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## Book Review: Teaching with a Social, Emotional, and Cultural Lens

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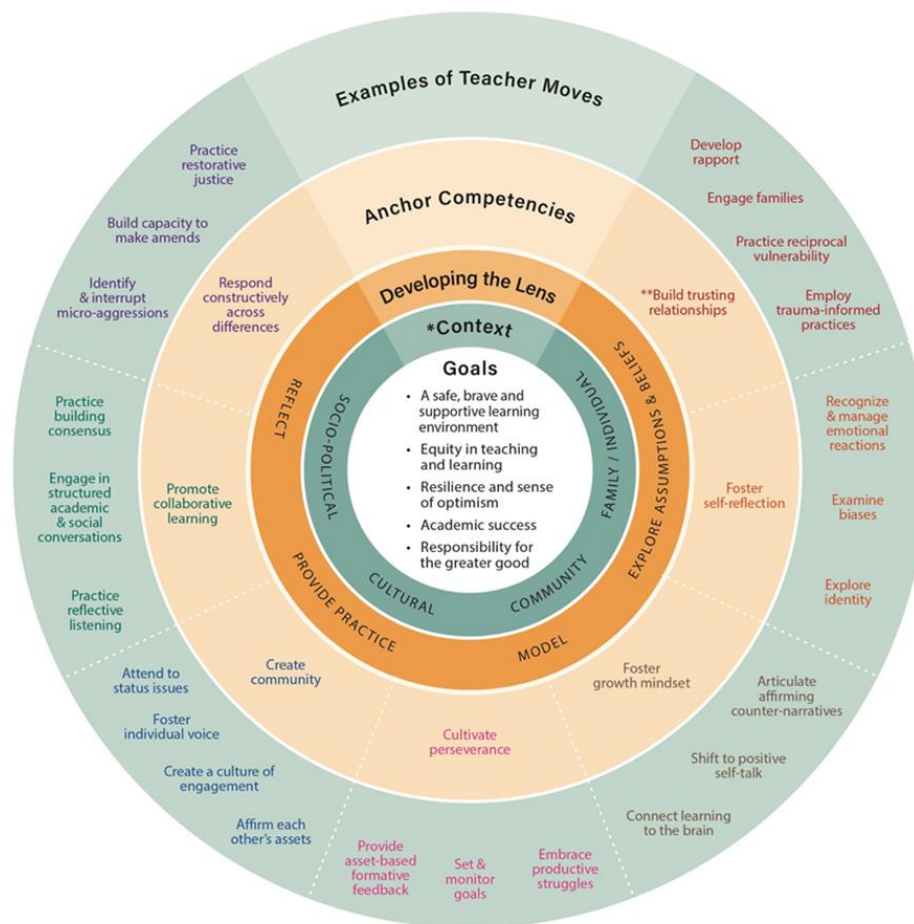
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## BOOK REVIEW: TEACHING WITH A SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND CULTURAL LENS

Teachers work diligently to make a difference and reach goals that change children’s lives in a positive way. Teachers continue to teach, learn, and try new ideas as research develops and as time allows. Nancy Markowitz and Suzanne Bouffard provide exceptionally well research, insights, and examples on teaching students through a social, emotional, and cultural lens. Markowitz and Bouffard did this by incorporating the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child’s (CRTWC) Anchor Competencies Framework (ACF) as illustrated in Figure 1. In every chapter, statistics, research, charts, diagrams, and real-world examples help potential teachers, veteran teachers, and administrators produce a school that is more socially, emotionally, and culturally aware.

**Figure 1**

*CRTWC Anchor Competencies Framework (ACF)*



Chapter one discussed the origins, importance, and value of the ACF and how it relates to the social, emotional, and cultural lens in teaching students and teachers. The ACF and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning’s (CASEL) five competencies can provide students and teachers with success in and outside of school. The chapter expressed that teachers need training and time to evaluate their social and emotional skills. “Teachers with well-

developed skills tend to develop more positive relationships with students and research shows that those relationships are key to successful teaching” (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020, p. 7). Many valuable statistics addressed in the chapter create a strong emphasis on teaching social-emotional learning and academics to different races, classes, and cultures.

Chapter two informed readers of the importance of the ACF by explaining the concentric circles (i.e., goals, context, developing the lens, anchor competencies, example of teacher moves) in detail. Each explanation of key definitions, teacher strategies, and real-world examples presented new and experienced teachers the importance of each circle in the ACF and how it relates to the social, emotional, and cultural lens of a student and a teacher. A relationship created between the ACF circle and Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development expressed the value of the ACF (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020, p.28). However, chapter two does not include how the Framework may be used by teachers to better address the needs of students with disabilities. With a growing commitment by school districts to implement a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) in every classroom as a way to better address the instructional needs of all students, it would behoove the authors to include tools and practical examples on how to incorporate the ACF in such an environment. Do the key definitions, teacher strategies, or real-world examples change in order to adapt to the needs of students with varying learning needs? If so, how?

Chapter three integrated the ACF and the classroom by providing real-life examples and research-based strategies for teachers and administrators. Integrating the ACF is challenging to complete in one week because teachers must use the framework during the teaching of academics. Several different tools explained how easy the transition is to incorporate the framework into a new style of teaching students. New teachers can learn the importance of building trusting relationships, fostering self-reflection, fostering a growth mindset, cultivating perseverance, creating a safe and welcoming community, promoting collaboration, and responding constructively to coworkers and students. A lesson plan template and example explained how teachers can incorporate several tools and strategies in an academic lesson.

Chapter four addressed the critical need to teach future teachers how to incorporate a social, emotional, and cultural lens into students. For schools to be successful, new teachers need preparation and skills to teach students with different needs. Preparation programs for aspiring teachers administer the knowledge, skills, and basic tools needed to be exceptional in the field of education (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020, p.77). “The Anchor Competencies Framework provides both a research-based process and a common set of competencies that can build greater consistency within teacher preparation programs. Additionally, because it brings together culturally responsive teaching practices with social and emotional learning, the framework enables graduates to start their careers with the ability to connect rather than silo these two critical areas of teaching” (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020, p. 78). Future and new teachers can create socially, emotionally, and culturally safe classroom environments by exploring assumptions and beliefs of other experienced teachers. Reflections and models in the chapter allowed future and new teachers to visualize a socially, emotionally, and culturally safe classroom. A yearly implementation process example presented new teachers with a step-by-step

incorporation of the ACF in the classroom. Many experienced or veteran teachers have experienced a variety of students with different needs; however, new teachers might not be familiar with this concept. Adding specific examples based on students' needs would help new teachers understand how the tools and strategies might change based on the students in the classroom. The chapter used several different strategies but does not emphasize the importance of picking several strategies, as one strategy may only work for certain students. This chapter could be greatly enhanced if it emphasized how new teachers may better address differences among students.

Chapter five expressed the importance of professional development among all staff members in a school. "In order for the social, emotional, and cultural lens to become firmly part of instruction, teachers need continuing support with opportunities to explore their assumptions and beliefs, view powerful modeling by other teachers, and practice and reflect as they build the social, emotional, and cultural competencies" (Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020, p. 115). Professional development is needed to integrate new research-based ideas. A comparison between the ACF, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and the Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) presented similarities among one another, but also how the ACF incorporates both PBIS and MTSS. Integrating the ACF schoolwide will provide a safe and welcoming community for all staff and students. In many districts, professional development appears as another task checked off the to-do list. It would be beneficial to know other ways to train staff members. Is there another way to complete this training? What happens if a veteran teacher refuses to be trained? These are the unfortunate realities schools face. While the chapter was helpful in how the Framework may be used to enhance professional development for school personnel, it would be helpful if it addressed the harsh realities of trying to improve uncooperative faculty who make doing so an onerous task.

The conclusion of the book included how to expand the ACF statewide. Chapters six and seven included the process of how to train and teach aspiring teachers at a university and how to provide professional development to a school district. The state can successfully incorporate the framework after making the specific requirements and qualifications. Training for all teachers and administrators would provide staff with confidence in using the framework throughout each day of the school year. Chapter seven included what the future of teaching would look like if the ACF is continually used effectively while including some key reminders and tips.

In the appendix, a lesson plan template, observation protocol templates, and matrixes helped incorporate the many skills of ACF. Each template provided specific directions to help with a successful transition in school. Teachers can copy and print off the templates to implement the several tools inside the classroom.

For any teacher or administrator that is interested in a safe and supportive learning environment, equity in teaching and learning, resilience and sense of optimism, academic success, and responsibility of the greater good in students, this book is for you as these are the goals of ACF. This book does a remarkable job at providing research-based tips, ideas, and strategies to potential, potential, and veteran teachers in K-12, as well as presenting real-life examples. Many diagrams and charts help understand the different ideas discussed in the book.

The book's organization allowed each chapter to be built from one another. It may be helpful to new teachers to incorporate the blank lesson plans in the appendix throughout the several chapters as the book relates to them.

As previously mentioned in this review, the book needs to better address how the ACF fits with teachers' efforts to better meet the needs of students with disabilities. The Framework seemed to have the potential to support all learners, yet the book lacks tips, tools, and strategies on how to perform with students with disabilities. Adding a chapter on utilizing the skills from ACF with students with disabilities would allow teachers to incorporate specific needs to all learners.

Overall, *Teaching with a Social, Emotional, and Cultural Lens* is a valuable resource for educators. Teaching students socially, emotionally, and culturally is critical for the success of all students. This book helped provide all teachers (aspiring, new, veteran) with remarkable skills that will strengthen their teaching careers.

### **Book Information**

Title: Teaching with a Social, Emotional, and Cultural Lens

Authors: Nancy Laurie Markowitz and Suzanne M. Bouffard

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### References

Markowitz, N. L., & Bouffard, S. M. (2020). *Teaching with a social, emotional, and cultural lens: A framework for educators and teacher educators*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.