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Feelings Friends: A Social-Emotional Learning App in the Primary Grades

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Feelings Friends: A Social-Emotional Learning App in the Primary Grades



By

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Teaching Literacy (birth through grade 6): Focus on Classroom Teaching in Childhood

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Abstract

To increase awareness around the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), this paper presents the development and implementation of a digital tool, *Feelings Friends*, designed to enhance emotional support in classroom settings. The idea came from the need to address diverse social and emotional needs that are often overlooked in traditional classroom environments. *Feelings Friends* is an app where students complete a daily emotional survey, allowing for consistent and proactive monitoring for teachers and students. The tool integrates into daily routines which provides students with a structured method to express and reflect on their emotions.

The paper outlines the theoretical foundations supporting the app, including its role in helping with working memory and emotional regulations. By fostering a safe and supportive environment, the app aligns with findings from the World Health Organization and Bank Street's Developmental Interaction Approach, emphasizing the significance of emotional security in academic success and personal growth. *Feelings Friends* also benefit both the students and teachers, highlighting their potential to enhance emotional awareness, facilitate communication with parents, and support teachers in understanding and responding to students' emotions.

In summary, *Feelings Friends* represents a modern approach to integrating SEL into daily classroom routines, offering a practical solution to support emotional well-being and improvement of educational outcomes through consistent, data-driven insights into student emotions.

Introduction

When we think of how much technology, specifically in the education field, has evolved, we think about how it's helped teachers know more information about their students. As someone who considers themselves "tech-savvy", I wanted to utilize these skills and do something unique and most importantly something that has a direct impact on all the students I teach in the future for my integrative masters project. Therefore, I created: *Feelings Friends: A Social Emotional Learning check-in application*. I knew that I wanted this app to be something that would be a part of a classroom routine. As a teacher in a class of 23 students, I know how important it is to have and solidify clear, direct classroom routines to keep students aware of their surroundings. Coming up with a quick and simple social-emotional check-in, which was where my ideas stemmed from for this app, made me think about how it would need to be practical in my classroom. I picture this app working as a quick simple morning routine for students to do every single morning when they come into the classroom. I'm envisioning it to be such a normal routine that it almost feels like muscle memory when the students walk into the classroom every morning. This paper is a culmination of all the research, personal experiences, data, and opinions that came together to back up the ideas of *Feelings Friends*.

Rationale: My Pizza Story

I have very vivid memories of when anxiety presented itself in my schooling as a child. One of my most crystal-clear memories was when I was in first grade. Over one weekend, I went to a pizza restaurant with my family and our family friends. We were having a grand old time catching up and eating mac and cheese and pizza, my favorites! As most kids do, we started to get antsy while our parents were talking and taking their time eating their meals. We decided to go outside and show off our gymnastics skills while we waited for the schmoozing to end. I

thought bringing my last piece of pizza outside with me would be a good idea. My mom came out with us to watch our moves for a bit. I was a cartwheel queen at this time in my life. I wanted to show off, I did a cartwheel on the grass in front of the restaurant while I was mid-chewing the last of my pizza crust. I suddenly started choking.

I only remember small flashes of events but I clearly remember my mom doing the Heimlich maneuver right next to a fire hydrant. She saved my life and the crust shot out of my mouth. After this, I had a full-blown panic attack. I thought food was still stuck and I thought that I still wasn't breathing. The other kids I was with went to get my dad to help calm me down with my mom. After some time and several small gulps of water, I was able to get myself together enough to get in the car and go home. I remember feeling incredibly nauseous in the car and the urge to lay in my bed and cry. This traumatic experience changed a lot of my childhood life.

As a child who already struggled with anxiety, this threw me off for years. This affected my learning, social skills, and most importantly, health. My first-grade teacher, Ms. Miller, was a savior at this time. She was a nurse, role model, teacher, and go-to person all at once. My mind was consumed with the choking events, which left me distracted every single school day. My memory wasn't working and I missed a lot of school and instruction. I was not able to concentrate in class, I was not able to show my full capabilities to my teachers and I was not able to be my fun-loving self.

A lot of social time happened in the lunchroom, which I refused to go to. I was too nervous to be around food and that many people. I was worried that I, or a friend, would choke and I would have to experience the trauma again. My friends would hang out during lunch but I would spend my time in the nurse's office faking sick to avoid that lunch room as a whole. The

nurse would have to watch me eat to make sure I was getting the proper nutrients I needed. I refused to eat most things out of the fear of choking again. My diet consisted of mostly plain noodles and ice cream, things I didn't think I could choke on. My mom would pack me lunches and they would come home untouched unless it was plain noodles.

This traumatic episode changed who I was as a child and as a student. If it wasn't for my teacher Miss Miller or my parents, I don't know how I would have gotten through this tough time. It almost felt like a halt in my life. I frequently heard my parents discussing the best ways to support me, different therapist recommendations, and how to help me be happy. Miss Miller was always there with a friendly smile on her face to welcome me and let me know she was there for me. She was my real-life Miss Honey! Miss Miller and my parents were always collaborating together and were always making sure I was getting what I needed. This makes me think about the importance of a school-to-home connection, which I value now as a teacher.

After teaching for some years and being an education graduate school student, I have a different perspective on this whole story. I think about how many needs I had at this time but also how many other students were in my first-grade classroom. It takes hard work and dedication to dedicate yourself to a student who's going through a tough time while also managing the learning of other students. Thinking back on this and how much Ms. Miller helped me, I wonder how helpful it would have been for her to have me do a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) check-in every morning when I arrived at school. This could have given her the data that she needed to know to think about the best way to approach my needs that school day.

Why a Social Emotional App?

When I was thinking about what to do my imp on, my first thought was to think of something I could use in my class that's lacking. I am an efficient person and like to apply my

learning to my classroom as immediately as I can. My brain jumped to the idea of doing something social-emotional learning-based. The National Education Association states that, “Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, establish and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions” (“The Importance of Social Emotional Learning”, 2018). My students have many different social, emotional, and learning needs, just like every classroom in America. Being able to create something that targets these specific needs is my goal.

Even though I am a young, 25-year-old teacher who knows how to use new technology, I always revert to hands-on or paper and pencil activities. However, as a teacher who started teaching at the height of the pandemic, I saw how much technology can be utilized. In my first year of teaching, I was an assistant teacher in a pod of 10 students. We used many different computer applications for math, reading, and science, but we never had any resources to check in on how the students were doing emotionally. I, of course, found ways to weave SEL into the daily schedule, but I look back and think about how it would be so helpful to hear how the students feel coming into school every day. While SEL is woven into learning daily in classrooms, it’s not always explicit. Depending on the student’s teacher and school environment, the amount of SEL learning varies. I wanted to create something universal, easy to use, and impactful for all students. Throughout my reflection on watching my students use computers differently, I came up with the idea to create an app where students fill out a survey every morning. It would become part of their routine, and the teachers, administration, and social workers/school psychologists would have access to the data. The data would then give those

important people a background into why or how the students were acting that day.

Working Memory/Being Present with Our Learning (self-monitoring)

Teachers have deadlines for report cards, preparation for parent-teacher conferences, and the need to meet academic standards and be role models. Think about when you're anxious or stressed. Is your brain working as well? Are you able to focus on the task at hand? Can you take in information easily? The answer is most likely no. When our working memory is being used for other things, such as thinking about traumatic events or worrying about something serious coming up in life, we are not able to be fully present with our learning. *Feelings Friends* allows students to take a step back, recognize their feelings, talk to someone if they want to, and help them feel more at ease and secure to learn the rest of the school day. Hans M Koot from the National Library of Medicine states that "Working memory is an important factor in children's social development as the ability to process social information is thought to be dependent on working memory. Adequate processing of social information is essential for the development of children's social cognition and behavior" (Koot, 2016, n.p.). For example, the study revealed that stress, such as that experienced by a student with post-traumatic stress disorder, plays a major role in shaping how our working memory operates. "Acute stress has been shown to increase activity in the pre-frontal cortex, suggesting that additional cognitive resources are needed to manage stress, which may impair working memory" (Porcelli et al. 2008). I think of *Feelings Friends* being one of the additional cognitive resources that students could use to manage their stress levels and improve their working memory. I picture a student coming into the classroom with a stressor, whether it be something at home or at school, and being able to relieve some of that stress by identifying their feelings and talking them through with a teacher. The aim for this would be that *Feelings Friends* would be an outlet and allow students to feel more at ease when

they start their school day. Feeling comfortable in a safe environment can lead students to more openness and interest in expressing themselves.

Fostering a Safe Environment

What's more important than fostering a safe environment that allows students to be vulnerable about their feelings and emotions? Fostering a safe and nurturing environment is crucial for several reasons and I believe that *Feelings Friends* could contribute to that. Overall emotional and psychological well-being helps students feel secure and valued. Safe spaces help reduce stress and anxiety which leads me to think about how it is additive to their academic success. When students feel safe and supported, they are more likely to engage in their learning and do better academically. A positive environment can spark creativity and curiosity. The World Health Organization's Information Series on School Health, *Creating an Environment for Emotional and Social Well-Being*, states that, "Positive reactions to school may increase the likelihood that students will stay in school longer, develop a commitment to learning, and use the institution to their advantage. Thus, a positive, supportive climate at school can make a critical contribution to the academic achievement." ("Creating an Environment for Emotional and Social Well-Being", 2003, pg. 4). Having the students check in with their feelings and feel heard can help them look at school through a more positive lens.

For most students, a need for a physically and emotionally safe place is necessary. Not all students have the privilege to go home to a safe place each night. Additionally, some students might not be able to express themselves at home, and at school is their only opportunity to do so. The non-verbal communication that *Feelings Friends* provides will allow students to feel like they can express themselves safely. When I think about fostering a safe environment, Bank Street's Developmental Interaction Approach comes to mind. The Developmental Interaction

Approach focuses on fostering children's growth through interaction with their environment and others. The component that correlates the most with *Feelings Friends* is the social interaction component. Nager and Shapiro (1999) state that children's development is fundamentally shaped through their interactions with others. Social interactions provide the context in which children develop cognitive, emotional, and social skills, and these interactions are essential for meaningful learning. Social interactions are crucial for development. *Feelings Friends* allows students to have a special social interaction with their teachers. For some students, their teacher is their "safe" person. Giving students the opportunity to let adults around them know how they feel, calmly and privately, can help them develop skills to help them cope and understand their feelings.

Need for Routine

There are wonderful SEL activities that teachers can do in the classroom but as all teachers know, instruction time is insanely limited. Routines allow students to get into the habit of things and know what to expect. Lehigh University's College of Education states:

Routines allow teachers to focus more on instruction and less on classroom management by teaching students to self-manage and get into the habit of following a particular schedule. This sort of scheduling is particularly important for regularly occurring events in the classroom ("Routine-based interventions", n.d.)

This quote makes me think about executive functioning. A skill of executive functioning is to be aware of the next step you need to take whether it's in the classroom or something in life. A part of executive functioning is organizing processes in your head to help you be effective and efficient. Routines make that simpler for students who struggle with executive functioning skills because it is already laid out for them and they feel successful. I know what it is like to have

additional lessons, assemblies, standards, and testing, interrupt the daily flow of a school day. Like Lehigh's College of Education says routines help students self-manage which can only benefit their school day experiences. I envision an iPad or a computer being set up for the students and them to fill out their app quickly and then the teacher can see their results quickly. It is very difficult as an educator to find time to add in things that matter the most. I try my absolute best to add those things in as much as I can but with the realities of the school day and the school year, it's not always possible. That's why adding a simple routine that the students will become familiar with right away from the first day of school is adding something important to the school day without sacrificing other parts of learning. *A Teacher's Guide: The Power of Routines in the Classroom* by Makayla DaSilva states that:

Routines benefit all students, regardless of their executive function abilities. Familiarity with daily routines helps students feel more comfortable in the classroom. When students know what is expected of them, they will feel more confident in their daily activities. Not to mention, with fewer cognitive demands, students will be able to perform more highly in their academics (DaSilva, 2023, pg. 3).

Incorporating *Feelings Friends* into a student's everyday routine can help them feel seen, and integrated into the classroom, and will help them know what to expect each and every day.

How *Feelings Friends* Support Students

Multiple main scenarios come to mind when I think about how this app can support students, which I unpack in this section. One part of this app that I think is powerful is the idea that no speech or talking is needed. This makes me think of a few different types of students. For example, this year, in my fourth-grade class, I have a student from another country who is here in New York to be treated at Sloane Kettering for Neuroblastoma. This student, Ralph, a

pseudonym, is from Israel and speaks little to no English. One can only imagine the feelings and emotions this student deals with daily. Ralph is only at school every other week due to constant treatment and scans. This has made it difficult for him to develop and maintain friendships. There are days when he feels lost and days when he doesn't know how to socialize with his peers. However, because it is extremely difficult to communicate with him orally, I am not always aware of his emotions and how he truly feels. Translating the app would add dimensions to how it could be utilized. For example, having the app translated into Hebrew allows students to understand the visuals and share their feelings.

Another type of student that this app will support are students who are reserved and don't always advocate for themselves. It's difficult to reach these students and allowing them to express themselves in a different, more private way could help the teacher-student relationship and help them understand that people can help them. I think back to when I was doing a teaching fellowship in Brooklyn for a summer; I had a student who was mute. This student went through intense trauma and became mute after one of the traumatic incidents. Reaching him was difficult but I made sure to use visuals and writing to communicate with him. *Feelings Friends* would be a nice opportunity to allow someone like him to express themselves but not have to say a word.

Feelings Friends also promotes self-awareness. Having this daily check-in helps students identify and name their emotions, which is a crucial step in managing them effectively. It also allows for self-reflection and encourages students to reflect on their feelings which gives them a deeper understanding of themselves. This thinking leads me to understand how *Feelings Friends* can also enhance emotional regulation, which is something that many students struggle with. By recognizing their emotions, students can learn from their teacher and others, and practice strategies to cope with challenging feelings. Regular check-ins can also help students articulate

their triggers, which can alleviate anxiety and improve emotional well-being. In addition, the app will serve as a gradual release of responsibility for students. The teacher will scaffold the app and how to use it at the beginning of the year. Teachers will model using *Feelings Friends* and then gently stop modeling so the students can use the app by themselves and become more independent in their capacities both using the app and managing their emotional wellbeing.

All of these ways that *Feelings Friends* helps students, give students the ability to develop emotionally and feel more secure in strengthening their friendships and other relationships. Sharing and listening to each other's experiences can build more empathy and understanding among students. I look at *Feelings Friends* as an early intervention for identifying emotional issues that can allow for timely support that's needed. Overall, incorporating social-emotional check-ins in the school routine helps create a supportive learning environment where students can thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

How *Feelings Friends* Supports Teachers

While *Feelings Friends* is an app for students, it is equally as helpful for teachers and their daily practice. Teachers use data for many different things, including attendance, assessments, evaluations, and more. Data helps teachers understand their students' areas of improvement, create modified lesson plans, adjust learning goals, collaborate with others, and look for trends. The data from *Feelings Friends* can be used by teachers in multiple different ways. Teachers could have flexibility on how often they would want to look at the data. Teachers could use the app daily, weekly, or monthly to reflect on their students' feelings over time. The possibilities and advantages of using the app are endless and can only help teachers help their students.

Analyzing *Feelings Friends* can help teachers be more aware of their students' emotional states. The app can provide teachers with real-time insights into students' emotional well-being, such as mood fluctuations. For example, if a teacher looks at the monthly view of a student, and notices that for three days the student marked their emotion as angry, they can be more aware and strategize ways to help the student. They can look at the data of their emotions, and watch for trends over time, which can help the teachers understand emotional patterns and potential triggers for different students. Whether the feelings reported by the students are positive or negative, the teacher's awareness can help students acknowledge their feelings and help them cope.

Communication is another aspect that *Feelings Friends* can help with. The data from the app can facilitate communication between teachers and parents about a student's emotional help, enabling a collaborative approach to support. This makes me think about parent-teacher conferences. In a parent-teacher conference, or any informal encounter with a parent, the parents often ask something along the lines of, "How is my child doing? Do they seem happy in school?". It would be extra beneficial in these conversations to have concrete data to share with the parents about their child's feelings when they come to school. Using the *Feelings Friends* data can also help teachers reach out to parents when there is a cause for concern. This collaboration promotes a healthy school-to-home relationship that the students can see and feel.

Teachers can use *Feelings Friends* to improve their relationships with their students. Allowing students to feel like they are in a safe place to share how they feel can build trust. The app can contribute to a culture where mental health is prioritized. Encouraging students to be more mindful of their emotions and those of their peers can teach them important life skills. The relationship between a teacher and a student can be incredibly powerful. The integration of

social-emotional learning in the classroom through *Feelings Friends* can foster a more supportive environment which can help teacher-student relationships evolve. Overall, *Feelings Friends* can serve as a valuable tool for teachers, helping them better understand and support their students, manage their communication more effectively, and contribute to a positive and nurturing educational environment.

RULER Study Research

After researching multiple different types of SEL curriculums in schools, this article from Yale School of Medicine's Child Study Center brought up some ideas. "Routines and consequences of emotions, labeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, expressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context and regulating emotions with helpful strategies." ("RULER: A Framework for Social and Emotional Learning", n.d.) I believe that my app would follow this approach very well. Recognizing emotions and labeling emotions are steps with this app because it provides the students with visual cues to help them recognize how they are feeling. Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions, and expressing emotions are parts of RULER that go beyond this app. Those are parts of an SEL curriculum that need to be enforced in school but I don't see them as part of the app. According to the RULER Study:

Research shows that students and adults who use RULER experience: Development of emotion skills, Improvement in academic performance and classroom climate, Fewer attention and learning problems, Greater social and leadership skills, Less anxiety and depression, Less stress and burnout, Better performance in school ("RULER: A Framework for Social and Emotional Learning", n.d.).

After reading this article, I revised part of the app to make it follow this approach, hoping it would lead to more success in schools. The biggest revision I made was allowing the students

to record themselves and express their feelings if they wanted to. I added this feature after honing in on the idea of how anxiety-provoking it can be to share how you feel in front of others. Also, children might not be able to fully capture their responses in words, especially if their use of *Feelings Friends* is for a short period of time. The RULER Study also made me think about labeling emotions. I made sure to choose the emotions on *Feelings Friends* wisely because labeling and understanding emotions can help give students clarity on how they feel. Overall, the RULER study added another lens to my creation and helped me come up with additive ideas to help support the social-emotional development of the students using the app every day.

Child Development

Understanding child development is crucial for designing an effective social-emotional curriculum, in my case, a SEL app, because it ensures that the material is age-appropriate, engaging, and impactful for the intended audience. Child development encompasses the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that children undergo from birth to adolescence. By comprehending these developmental stages, educators can tailor their curriculum to address the unique needs and abilities of children at different ages. I decided to make visuals of the app for two different age spans. I have spent multiple years working in first grade and now I'm currently in fourth grade. Working in both grades, I became aware of the big difference in the ages and the development of the students. With this knowledge and after taking Child Development at Bank Street, I catered my two age spans in the app to match what would be best for certain ages, recognizing that one app wouldn't meet the developmental needs of both age groups. The two age bands that I decided to create for the app were 5 and 6-year-olds (first graders) and 9 and 10-year-olds (fourth graders).

Knowledge of child development helps educators identify the social and emotional milestones children typically reach at various ages. For instance, according to an article about the milestones for 7-year-olds, young children in first grade,

Become more aware of and sensitive to the feelings of others. This trait is called empathy. They overcome some fears they had when they were younger. But they still can be terrified of the unknown. Many children also fear being in trouble with their parents or other adults. In general, they are worried about the opinions of others. They form friendships, usually with other children of the same gender. They play in larger groups sometimes but they also need time alone (“Milestones for 7-Year-Olds, n.d.)

A curriculum designed for this age group should focus on helping children recognize and name their emotions, as well as teaching foundational social skills through play and simple, interactive activities. Conversely, older children in fourth grade are developing more complex social relationships and a deeper understanding of their own and others' feelings. According to Understood.com's article, Developmental Milestones for Fourth and Fifth Graders, Fourth Graders:

Are insecure or have mood swings and struggle with self-esteem (This tends to be more pronounced in girls.) They are increasingly independent from family, withdraw more from family activities, and need privacy. They form stronger and more complex friendships. They may face strong peer pressure and find it hard to resist if they struggle with self-esteem. They have a deeper understanding of how relationships with others can include more than just common interests. They value friends' opinions; share secrets and inside jokes. They may test out new attitudes, clothing styles, and mannerisms while

figuring out where/how to fit in. (Developmental Milestones for Typical Fourth and Fifth Graders, n.d.)

Curricula for this age group should incorporate more sophisticated concepts, such as empathy, conflict resolution, and cooperation. Looking at these milestones of the grades that I have experience with, I tried to create the different versions of the app to be age-appropriate.

I understood the importance of having an understanding of characteristics to look for in my younger age band. After doing some more research on early to middle-aged children, I automatically thought back to this article by Burgess and Rubin from my Child Development course about the social development in younger children. It mentioned that,

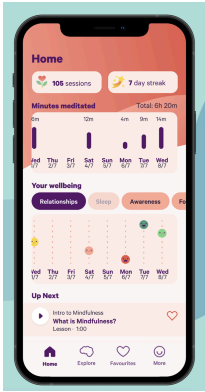


The ways in which children think about their social worlds become increasingly abstract from early to middle childhood. Young children perceive, think about, and describe social phenomena by referring to appearance, possessions, and behavioral acts; by middle childhood, there is the beginning of a focus on internal (psychological) characteristics, such as the thoughts, feelings, intentions, and opinions of peers (Burgess and Rubin, 2000, pg. 235).

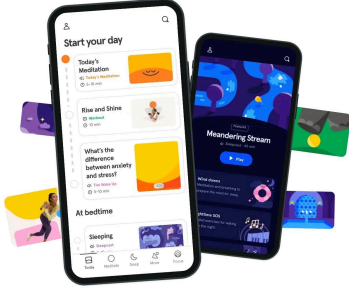

This proved to me how different the two age spans in the app have to be. In the first grade version, I made it very visual, with little words, because not all the students can read at that age. I also allowed them to listen to the words if they could not read it. For the fourth-grade app, I added 3 more emotions and made some of them more complex than the first-grade emotions. For example, I added lonely, frustrated, and anxious.

App Research

For the purpose of what could be possible for *Feelings Friends*, I did extensive research on other apps out there that are used for Social Emotional Learning. The chart below describes

what the other apps offer, as well as particular notes about each app, that I noticed during my research period. I wanted to have an array of apps that I could compare to the one I wanted to create and sought exemplary apps that build on my concept, which helped me with the fine-tuning of *Feelings Friends*. support. In this chart, you'll find an example of the graphics, quick notes of what the app does, and any other interesting findings I found. All of these apps have such wonderful ideas but none of them are exactly like *Feelings Friends*.

App Name	What it Does	Other Notes
<p>Smiling Mind</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mindfulness activities ● Short meditation routines ● Brain breaks with musical components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No interactive check-in ● More just activities and resources ● Not just for a school setting
<p>Wondergrade</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calming videos ● SEL lesson plans provided for educators ● Visual and engaging content ● Their goal is to look at the app as an “Emotional coping companion” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most used for parents to help their children deal with big feelings
<p>Class Dojo</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A way to communicate with families ● Fun SEL learning content through games and videos ● In classrooms, Class Dojo is mostly used for behavior management ● Has a YouTube account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Point system which gives a competitive component and extrinsic motivation ● Created for educators to communicate with families

	with mindfulness videos	
<p><u>Headspace</u></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mindfulness activities ● Guided, recorded meditations ● Popular for sleep meditations ● Customizable experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not just geared toward kids ● Includes more adult-based ideas such as productivity tips, sleep support, focus sessions, daily inspirations
<p><u>Emotionary</u></p> <p>Most Similar to My Idea</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check-in (with a feelings chart) can be done whenever ● Starts with naming a primary emotion, then categorizing it ● Uses AI to come up with words to describe feelings ● Works to identify emotions ● Asked to rate the intensity of emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No research or information behind it ● Not specifically made for schools <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>This app is most similar to <i>Feelings Friends</i>. It is student-focused, helps support the teachers with data, and exposes students to multiple different emotions. Visually, it is similar because it looks like a feelings chart, just like <i>Feelings Friends</i>.</p> </div>

Technology Visuals of the *Feelings Friends* App

In order to help others visualize what the *Feelings Friends* app would look like for both the teachers and the students, I made visual models to represent the vision I had. As you can see, there are two versions of the app here. One version is for the younger age band (first grade) and the second version is for the other age band (fourth grade). They have the same aesthetic so it can be consistent between ages. I wanted the aesthetic to be colorful, calming, and child-friendly, but not overwhelming. The first-grade view is more simple and the fourth-grade view has more

complex emotions. Please look at the arrows and captions that follow them to understand the symbols.

FIRST GRADE STUDENT VIEW

Student will click on their name and then it automatically generates them to their feelings page.

The same emotion options are given every day to provide the student with consistency.

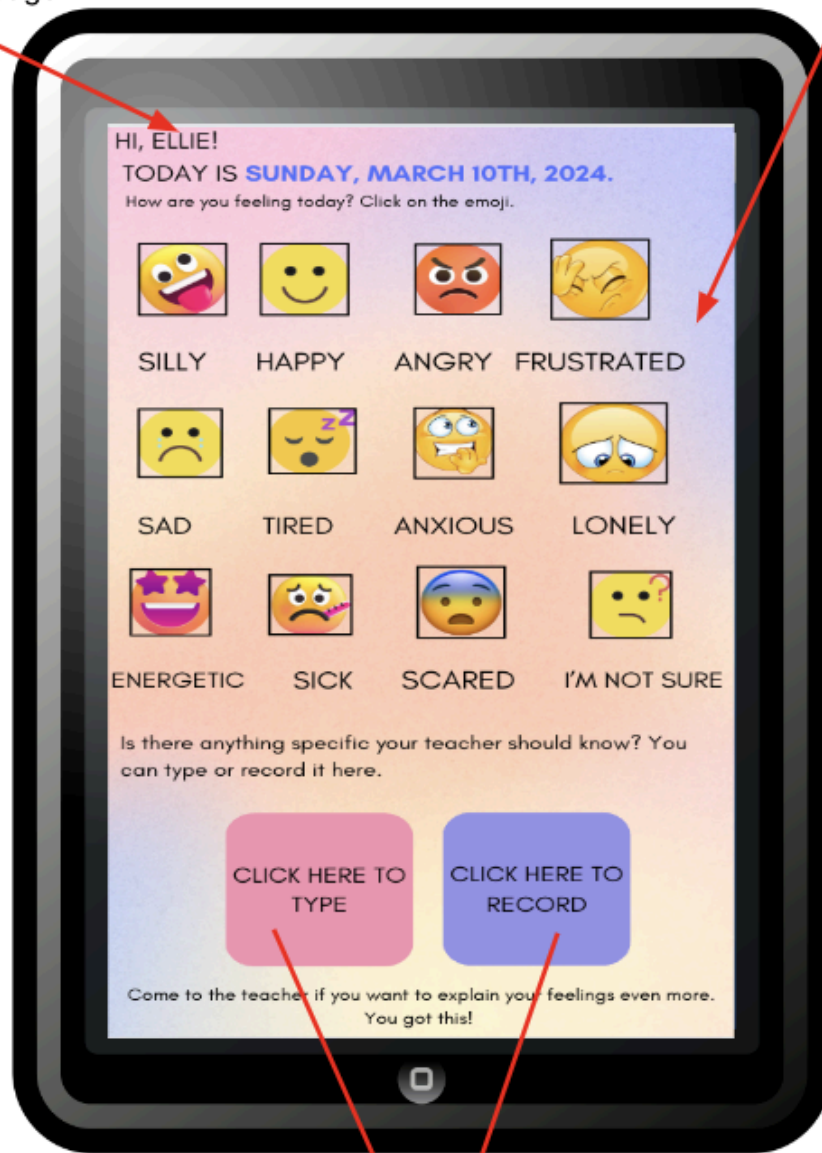


Student can click on this icon to have the words read to them.

Student will click on their name and then it automatically generates them to their feelings page.

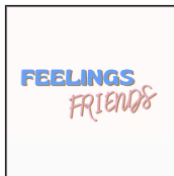
FOURTH GRADE STUDENT VIEW

The same emotion options are given every day to provide the student with consistency.



Students have the opportunity to record themselves or type if there's anything specific they want to share with their teacher.

As a teacher, I feel like it's always important to have a clear way to look at student data. When I originally started thinking about how the data could be shown, I was making graphs and tables. However, after some playing around with Excel, I concluded that a simple monthly view per student was a quick way for teachers to notice weekly trends and see their students' feelings overall. Please look below at the monthly calendar view of a pseudonym student, John Smith. On the days when you see a red notebook, those are the days when a teacher wrote down notes. The red notebook contains a link that brings the teacher to their notes when they click it. This allows for all notes and data to be in one place each month.



Student: *John Smith* - October 2024 Feelings Friends Report

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29	30 HAPPY	1 HAPPY	2 HAPPY	3 HAPPY	4 HAPPY	5
6	7 ANGRY	8 SAD	9 SAD	10 SAD	11 TIRED	12
13	14 I'M NOT SURE	15 CALM	16 TIRED	17 SICK	18 SICK	19
20	21 ENERGETIC	22 ENERGETIC	23 HAPPY	24 HAPPY	25 HAPPY	26
27	28 HAPPY	29 HAPPY	30 HAPPY	31 SILLY	1 HAPPY	2

Reflection

Through the process of this independent study, it became clear to me how important prioritizing mental health in a school environment is. As an educator, advocating for social-emotional learning is necessary because it helps students with vital skills that extend beyond academics and into all parts of life. The time when you see smiling faces on all your kids, no matter what's going on in their lives, is the time when teaching feels especially worth it. There is a special feeling that hits when you know that you did something right and helped a child on an emotional level. The connection between social-emotional learning and school performance is strong, and I think that incorporating a daily social-emotional check-in, through *Feelings Friends*, can help students become in touch with their emotions and feel more comfortable being themselves.

When I started to think about my imp, I was overwhelmed. Writing a very lengthy paper is extremely intimidating to me, as I am a visual learner who prefers to express herself in ways other than writing. However, when I decided I wanted to create an app with my own ideas, I felt more at ease. I got excited about the process and looked forward to finding ways to showcase my thoughts. The ability to choose and hone in on what you want to learn more about was especially inviting for me.

Towards the end of my work, I went to see the movie *Inside Out 2* with a few of my friends. This movie, along with the first one, offered an exploration of social-emotional learning that resonated with me as an educator. The film vividly illustrates the importance of understanding and managing emotions. The characters, who portray feelings, Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, Disgust, Envy, Anxiety, Boredom, and Embarrassment emphasize the complexity of

human emotions and how we all have them. The movie does a wonderful job of making this relatable and enjoyable for children and other audience members.

Throughout the movie, the characters navigate challenges and conflicts, requiring them to manage their self-control and resilience. This makes me think of *Feelings Friends*. Even though the emotions I decided to use for *Feelings Friends* are somewhat different than *Inside Out 2*, they are still relatable and important. My goals for the app are aligned with the goals that I think *Inside Out 2* set for its' audience, especially younger children. *Inside Out 2* and *Feelings Friends* both promote empathy, cooperation, and conflict-resolution skills that foster a supportive and inclusive environment.

It felt nostalgic because watching it was the ending point of graduate school being over and it connected so tightly with my IMP. I felt myself getting emotional about how far I've come in this process and how much I have learned. Of all the emotions from *Inside Out 2*, Anxiety, Joy, and Nostalgia are related to my IMP experience. To end the project, I wanted to categorize the emotions I felt throughout the process and relate them to these emotions.

Anxiety	I felt anxiety when I first started the paper. I was worried about fitting in the work with my other classes and being a full-time head teacher. Like in the movie, I felt like my head was spinning at times, but I knew it would all be worth it in the end. Anxiety is a feeling I have felt on a daily since I was a child, and I think having <i>Feeling Friends</i> when I was younger would help me understand my emotions more.
Joy	I felt joy when I finally decided what I wanted to do for my IMP. The opportunity of choice led to my passion for this project. Whenever anyone

	<p>asked me what I was doing for my IMP, joy came out when I mentioned my idea. I felt positive, determined, and excited about where this project could take me.</p>
<p>Nostalgia</p>	<p>Nostalgia has a tiny role in the movie but it didn't have a tiny role in the process of my IMP. As I simultaneously worked on this while in classes, teaching my fourth-grade students, doing my summer literacy practicum, and celebrating special events in my life, nostalgia popped up. This part of my life, my graduate school career, is coming to an end and nostalgic is a perfect word to describe my feelings. I am incredibly proud of my hard work, the connections I made, and my integrative master's project.</p>

Embracing social-emotional learning is not just about enhancing academic performance but also nurturing well-rounded individuals who are equipped to thrive in a complex world. By prioritizing social-emotional learning, educators can not only enrich their students' educational experiences but also empower them to become compassionate, responsible, and productive members of society. Reflecting on this process, I am hopeful that I can use what I learned to better serve my future students and help them from a social-emotional standpoint. I am looking forward to all the work I will do to keep up with my passion for social-emotional learning in and outside of the classroom.

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