My interest began when I was in middle school struggling mental health issues. I had a middle school mental health program, but not one that impacted my life significantly or taught me how to thrive as a happy and healthy human. After my recovery, I was interested in how middle school wellness programs can help educate and prevent mental health disorders while also teaching teenagers about healthy habits, phone use, relationships, goal setting, strengths and weaknesses, and other crucial life skills. Throughout my work, my goal is to assist in designing a comprehensive middle school mental health program that is engaging, exciting, and relatable for every type of adolescent.

My research
I started off by educating myself on social-emotional learning. I completed Dr. Marc Brackett’s online course, “Managing Emotions in Times of Stress,” where I learned the importance of RULER and how a healthy emotion education truly is the base of a comprehensive wellness education. I then researched other middle schools in Denver to gain a deeper understanding of what competing schools were implementing to help their students thrive. I also read multiple books, published studies, and attended a webinar.

Dr. Marc Brackett’s Mood Meter

The components of SEL

Example activity-gratitude jar

Looking ahead...
This summer, I have two internships I am honored to participate in. In one I will assist in a research lab of a well-known psychologist at DU and the other I will volunteer at a wonderful nonprofit called “Motherwise.” At Motherwise it is their goal to empower new mothers and guide them with all their needs. Lastly, I will be co-running a camp for autistic children through a private practice to help them form social connections. In the fall I am also looking forward to running a mental health club at St. Anne’s Episcopal School in Denver where I will help the middle schoolers began to have conversations over the importance of mental health. I am grateful for these opportunities, and I know they will all help me grow as a future-psychologist and leader of next year’s wellness programs.

Example lessons Middle school

Goals in lessons
- open discussions
- crafts and journal reflections
- activities with movement
- peer taught lessons

Sample lessons
- Link 1- Healthy habits
- Link 2- Technology

My website
https://annalee-selmiddleschool.weebly.com/

“11-17 percent test improvement after SEL programs are introduced”

The short-term goals of SEL programming are to promote students’ social-emotional skills and positive attitudes, which, in turn, should lead to improved adjustment and academic performance as reflected in more positive social behaviors, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and better grades and achievement test scores.”