



DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA

School of Liberal Arts and Education

**Compassionate Classrooms:
A Guide to Building Safe Learning Communities**
EDUO 9944E - Six Graduate Level Units/Credits
Developed By: Ryan Pickett
rpickett@dominicancaonline.com

Course Overview

The National Survey of Children's Health has found that half the students in U.S. schools have experienced trauma and/or chronic stress. Given the strong connection between our emotions and learning, we know that the majority of these students are not ready to learn when they arrive at school. In this course, educators will learn how to promote trusting relationships and social-emotional development in their classrooms. Educators will thereby be better equipped to create environments where students feel welcome, safe, and ready to learn. Through powerful readings and dynamic projects, educators will walk away from this course invigorated and ready to build safe learning communities for their students.

Course Objectives

In this course, participants will have the opportunity to:

- develop an understanding of how trauma and chronic stress can affect their students.
- investigate and learn strategies for teaching students who have had an adverse childhood experience.
- participate in lessons, activities, and projects that are designed to demonstrate how to create curriculum and classrooms that allow students to feel welcome, safe, and capable of learning.
- demonstrate the ability to create compassionate curriculum and build safe learning communities for all.

Course Relation to CCS or other Professional Standards

This course aligns to the following professional teaching standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/index.asp>

- Engaging and Supporting all Students in Learning
- Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
- Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning
- Planning Instruction and Designing learning Experiences for all Students

How to Submit Coursework

You have nine months to complete this course from the day that you registered. However, you are free to turn in all of your work for a grade at any time along the way.

Place each assignment (1-26) in a separate word processing document with clear labels and submit it into the corresponding assignment's Dropbox. Be sure to e-mail your instructor after each submission. If your assignment is too large for the Dropbox or it is in a format that the Dropbox will not accept (i.e. Google docs), feel free to e-mail or share the document directly with your instructor.

Course Assignments

1. Introductory Tweets

- a. You are to create three "tweets" of 140 or less characters (i.e. letters, numbers, symbols). Be sure to use abbreviations and/or acronyms to allow you to expand what you can communicate. You can even take liberty to create new words. Your first tweet should communicate why you enrolled in this class. Please do not simply say that you need units, as this tweet needs to reflect why you chose this particular class. In your second tweet, you are to describe what a compassionate classroom looks like to you. For your third tweet, communicate what you think it would take for every student in your class to feel safe and ready to learn.
- b. Create a lesson that includes "tweeting" as a way to get to know your students and/or find out their prior knowledge before beginning a new lesson/unit.

2. Movie Poster

Read the article titled "*The Deficit Lens of the Achievement Gap Needs to be Flipped.*" This article can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>

- a. Create a "movie" poster depicting the concepts in the article. The goal of the poster is to entice people to read the article, not for them to learn the information in the article. We want this poster to look more like one that was created to advertise a movie.
- b. Write a description of your poster explaining why you made the creative choices that you did.

3. Measuring Opportunity

- a. Keeping in mind the article from the movie poster assignment, explain how you currently measure student opportunity in your classroom and/or school and describe how you and/or your school could improve in this area.

- b. Create a 15 to 30 second radio teaser marketing a movie that depicts the information in *“The Deficit Lens of the Achievement Gap Needs to be Flipped.”* It would be great if you were able to create an audio file to share with your instructor, but it is ok to turn in a written script of the radio teaser instead.

4. Goal Setting

Now that you have had a taste of what this class is about, create three goals for acquiring skills and knowledge through this class. The goals can be used to improve as a teacher and/or reflect the need to improve on a personal level. As the class proceeds, you will have a chance to revise your goals as needed.

5. Introduction to Trauma-Informed Teaching

Read the article titled *“A Case for a Trauma Informed Approach.”* This article can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>

- a. Summarize the above article.
- b. Discuss what you know about this topic as well as what experience you have with it thus far in your career.

6. Rose and Thorn

- a. Read the article titled *“A Simple but Powerful Class Opening Activity.”* This article can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518> Share something positive (rose) that you are bringing to this class or a negative (thorn) that may impact your ability to learn in this class.
- b. Describe how you might be able to implement this activity in your classroom and how it could support a compassionate classroom.

7. Compare and Contrast

- a. Read the following six articles that can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>
- *“Nobody Learns it in a Day”*
 - *“Do Distressed Students Have a Right to Trauma-Sensitive Schooling?”*
 - *“Some FAQ for Educators on Childhood Trauma”*
 - *“Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies”*
 - *“Teaching Through Trauma”*
 - *“What’s Love Got To Do With It?”*
- b. Watch the video called “Trauma-Informed Practices” which can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. You can also click on the following link to view the video. <https://youtu.be/iydalwamBtg>.

- c. Write a short summary of the video.
- d. Write short summaries for each of the six articles.
- e. Write a paper of at least one page in length comparing and contrasting the information from the articles and the video. You do not have to mention all six of the articles. The goal is just to get a sense of the similarities and differences between the ideas presented.

8. Introduction to Social Emotional Learning

Watch the video titled “It’s time to stop calling SEL soft skills.” This video can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicanselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. You can also click on the following link to view the video. <https://youtu.be/EEaRlcxEshg>. When you finish the video, write a paragraph about it. Be sure to utilize the information that you’ve learned about trauma-informed schools to explain why social-emotional learning, as outlined in the video, should be considered essential for school today.

9. Picture Collage

- a. Read the following six articles. These articles can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicanselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>
 - “*A De-escalation Exercise for Upset Students*”
 - “*Getting Creative with SEL*”
 - “*Making SEL Culturally Competent*”
 - “*Promoting Pro-social Behaviors in the Classroom*”
 - “*Social-Emotional Learning in a World Language Class*”
 - “*Stories Help Build a Strong Classroom Culture*”
- b. Write a summary for each of the 6 articles.
- c. Create a picture collage depicting your opinion of the information that you learned in the 6 articles. This collage can be made with digital imagery or with pictures cut and glued from magazines. If you choose a non-digital method of creating your collage, take a picture of the collage to turn in. After you make the collage, write a summary of your opinion on a word document.

10. Introduction to the Power of Relationships

Read the article titled “*Five Things to Say to Your Students.*” This article can be found in the online resources section of this class at <https://dominicanselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. Thinking of everything that you have learned in class thus far, create an outline of how you could improve student-to-student and teacher-to-student relationships in your class.

11. Blog

- a. Read the following four articles. These articles can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>.
 - “4 Ways to Foster Positive Student Relationships”
 - “6 Strategies for Building Better Student Relationships”
 - “The Key to Effective Classroom Management”
 - “The Power of Being Seen”
- b. Watch the videos titled “Making Sure Each Child is Known” and “The Power of Relationships in Schools.” These articles can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. You can also click on the following links to view the videos. <https://youtu.be/xjZx0VdmgkE> and <https://youtu.be/kzvm1m8zq5g>.
- c. Pretend that you are the author of a daily blog about creating safe learning communities for all. In your blog for today, compare and contrast the four articles from above as well as the videos you just watched. In your blog, discuss the concepts in the articles and how they relate to promoting compassionate classrooms.

12. Standards

Identify a group of standards that you are responsible for teaching and begin planning lessons that will teach those standards while promoting trusting relationships and social-emotional development. For this assignment, you only need to turn in the standards you have chosen and explain why you choose them. After completing this course, however, you are encouraged to complete lessons for the standards that you choose.

13. Introduction to the concept “Everyone Belongs”

Read the article titled “*Every Student Matters: Cultivating Belonging in the Classroom.*” This article can be found in the online resources section of this class at

<https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>.

- a. Synthesize the ideas in the article into a poem.
- b. Brainstorm and document some ideas on how you can help students feel as though they belong in your classroom.

14. Book Reports

- a. Read the following seven articles that can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>.

- *“A Lot of Pride”*
- *“Support Lacking for LGBTQ+ Students”*
- *“Rethinking Connections: Keeping Gender Diverse Students Safe”*
- *“A Wake-Up Call on Student Homelessness”*
- *“Don’t Forget About Me!”*
- *“How to Support Students Living in Foster Care”*
- *“Superintendent: Immigrant Students Need a Safe Harbor in School”*

b. Using separate word documents, create a mini book report for each of the seven articles above. Each mini report should include the following: 1) the title and author(s) of the article, 2) at least three images or drawings that represent the concepts in the article, 3) a summary of the article (a paragraph is fine), and 4) ideas for how the concepts in the article could help create compassionate classrooms where everyone feels safe, welcome, and ready to learn.

15. Field Trip

Read the article titled *“Make the World Accessible to All.”* This article can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. For this assignment, you will be creating a guided field trip book as outlined in the article. In order to do this, you’ll need to preview the location for which you intend to make the book. If it is not possible to visit sites for this assignment, you can go on a virtual field trip instead. Many educational facilities have this option on their website. If you would like to explore a place that does not have a virtual field trip set up, you should be able to collect enough information online about the potential location to make your book.

16. Introduction to Restorative Discipline

Watch the video, *“Restorative Circles.”* This video can be found in the online resources section of this class at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. You can also click on the following link to view the video. <https://youtu.be/1-RZYSTJAAo>. After watching the video, draw a picture depicting what this video means to you. You can take a picture of your drawing in order to turn it in.

17. Goals Revisited

Describe your progress on the goals you created in assignment four of this course. Now that you are about halfway through the class, you may decide to revise your goals. If you choose to make revisions, please write out your updated goals and explain your reasoning for the change.

18. State School Board

- a. Read the following five articles. These articles can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>.
- *“Ditching Detention for Yoga”*
 - *“How Restorative Practices Work for Students and Educators”*
 - *“Middle School Student Brings Restorative Justice to Ignacio”*
 - *“Teen Court Rules”*
 - *“Getting Started with Restorative Practices”*

- b. Write a summary of each of the 5 articles.
- c. Your State School Board is considering mandating restorative discipline in schools. Utilize all of the information that you have learned in class as well as your own previous knowledge to speculate what the stance of each of the following people would be. This part of the assignment doesn't need to be written up or turned in.
- Willow Schulz: featured in the article *“Middle School Student Brings Restorative Justice to Ignacio.”*
 - U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona: representative from the Government Accountability Office
 - Jo Carrigan: Principal of Doull Elementary in Denver, Colorado and featured in the article titled *“Ditching Detention for Yoga.”*
 - Representative from your state's union association
- d. Write to the Board stating your recommendation on whether or not they should mandate restorative discipline in schools. Be sure to defend your position.

19. Introduction to the topic of Teacher Support

Read the article titled *“The Elephant in the Classroom.”* This article can be found in the online resources section of this class at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. When you finish the article discuss what you currently do to stay both physically and emotionally healthy.

20. Research

Research books, videos, articles, programs, etc. that match topics presented in this class. You can further explore an area that you have already learned about in this class or research one that has yet to be covered. Choose at least three resources that you would like to share with your colleagues and write a summary about each. Explain why you chose to share these particular resources.

21. Create Your Own Article

- a. Read the following four articles. These articles can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>.
- *“How Caring for Students in Distress Can Take a Steep Toll”*
 - *“Ways to Reclaim Your Joy in Teaching”*
 - *“Teachers Support Social-Emotional Learning, But Say Students in Distress Strain Their Skills”*
 - *“When Students are Traumatized, Teachers are too”*

- b. Based on everything that you learned from the above readings, write an article entitled Teachers Need Support Too. Your article should communicate the importance of teachers' well-being and ways to support them. Support your statements and opinions with facts presented either in the articles provided or in other research that you have conducted.

22. Fable

Books written for young children typically have the same basic purpose: to entertain while teaching a valuable life lesson and laying a foundation for future learning. While there is nothing wrong with a picture book meant only to show a toddler the difference between a square and a circle nor a fairy tale written mainly to enchant, stories with morals offer something extra special.

Fables have a long and rich history. Aesop is perhaps the best-known creator of many of the fables read and discussed today (e.g., The Tortoise and the Hare, The Goose With The Golden Egg). He developed a reputation for wise and great wit through the stories he used in discussion and negotiation. While he used his fables as cautionary tales to suggest wise ways of behaving, they came to be used in educational settings to encourage moral and ethical reasoning.

Write and illustrate an original fable to communicate the importance of creating a learning environment where everyone feels welcome, safe, and ready to learn. Since the characters in fables are typically animals, start by picking two animals to represent opposing qualities (compassionate classroom vs. authoritarian environment). This will help set up the conflict or problem within the fable. Next, decide on a problem that must be solved in order to showcase the moral. Finally, determine a solution to the problem and decide on an ending keeping in mind that at least one of the characters must learn the valuable lesson. If you completed your fable in a non-digital format, take pictures of it to turn in to your instructor.

23. The Compassionate School

For this assignment, pretend that you have been assigned the task of creating a new school. It can be a private, public, or charter school. Your school should be designed so that all students feel welcome, safe, and ready to learn. The environment should promote trusting relationships and social-emotional development. You'll need a name for your school as well as a plan for how to recruit the needed staff and families to form a strong school community. You are to create three different recruitment plans, one for each audience (i.e., teachers, administrators, and families). In your efforts to recruit the different groups, you must communicate how your school will prepare students based on the school's philosophy of being a welcoming and safe place for students to learn. Keep in mind that you may need to emphasize different things based on the audience. For each recruitment plan, you must create at least one advertisement to present with your plan. This could be a radio spot, a TV commercial, a brochure, a magazine/newspaper ad, or a job listing.

In addition to the recruitment plans, you are to create a presentation that includes all three of your target audiences at the same time. This presentation should outline how your school will accomplish its goals while following its philosophy. During this presentation, you should cite research that supports your goals and philosophy.

In order to make your presentations and recruitment plans convey the goals and philosophies of your school, be creative and think critically while utilizing the information that has been presented in this class.

Although this project will take a lot of work, it should be a fun experience. Just do the best you can with the limited time and materials you have at your disposal.

24. Appreciation, Apology, & Aha

- Watch the video called “Appreciations, Apologies, & Aha.” This video can be found in the online resources section of this course at <https://dominicancaselfguided.com/course/view.php?id=518>. You can also click on the following link to view the video. <https://youtu.be/qIel4r3uK9k>. Given your experience in this course, identify your own appreciation, apology, or aha moment.
- Describe how you might be able to implement this activity in your classroom and how it could support a compassionate classroom.

25. Compassionate Teacher Award

Pretend that you just won the student choice award for the most compassionate teacher of the year. Keeping in mind everything that you have learned in this course, write your acceptance speech for this award. The speech should focus on the importance of creating learning environments in which everyone feels welcome, safe, and ready to learn. Include your thoughts on what can be done within school districts and what parents can do to help promote and sustain compassion within the school system.

26. Self-Reflection

As part of this course, you created goals for what you wanted to accomplish. Write a one-page self-reflection paper covering not only your progress on the goals you set for yourself, but also your journey towards meeting them. As part of this reflection, write about something that represents what you have accomplished and explain how it represents your journey. It can be a book, a song, a poem, an article, etc. The only exception is that you cannot choose material presented or created during this class.

Course Assessment Rubric

Exemplary: A to A-	Acceptable: B+ to B-	Unacceptable Must be resubmitted
Reflective, thoughtful ideas relevant to the assignment are clearly stated	Presents some relevant ideas and connections to the assignment	Ideas are not clear or relevant
Very well organized	Generally well organized	Shows little or no organization
Responses relate numerous facts and specific details of the program materials	Some facts and specific details of the program materials are included	Few or no facts or specific details of the program materials are included
Free of spelling and/or grammatical errors	Writing contains a few spelling and/or grammatical errors	Numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors make the writing difficult to read

- You are allowed 9 months to complete the course.
- Course questions? Contact the developer by email. rpickett@dominicanaonline.com
- For questions involving your registration, please contact us at support@dominicanCAonline.com or call (800) 626-5080.
- To change your address, link to your Dominican account at https://www.dominicanaonlinestore.com/store/index.php?main_page=login

