



Scientific & Pedagogical Foundation

Early Ethical Leadership Method (EELMSM)

A comparative analysis with the Montessori Method and a grounding in the educational and human-development sciences

EVIDENCE STATUS

Informed by external evidence · Specific efficacy of EELMSM not yet established

Preliminary technical document for research, academic review, and pilot design

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Evidence status

This document adopts an explicitly conservative stance toward scientific claims. It distinguishes among evidence established in external literatures, EELMSM design decisions informed by that evidence, hypotheses specific to the method, and results that should not yet be asserted.

Level	What it means	Application in this document
A. External evidence	Relevant empirical or theoretical literature exists.	SEL, restorative practices, development, narrative, Montessori, fidelity, and measurement.
B. Informed design	EELM SM adopts a principle compatible with prior literature.	Progressive cases, structured autonomy, procedural facilitation, observation.
C. EELMSM hypothesis	The specific combination is plausible but still to be tested.	Role rotation, narrative distance, causal chain, transfer.
D. Not established	Must not be asserted as a result until own evidence is obtained.	Causal efficacy, effect sizes, superiority over other interventions, an exclusive “brain window.”

EVIDENCE PRINCIPLE — STATEMENT OF NON-EQUIVALENCE

EELMSM is not presented as a derivation of the Montessori Method, nor as an intervention whose efficacy can be inferred from evidence on SEL, restorative justice, neurodevelopment, or any other body of research. The specific EELMSM combination requires its own evaluation.

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1. Purpose and scope

The Early Ethical Leadership Method (EELMSM) is an educational proposal designed to give children and adolescents structured opportunities to practice competencies related to listening, perspective-taking, information analysis, deliberation, responsibility, conflict resolution, repair of harm, and shared leadership.

This document examines its foundations from an educational and scientific perspective, and analyzes its points of convergence and divergence with the Montessori Method.

The aim is not to present EELMSM as an intervention whose specific efficacy has already been demonstrated. Nor does it seek to infer its effectiveness merely because some of its components relate to consolidated bodies of research. A new intervention must be evaluated as a system in its own right.

Accordingly, this analysis distinguishes three levels: (1) principles supported by prior research, drawn from fields such as social-emotional learning, restorative justice, developmental psychology, learning through narrative, active learning, and educational assessment; (2) EELMSM design decisions that are theoretically plausible, such as the progressive use of fictional cases, role rotation, and low-intervention adult facilitation over the content of decisions; and (3) results EELMSM still has to demonstrate empirically, including efficacy, transfer to novel situations, stability of learning, how its rubrics function, and the conditions for safe and consistent implementation.

CRITERION — THE DOCUMENT'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL RULE

The existence of favorable evidence for a component does not demonstrate the efficacy of the EELMSM combination. Any causal claim about EELMSM must rest on studies that directly evaluate the method.

2. The pedagogical nature of EELM

EELMSM may be provisionally defined as a structured architecture for experiential socio-ethical learning.

Its goal is not to transmit to students a catalog of morally correct answers. It seeks to create conditions in which they must practice processes of reasoning and action: listening to different accounts, distinguishing information from inference, weighing consequences, representing different interests, forming agreements, justifying decisions, and examining possibilities for repair.

In educational terms, this partly shifts the center of the activity from the adult's verbal instruction toward the student's own action.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE

Certain social, ethical, and leadership competencies not only need to be explained; they need repeated, structured, and progressive opportunities to be exercised.

EELMSM proposes to create those opportunities through controlled narrative scenarios, differentiated roles, peer deliberation, procedural rules, and adult supervision. This configuration is

compatible with general principles of active and situated learning, but its specific combination is a proposal of its own that requires independent evaluation.

3. First foundation: social-emotional learning

A significant portion of the capacities EELMSM seeks to exercise coincides conceptually with competencies recognized by the field of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). CASEL organizes this field into five interrelated areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020).

Within that framework are capacities such as taking perspectives, showing empathy, listening, cooperating, solving problems jointly, and considering personal and collective consequences. The conceptual correspondence with EELMSM is relevant, but it does not turn EELMSM into a validated SEL program.

The meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011), which integrated 213 universal programs and 270,034 K-12 students, found average improvements in social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance. The study also showed that implementation moderated outcomes. Taylor et al. (2017), reviewing 82 interventions with 97,406 students and follow-up outcomes, found later benefits across several social-emotional and well-being measures.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE — PERMITTED INTERPRETATION

The SEL literature supports the claim that the intentional development of social-emotional competencies in schools has empirical backing. It does not permit attributing those effects to the particular architecture of EELMSM before it is evaluated.

4. Second foundation: restorative justice and responsibility

Restorative justice is another central antecedent. From a restorative perspective, the response to harmful conduct is not limited to determining which rule was broken and what sanction applies. It introduces additional questions about harm, needs, obligations, and repair (Zehr, 2002): who was affected? what harm occurred? what needs arose? what responsibilities exist? what actions can help repair the harm? and how can compliance with what was agreed be verified?

This perspective does not necessarily eliminate consequences: it changes their purpose. Restorative responsibility may require understanding the consequences of one's own conduct, listening to those who were affected, taking on concrete obligations, and later demonstrating that they were fulfilled.

School research offers results important enough to justify studying restorative practices, though not a uniform conclusion. A randomized trial in Pittsburgh found improvements in teacher-reported school climate and reductions in suspensions, but did not improve overall academic outcomes and showed unfavorable academic results in grades 6-8 during the period studied; it also did not reduce arrests (Augustine et al., 2018). Large-scale observational studies have likewise found favorable associations between exposure to restorative practices and various disciplinary, academic, and school-climate outcomes (Anyon et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Gregory et al., 2016).

FRAMEWORK OF RESPONSIBILITY

EELMSM uses the logic of harm → needs → obligations → repair → follow-up as a conceptual antecedent. Restorative justice must not be used as a substitute for safety, mandatory-reporting, or due-process procedures.

5. Development during middle childhood and early adolescence

The approximate 8-to-14 age range used by EELMSM must be justified with particular precision. There is not sufficient evidence to claim that a single, bounded “prefrontal window,” or a specific “plasticity peak,” exists between ages 8 and 14 that would make EELMSM neurobiologically optimal during those years.

The evidence does support a more prudent claim: middle childhood and adolescence are periods of significant change in executive functions, social cognition, self-regulation, reasoning, interpersonal sensitivity, independence, and decision-making. Adolescence has been described as a period of growth, learning, adaptation, and neurobiological reorganization with meaningful opportunities for education (Dahl et al., 2018). The networks that support higher-order cognition continue to be refined during adolescence, though the mechanisms and limits of possible sensitive periods remain under investigation (Larsen & Luna, 2018).

SCIENTIFIC CORRECTION — RECOMMENDED FORMULATION

The 8–14 range is a reasonable pedagogical decision based on developmental characteristics, not a demonstrated neurobiological boundary nor an exclusive window of efficacy.

This distinction has methodological consequences. An 8-year-old and a 14-year-old should not be assumed equivalent in verbal reasoning, emotional regulation, moral abstraction, social sensitivity, or planning capacity. The pilot should therefore examine whether the cases, performance expectations, and rubrics require differentiation by age or developmental stage.

6. The Montessori Method as a comparative antecedent

Montessori and EELMSM are not equivalent methods. Montessori is an integral educational system spanning multiple developmental stages and curricular areas. EELMSM is a more focused intervention, oriented toward the exercise of socio-ethical, restorative, and leadership competencies.

It is not scientifically appropriate to present EELMSM as a derivation of Montessori. There are, however, relevant conceptual convergences that allow Montessori to be used as a comparative antecedent, not as causal evidence for EELMSM.

6.1. The prepared environment

The Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) describes the Montessori environment as a carefully prepared setting for child-centered learning: accessible materials, choice of activity, logical limits, and the observation of a trained adult; activities are introduced through presentations and followed by self-directed work, whether individual, collaborative, or among peers (AMI, n.d.-a).

This principle offers a useful parallel with EELMSM. In Montessori, what is primarily prepared is an educational environment. In EELMSM one can speak of a prepared procedure: a previously designed scenario, known rules, differentiated roles, safety limits, organized opportunities for participation, closing criteria, and follow-up procedures.

CONVERGENCE OF PRINCIPLE

Autonomy does not mean the absence of structure. In both approaches, the student's activity takes place within intentionally prepared conditions.

6.2. Activity and autonomy

Montessori placed special value on learning through one's own activity and on progressive independence. EELMSM shares that general principle but applies it in a different field. The student does not merely receive an explanation about listening, justice, responsibility, or leadership: they must act within a situation that demands those capacities.

SYNTHETIC COMPARISON

Montessori: learning through autonomous activity within a prepared environment. EELMSM: practicing socio-ethical reasoning and responsibility through autonomous participation within a prepared procedure.

The similarity lies in the design principle, not in the specific technique.

7. Montessori, moral development, and ages 6-12

The comparison is especially interesting during Montessori's second plane of development. AMI characterizes children aged 6-12 by their growing capacity for abstraction and imagination, their moral and social orientation, their reasoning, and their energy for inquiry and exploration (AMI, n.d.-b).

This historical antecedent shows a conceptual convergence with some of EELMSM's aims: forming judgments, understanding reasons, working with others, taking on responsibilities, and reflecting on moral and social questions. It does not mean that Montessori theory has been confirmed in full by contemporary psychology, nor that it can be used as proof of EELMSM.

Montessori distinguishes roughly the 6-12 period from the adolescent 12-18 period (AMI, n.d.-c). EELMSM, spanning 8-14, partly crosses both. This reinforces the need to study empirically the differences between younger students and early adolescents rather than assuming they constitute a homogeneous population.

8. Imagination, fiction, and EELM cases

The use of fictional cases is one of the potentially most relevant components of EELMSM. Its function should not be limited to initially avoiding the exposure of personal conflicts. Fictional cases can be conceptualized as protected social laboratories for ethical reasoning.

They make it possible to create conflicts realistic enough to generate emotional, social, and moral analysis, yet distant enough from the student's immediate experience to reduce interpersonal pressure and allow rehearsal.

Gasser, Dammert, and Murphy (2022) identify several mechanisms through which narrative can support socio-moral learning, including meaning-making, the simulation of social worlds, and dialogic or argumentative inquiry. These mechanisms are relevant to EELMSM because its cases can place participants before incompatible accounts, incomplete information, human consequences, and decisions that need to be justified.

EELMSM HYPOTHESIS — THE NARRATIVE-DISTANCE HYPOTHESIS

Narrative distance may provide enough involvement to elicit interpersonal reasoning and enough separation to reduce some threats associated with working directly with personal conflicts.

9. EELM fiction and Montessori: a more nuanced relationship

Montessori is sometimes simplified as an approach opposed to imagination. That reading is incomplete. AMI distinguishes between imagination grounded in knowledge and experience and fantasy detached from reality, and considers imagination an especially relevant characteristic of the second plane, roughly between ages 6 and 12 (AMI, n.d.-d).

EELMSM cases can be compatible with that principle when they present socially plausible, internally coherent situations, related to understandable experiences, and intended to investigate human consequences rather than merely to entertain.

THE CORRECT RELATIONSHIP

Montessori recognizes reality-based imagination as an instrument of the older child; EELMSM uses plausible fictional scenarios to reason about social situations without necessarily beginning with a real personal controversy.

10. The adult's role: from “Silent Ally” to structured facilitation

The concept of the Silent Ally requires a technically precise definition. “Minimal adult intervention” can be misread as the absence of instruction, supervision, or scaffolding. The literature on instructional guidance warns against equating active learning with fully unassisted discovery (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006).

EELMSM should distinguish between two types of intervention. **Content intervention** (the adult determines which conclusion is correct, decides who should “win,” indicates which student is right, or imposes the substantive agreement) should remain limited if the purpose is to develop authentic deliberation. **Process intervention** (ensuring safety and time limits, protecting participation and accessibility, enforcing rules and safeguards, interrupting situations that exceed the method's scope, and preserving the conditions that allow autonomous reasoning) must remain high.

RECOMMENDED DEFINITION — THE SILENT ALLY'S OPERATING MODEL

Low adult intervention over the content of the decision + high fidelity in protecting the process + immediate intervention when a safety issue appears.

The Silent Ally is not an absent adult. They are a prepared adult who deliberately avoids taking over the reasoning that belongs to the students. This formulation partly converges with the Montessori concept of the prepared adult, without making the two roles equivalent (AMI, n.d.-e).

11. Role rotation as an EELM-specific mechanism

Role rotation should not be attributed to Montessori. It is a feature of EELMSM's own architecture, and its pedagogical interest lies in the distribution of practice opportunities.

In children's groups, informal specializations can arise quickly: the one who speaks best repeatedly becomes the leader; the one who writes best keeps the record; the one with higher social status dominates decisions; and the one perceived as shy avoids visible roles. Systematic rotation can counter this crystallization by requiring each participant to experience different positions.

EELMSM HYPOTHESIS — THE ROTATION HYPOTHESIS

Systematic role rotation may distribute participation opportunities and broaden students' behavioral repertoire by preventing a single group identity from continually determining who leads, questions, listens, records, or facilitates.

The pilot can evaluate this hypothesis through the distribution of speaking time, participation per student, performance across different roles, longitudinal changes in confidence, and the persistence or reduction of initial inequalities.

12. EELM as progressive practice

The EELMSM structure incorporates repetition and a gradual increase in complexity. This makes it reasonable to speak of structured, progressive practice. The technical term “deliberate practice” should be used with caution, because that literature typically requires specific conditions of goal, execution, feedback, correction, and renewed practice.

EELMSM can approximate a stronger learning cycle if it explicitly incorporates: (1) a target competency, (2) an observable opportunity to perform, (3) structured recording, (4) appropriate feedback, (5) reflection, (6) a renewed opportunity to perform, and (7) longitudinal comparison.

The method's future development should clarify exactly when, how, and by whom feedback is provided. This will matter if changes are to be attributed to practice and not merely to repeated

exposure.

13. A proposed EELM causal mechanism

The scientific model of EELMSM should not be presented as a sum of Montessori + SEL + restorative justice + neuroscience. That formulation would be conceptually weak. A more coherent proposal is to conceive EELMSM as its own architecture whose hypothesized mechanism can be represented as follows:

Safe fictional case → taking on a role → exposure to different perspectives → analysis of information → peer deliberation → consideration of consequences → shared decision → responsibility / repair / reflection → later repetition from another role

External research supports different elements of this chain. What we do not yet know is whether the chain works in EELMSM, which components are indispensable, what dose is required, which ages it works best for, which students benefit, under what conditions, and whether the practiced capacities transfer beyond the EELMSM scenario.

14. What Montessori contributes and what it does not contribute to EELM

The relationship can be summarized through parallels of principle that do not imply methodological equivalence:

Montessori	EELM SM
Prepared environment	Prepared procedure
Prepared adult	Prepared Silent Ally / facilitator
Freedom within limits	Deliberation within rules
Student activity	Student responsibility for the process
Progressive independence	Progressive agency
Individual and collaborative work	Primarily social deliberation
Structured materials	Structured cases and protocols
Adult observation	Observation and rubrics
Whole-child development	Specific socio-ethical competencies
A complete pedagogical system	A focused intervention

The comparison makes it possible to identify pedagogical kinship without confusing the two systems. EELMSM does not need to claim to be Montessori in order to benefit intellectually from some of its principles.

15. Current state of the Montessori evidence

Montessori has a level of evidence incomparably higher than can currently be attributed to EELMSM. A Campbell systematic review published by Randolph et al. (2023) included 32 studies, 204 effect sizes, and more than 132,000 data points. The aggregate results favored Montessori across various academic and non-academic outcomes, although there was substantial heterogeneity across studies and contexts.

The review estimated roughly $g = 0.24$ for the academic aggregate and $g = 0.33$ for the non-academic aggregate. These results allow Montessori to be considered a pedagogy with accumulated empirical evidence. They do not allow the claim that each individual Montessori principle has been validated in isolation, nor that Montessori is uniformly superior in any context.

ASYMMETRY OF SCIENTIFIC MATURITY

Montessori has more than a century of development and an accumulated comparative literature. EELMSM is at an early stage of construction and validation. That difference describes its current state; it is not, on its own, a judgment about its potential.

16. Limits of neuroscientific reasoning

EELMSM should adopt an especially conservative policy regarding the use of neuroscience. The fact that a psychological function depends on developing brain networks does not demonstrate that a specific intervention improves those networks. Nor should educational efficacy be inferred directly from neuroimaging.

Adolescence is a relevant period of neural reorganization, social learning, and adaptation, and developmental science provides strong arguments for investing educationally in this stage (Dahl et al., 2018). But neuroscience should provide context, not become a promotional tool.

PERMITTED CLAIM

EELMSM operates during a period of significant development of cognitive and social capacities.

CLAIMS THAT MUST BE AVOIDED

“EELMSM harnesses a demonstrated brain peak between ages 8 and 14” or “EELMSM develops the prefrontal cortex.” Such claims would require specific evidence that does not currently exist.

17. Safety, limits, and ethics

An intervention that uses restorative concepts with minors needs clear limits. Not all conflicts are suitable for student deliberation. Serious threats, abuse, suspected neglect, serious discrimination, harassment or sexual conduct, risk of self-harm, safety situations, and other matters that trigger legal or professional obligations must pass immediately to the appropriate procedures.

EELMSM must not replace safeguarding, mandatory reporting, administrative investigation, Title IX procedures where applicable, required disciplinary procedures, mental-health services, or

due-process guarantees. Restorative practices may, in certain contexts and where appropriate, complement other systems; they must not be used to bypass them.

Likewise, a person who has been harmed must never be compelled to forgive, reconcile, confront another person, take part in a circle, or accept a restorative agreement. Voluntariness and protection from coercion are components of the integrity of the process.

18. Fidelity of implementation

An educational intervention cannot be adequately evaluated if we do not know which intervention each group actually received. The literature on school implementation identifies fidelity as fundamental to interpreting results, including dimensions such as adherence, quality, exposure or dose, and responsiveness (O'Donnell, 2008).

Before conducting efficacy studies, EELMSM needs a sufficiently stable operational version. It must specify at least: the number and sequence of sessions; approximate duration; the order and difficulty of cases; the definition of each role; the method of assignment or rotation; the rules of deliberation; the limits of Silent Ally intervention; interruption criteria; the safety protocol; the observation system; the timing of feedback; follow-up procedures; and the training required of the facilitator.

PREREQUISITE BEFORE THE STUDY

A frozen pilot protocol must exist, accompanied by a separate log to document incidents and future modifications. Otherwise it will be impossible to know precisely which intervention produced the results.

19. Rubrics and measurement

EELMSM rubrics can become an important research tool if used with psychometric discipline. A 1–4 score is not, in itself, a valid measurement. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing are a central reference on questions of validity, score interpretation, and fairness (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014).

Among other things, the following must be examined: **inter-rater reliability** (two independent observers should reach reasonable levels of agreement when observing the same behavior); **validity evidence** (whether a rubric labeled, for instance, “perspective-taking” actually measures that and not primarily verbal fluency, extroversion, obedience, or academic ability); **sensitivity to change; developmental appropriateness** (a competent manifestation at age 8 may differ from one at 14); and **fairness** (whether language, disability, communication style, culture, or temperament produce systematic biases).

RECOMMENDED TERMINOLOGY

Until adequate evidence exists, EELMSM rubrics should be described as observation instruments in the process of validation, not as scientifically validated scales.

20. What a first pilot should measure

An initial study should not attempt to demonstrate immediately that EELMSM “transforms leadership” or globally changes school climate. The first questions should be more specific and closer to the intervention, across five fronts:

- **Feasibility:** can it be implemented as planned? can schools complete the sessions? do students understand the rules? is the planned time realistic? are there significant dropout rates?
- **Acceptability:** do students find the procedure understandable and respectful? can facilitators implement it? do schools identify operational problems?
- **Fidelity:** are roles actually rotated? is student autonomy maintained? do Silent Allies intervene as protocol requires? are safeguards met?
- **Measurement:** do the rubrics produce enough variability? is there agreement among observers? do age effects appear? are there evident biases?
- **Preliminary signals of change:** listening, perspective-taking, information-based argumentation, identifying consequences, collaboration, distributed participation, forming agreements, and considering repair.

Only after demonstrating sufficiently solid feasibility, fidelity, and measurement would it make sense to move toward stronger efficacy studies.

21. Transfer: the most demanding test

A student may learn to perform well within KidzKourtRoomSM without necessarily transferring that learning to other contexts. This is one of the fundamental scientific questions.

DESIRABLE SEQUENCE

Learns the procedure → improves within the cases → maintains the skill on new cases → uses the skill outside the EELMSM format → maintains it over time.

It is useful to distinguish **proximal learning** (direct improvement on the practiced tasks), **generalization** (use of what was learned in new fictional situations), **transfer** (use of competencies in different contexts), and **persistence** (later maintenance). Success at the first level does not automatically demonstrate the later ones; each level must be measured separately.

22. Potential strengths of EELM

From a theoretical analysis, EELMSM presents several promising design features: it initially reduces interpersonal risk by using fictional situations; it turns abstract concepts into observable activity; it distributes opportunities through role rotation; it places students before potentially incompatible perspectives; it requires justifying decisions rather than merely offering opinions; it integrates responsibility and repair rather than limiting itself to identifying blame; it preserves an adult safety function without handing the substantive decision to the adult; it allows repeated observation through comparable tasks; it can generate longitudinal performance data if the rubrics are properly developed; and it makes it possible to separate a protected educational phase from any later application to real contexts.

INTERPRETIVE CAUTION

These are potential strengths of architecture and evaluability. They must not be confused with already demonstrated effects.

23. Vulnerabilities and risks

- **Scientific over-interpretation:** presenting EELMSM as scientifically proven before having its own data.
- **Neuro-scientism:** using brain references to produce apparent authority without direct evidence.
- **Facilitator dependence:** an overly controlling Silent Ally can eliminate autonomy; an overly passive one can allow poor or unsafe processes.
- **Language and status biases:** verbally strong students may appear more competent even without better reasoning.
- **Pseudo-participation:** the procedure may appear to show student leadership while adults implicitly determine the outcome.
- **Confusion between simulation and transfer:** better performance on fictional cases does not automatically demonstrate better everyday behavior.
- **Loss of fidelity at scale:** simplifying the method may remove relevant components.
- **Inappropriate use with serious conflicts:** prematurely expanding EELMSM toward situations that require professional intervention would create ethical and legal risks.

These vulnerabilities should be incorporated into the research and implementation design, not concealed.

24. Final relationship between Montessori and EELM

Montessori and EELMSM can be considered compatible in certain principles, but not interchangeable. Montessori provides an integral pedagogy; EELMSM proposes a structured environment for practicing a narrower set of socio-ethical capacities. They share five principles: autonomy within limits; the prepared adult (reducing direct control demands more preparation, not less); an intentional environment or procedure; learning through activity; and progressive development.

The divergence is that EELMSM introduces restorative deliberation, narrative scenarios, rotating functional roles, analysis of responsibility, and the explicit construction of repair. Those components belong to its own architecture.

25. Recommended scientific position for EELM

The institutional position of KidzKourtRoomSM should be stated clearly: EELMSM is not currently presented as a method whose efficacy has been established through its own controlled trials.

INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENT — RECOMMENDED SCIENTIFIC POSITION

EELMSM is an original, evidence-informed educational method designed to provide progressive, structured practice in competencies related to listening, analysis, perspective-taking, deliberation, shared responsibility, repair, and leadership. Its mechanisms have reasonable theoretical foundations, but the efficacy of its specific combination must be subjected to independent evaluation.

Its foundations relate to prior literature on social-emotional learning, restorative justice, child and adolescent development, active learning, narrative learning, guided autonomy, formative assessment, and fidelity of implementation. But its specific combination must be evaluated as an intervention in its own right.

26. Central scientific hypotheses of EELM

HYPOTHESIS 1 — SOCIO-ETHICAL PRACTICE

Repeated participation in structured scenarios may improve certain observable competencies of socio-ethical deliberation.

HYPOTHESIS 2 — NARRATIVE DISTANCE

Fictional cases may provide enough involvement to elicit interpersonal reasoning and enough distance to reduce the threats associated with real conflicts.

HYPOTHESIS 3 — FUNCTIONAL ROTATION

Role rotation may distribute leadership opportunities and broaden participants' behavioral repertoire.

HYPOTHESIS 4 — CONSTRAINED FACILITATION

Strong adult intervention over process and safety, but limited over the content of decisions, may preserve student agency without abandoning scaffolding.

HYPOTHESIS 5 — PROGRESSION

Exposure to gradually more complex cases may make it possible to observe the development of performance.

HYPOTHESIS 6 — TRANSFER

The practiced competencies may, under certain conditions, generalize to new problems and eventually to other school contexts.

None of these hypotheses should yet be presented as a result. Precisely because they are falsifiable, they provide an appropriate basis for research.

27. Conclusion

From the perspective of the educational and behavioral sciences, EELMSM presents a coherent and sufficiently plausible pedagogical architecture to justify systematic evaluation.

Its interest does not depend on demonstrating that it reproduces Montessori, nor on attributing to it neurobiological effects not yet established. Its originality lies in the organized integration of protected narrative, rotating roles, peer deliberation, restorative responsibility, procedural adult facilitation, and progressive observation.

External evidence provides reasons to consider several of these mechanisms plausible, but it does not yet demonstrate the efficacy of their combination. Montessori offers a relevant pedagogical antecedent; SEL provides a contemporary framework for describing some competencies; restorative justice contributes a model of responsibility centered on harm, needs, obligations, and repair; developmental psychology makes it possible to adapt expectations by age without positing an exclusive brain window; research on narrative grounds the use of fictional scenarios; implementation science recalls that no result can be interpreted without knowing fidelity; and psychometrics requires demonstrating that measurement tools produce reliable, valid, and fair interpretations.

SYNTHESIS — EVIDENCE-POSTURE CONCLUSION

EELMSM is an original, evidence-informed educational intervention designed to be evaluable. Its mechanisms have reasonable theoretical foundations, but its specific efficacy, its implementation conditions, the validity of its instruments, and the extent of any transfer must be established through independent and progressive empirical research.

This position does not diminish the method's potential value. It places it exactly where a serious educational innovation should be before its validation: with an explicit theory, identifiable mechanisms, acknowledged limits, falsifiable hypotheses, and a willingness to let the data determine what works, for whom, under what conditions, and to what magnitude.

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Their citation implies no affiliation, endorsement, or review by their authors or institutions.
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FINAL EVIDENCE-POSTURE NOTE

References to SEL, Montessori, restorative justice, development, narrative, learning, and measurement describe relevant scientific antecedents. They must not be cited as causal evidence for the efficacy of EELMSM. Any future claim of specific efficacy for the Early Ethical Leadership Method must rest on data produced through studies that directly evaluate the method, its instruments, its implementation, and its outcomes.