

2018-19 Evaluation of the Social and Emotional Learning Initiative

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At-a-Glance

The goal of the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative is to “foster collaborative communities that promote social and emotional development through in-school and out-of-school programs.” The initiative includes two components: 1) support and train counselors for working with students in classrooms and individually and 2) provide campus staff members with SEL training and implementation support. The 2018-19 budget for the SEL initiative was \$3,744,874, an increase from \$3,585,744 in 2017-18 (Weir, 2018).

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

This report summarized the context, process, and outcome data for the 2018-19 SEL initiative. Context data included information about services provided to campus staff members and students collected from SEL initiative central staff members. Process data included data collected using an implementation rubric completed by campus coordinators with principals. Outcome data included comparisons of campuses that were and were not supported by the SEL initiative on various student and staff member outcomes. The evaluator used frequency analyses to summarize and compare outcomes.

What was context of the 2018-19 SEL initiative?

Student Engagement and Counseling Services Department (SECSO)

To support a larger group of campuses with SEL, the Student Engagement and Counseling departments merged in October 2017 to form the SECSO. The new department aimed to provide campus staff members with a new, cohesive SEL model and began training teachers and providing SEL implementation resources.

Counseling Services

Counselors provided four main services to students: 1) responsive services to assist with individual student needs, 2) course schedule and post-secondary planning, 3) systems support

documenting provided services and assisting with 504 planning, and 4) age-appropriate guidance lessons.

SEL in the Dallas ISD

In the Dallas ISD, the SEL initiative focused on building “the skills, knowledge and attitudes students and adults need to be successful in school, work, and life.”¹ In 2017-18, district SEL staff members began initiative implementation by training campus staff members to understand SEL, practice SEL, and model appropriate behaviors for their students. In 2018-19, campus-staff-member SEL training continued with a new focus on introducing SEL concepts to students. Campuses were classified into one of six SEL-related groups.² Some components were shared among groups, but each group also implemented unique components. Some campuses were not formally involved in the SEL initiative.

Common SEL Components

Six components of the SEL initiative occurred across all campuses implementing SEL. First, campus steering committees fostered SEL by leading and supporting campus-level SEL implementation. Second, campus champions served as steering committee members and SEL experts, provided feedback, and served as a bridge between campuses and central staff members. Third, district SEL coordinators served as a link between campuses and the SECSO. Coordinators received SEL training, helped train campus staff members, and provided other campus-specific supports.³ Fourth, in 2018-19, all campuses implementing SEL ideally designated times in the schedule and methods of instruction for teaching SEL. Explicit SEL instruction was required for 10 minutes each day or for 45 minutes each week. In 2018-19, most elementary campuses implementing SEL used the Sanford Harmony⁴ curriculum to teach SEL. At the secondary level, teachers used community meetings with discussion questions to teach SEL. Fifth, in addition to explicit SEL instruction, SEL also was embedded into the social studies and reading and language arts curricula for 2018-19 in consultation with

¹ Documentation provided by the SEL program manager on September 20, 2018.

² Groups included 1) Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI) Study campuses, 2) PSELI Comparison campuses, 3) SEL Partnership/Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) Study campuses, 4) SEL Partnership/BARR Comparison campuses, 5) SEL Partnership campuses, and 6) Non-Partnership campuses.

³ Staff members (both campus and central) could also attend various district-level trainings related to SEL including training on building positive classroom systems, culturally responsive teaching, student engagement, and avoiding power struggles (secondary school teachers only).

⁴ <https://www.sanfordharmony.org/>.

the Teaching and Learning department.⁵ Sixth, each campus in the district that used SEL operated on SEL guiding principles (e.g., environment enhances the learning experience). Each principle included signature practices to serve as possible action items (e.g., calming areas, morning greetings).

PSELI Study and Comparison Campuses

In 2017-18, the Dallas ISD began participating in the PSELI study (funded by the Wallace Foundation). The study was designed to examine the impact of consistent SEL implementation during in- and out-of-school time (OST). Seven PSELI Study and seven PSELI Comparison campuses participated in the two-phase study. Across phases, each campus worked with an OST partner provided by Big Thought to provide OST programing.⁶ In phase I, the study campuses received SEL support while the comparison campuses did not. When phase II begins in 2020-21, the comparison campuses will receive SEL implementation support. In addition, PSELI Study campuses also were provided with a full-time OST coordinator by Big Thought. OST coordinators ran the OST programs after school and worked on campuses during the day.

While PSELI Comparison campuses were asked not to engage in campuswide or OST SEL practices until phase II, some students may have received exposure to SEL from individual staff members. For compensation, each comparison campus received \$5,000 per year. Use of this money was not restricted, except that it could not be used for anything related to SEL. When PSELI Comparison campuses implement SEL in 2020-21, they will receive \$50,000 to support initial costs.⁷

SEL Partnership/BARR Study and SEL Partnership/BARR Comparison Campuses

SEL Partnership/BARR (BARR Study) campuses used the BARR curriculum, an SEL curriculum designed to assist with the transition to high school.⁸ Bryan Adams and W.T. White high schools served as BARR Study campuses. In 2018-19, Bryan Adams was in its third and final year of participation in the BARR program. However, the campus could continue implementing the model without support, if desired. W.T. White began implementing its three-year BARR grant during 2018-19. W.H. Adamson and H. Grady Spruce high

schools served as BARR Comparison campuses in 2018-19 and will begin implementing BARR in 2019-20. As of October 2018, Adamson was participating in the SEL initiative (but not BARR) and Spruce was not.

SEL Partnership Campuses (SEL Partners)

SEL Partners campuses were district-supported SEL campuses not participating in the PSELI or BARR studies. These campuses received all the common SEL components outlined previously. SEL Partners included 114 campuses (77 elementary schools, 1 combined elementary/middle school, 25 middle schools, and 11 high schools).

Non-Partner Campuses (Non-Partners)

In 2018-19, 101 campuses (60 elementary schools, 3 combined elementary/middle schools, 11 middle schools, 5 combined middle/high schools, and 22 high schools) did not formally participate in SEL in the Dallas ISD. These campuses may have had some exposure to SEL, but not as part of the districtwide initiative.

How were the SEL initiative components implemented in 2018-19?

A rubric was developed by Evaluation and Assessment and SEL central staff members to measure SEL implementation by campus. The mean score was 65.0 out of a possible 105 points (standard deviation = 15.9; range: 25.0 to 99.0). The rubric was highly reliable (21 items; $\alpha = .88$).⁹ Implementation tended to be rated higher at PSELI and BARR Study sites compared to SEL Partners, which received a wider range of scores.

How did 2018-19 student outcome data vary by SEL implementation group?¹⁰

In general, results provided some evidence of an advantage for SEL programs when compared to comparison groups, but the advantages were mostly for the small, more structured PSELI and BARR programs.

PSELI. PSELI Study campuses outperformed PSELI Comparison campuses on almost half of the measured outcomes in 2018-19 (Table 1) and on STAAR (range: 3 percentage points higher, mathematics Meets+ to 19 percentage points higher, science Approaches+ and Meets+).¹¹ Examining change over time also indicated some support for PSELI Study

⁵ SEL instruction within the mathematics and science curricula was planned for 2019-20.

⁶ Student attendance at after-school programing was not mandatory.

⁷ No money was provided to PSELI study campuses; those campuses were compensated by the additional SEL supports they received.

⁸ www.barrcenter.org.

⁹ Cronbach, 1951. Only campuses implementing SEL were included in analyses.

¹⁰ Readers should not attribute causation based upon the results presented. All results are descriptive and have not been experimentally examined. Additionally, the number of campuses within groups widely varies; thus, readers should use caution when comparing among groupings.

¹¹ Approaches+ = Approaches Grade Level or Above. Meets+ = Meets Grade Level or Above. STAAR data files dated September 06, 2018 (2017-18) and June 13, 2019 (2018-19). PEIMS demographic data files dated October 30, 2017 (2017-18) and October 26, 2018 (2018-19).

campuses (Table 1). Additionally, with some exceptions, students at PSEL Study campuses demonstrated greater one-year rate increases than PSEL Comparison campuses on STAAR at the Approaches+ and Meets+ levels.

BARR. BARR Study campuses outperformed BARR Comparison campuses on half of the metrics measured in 2018-19 (Table 1) and STAAR EOC outcomes (range: 1 percentage point higher, US History Approaches+ to 18 percentage points higher, Biology Meets+).¹² Changes over time also indicated some support for BARR Study campuses (Table 1). Additionally, one-year STAAR EOC Meets+ rates increased more for BARR Study students than for BARR Comparison students.¹³

Table 1: 2018-19 Student NonSTAAR Outcomes by SEL Implementation Group

Outcome	2018-19		1 Year Change	
	Study	Comp	Study	Comp
PSELI				
Discipline (Ref)	18.9	30.1	+1.0	+21.0
Bullying (Ref)	4.0	3.3	+2.0	+1.8
CD (Ref)	4.3	7.0	-1.0	+6.0
Attend (% pts)	96.5	96.0	+0.4	-0.4
Reenroll (% pts)	86.5	85.6	-	-
TN Math (% pts)	52.7	51.6	-0.2	-0.6
TN Read (% pts)	56.2	62.6	-0.6	-3.3
SUPERA (% pts)	79.2	78.7	-2.2	+0.9
Stu Exp (% pts)	86.9	81.3	+2.6	-0.3
BARR				
Bullying (Ref)	2.5	1.0	-1.5	-2.0
Attend (% pts)	94.1	92.2	-0.7	-1.3
Reenroll (% pts)	83.3	86.9	-	-
Stu Exp (% pts)	75.5	69.0	+0.7	-1.1

Source: Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data: October 30, 2017 (2017-18), October 26, 2018 (2018-19). Discipline data: July 19, 2018 (2017-18), July 18, 2019 (2018-19). Attendance data: June 11, 2018 (2017-18), June 04, 2019 (2018-19). TerraNova data: August 07, 2018 (2017-18), July 02, 2019 (2018-19). SUPERA data: June 14, 2019 (2017-18), July 02, 2019 (2018-19). Student Experience Survey data: July 16, 2019 (2017-18), June 19, 2019 (2018-19).

Note: PSELI = Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning. Comp = Comparison. Ref = referrals. CD = classroom disruption. Attend = attendance. Reenroll = reenrollment year over year. TN = TerraNova. Read = reading. % pts = percentage points. Stu Exp = Student Experience Survey overall. BARR = Building Assets, Reducing Risks. - = no prior measure was available for change calculations. **Blue bold** = more favorable for SEL campuses.

SEL Partners. Comparisons yielded little evidence of an advantage for SEL Partner over Non-Partner campuses in 2018-19 (Table 2). On STAAR and STAAR EOCs, SEL Partner campus rates of attainment of performance standards were lower or comparable to those for Non-Partner campuses. Even so, SEL Partner

campuses did outperform Non-Partners over time on some outcomes (Table 2). Additionally, with some exceptions, elementary and middle school students at SEL Partner campuses demonstrated greater one-year rate increases than Non-Partner campuses at both the Approaches+ and Meets+ standards on STAAR.¹⁴

Table 2: 2018-19 SEL Partner and Non-Partner Student NonSTAAR Outcomes by Campus Level

Outcome	2018-19		1 Year Change	
	SEL Partner	Non-Partner	SEL Partner	Non-Partner
Elementary Schools				
Discipline (Ref)	21.8	9.0	-7.8	-1.0
CD (Ref)	6.7	1.9	-1.0	-0.7
Attend (% pts)	96.2	96.3	+0.2	+0.2
Reenroll (% pts)	83.2	84.6	-	-
TN Math (% pts)	59.3	63.4	+2.0	-0.4
TN Read (% pts)	67.5	71.5	+0.8	-0.8
SUPERA (% pts)	82.4	81.9	-1.6	-3.7
Stu Exp (% pts)	85.9	86.5	+1.8	+1.1
Middle Schools				
Discipline	280.6	150.0	-41.4	-42.4
CD (% pts)	55.6	45.6	-26.8	-7.8
Attend (% pts)	95.5	96.3	0.3	0.2
Reenroll (% pts)	86.5	89.5	-	-
Stu Exp (% pts)	68.1	73.1	-0.2	+0.8
High Schools				
Discipline (Ref)	182.6	104.8	-25.7	+13.6
CD (Ref)	24.1	26.1	-0.3	-5.6
Attend (% pts)	92.3	93.3	-0.8	-0.7
Reenroll (% pts)	85.8	85.8	-	-
Stu Exp (% pts)	69.6	73.4	-0.5	+0.9

Source: See sources in Table 1.

Note: SEL = social and emotional learning. Ref = referrals. CD = classroom disruption. Attend = attendance. Reenroll = reenrollment year over year. TN = TerraNova. Read = reading. Stu Exp = Student Experience Survey overall. % pts = percentage points. - = no prior measure was available for change calculations. **Blue bold** = more favorable for SEL campuses. No notable findings were found related to bullying on SEL Partner campuses compared to Non-Partners.

How did 2018-19 campus staff member outcome data vary by SEL implementation group?

Less support was found for a possible SEL advantage for staff members than was found for students.

PSELI. PSELI Study campuses outperformed PSELI Comparison campuses on most of the measured staff member outcomes in 2018-19, and some changes over time also showed greater increases over one year for PSELI Study campuses compared to PSELI Comparison campuses (Table 3).

over time emerged at the Approaches+ level between BARR Study and BARR Comparison campuses.

¹⁴ At the high school level, no consistent patterns of change emerged between 2017-18 to 2018-19 at the Approaches+ or Meets+ levels between SEL Partner campuses and Non-Partner campuses.

¹² Except for Algebra I. STAAR EOC data files dated September 06, 2018 (2017-18) and June 04, 2019 (2018-19). PEIMS demographic data files dated October 30, 2017 (2017-18) and October 26, 2018 (2018-19).

¹³ The one exception was Biology, for which one-year decreases were smaller for BARR Study campuses than for the comparison campuses. No consistent patterns of change

BARR. BARR Study campus staff member outcomes were mostly less favorable than for BARR Comparison campuses both in 2018-19 and year over year (Table 3).

Table 3: 2018-19 Campus Staff Member Outcomes by SEL Implementation Group

Outcome	2018-19		1 Year Change	
	Study	Comp	Study	Comp
PSELI				
Absences (Days)	12.0	18.0	-1.7	-0.4
Retention (% pts)	81.1	82.5	-0.7	-2.8
Clim PCC (% pts)	78.2	64.8	+ 3.0	-1.8
Clim TTT (% pts)	83.2	75.3	+ 2.0	+6.7
Clim TPT (% pts)	83.1	71.6	0.0	-3.1
BARR				
Absences (Days)	15.0	16.0	+2.5	+2.5
Retention (% pts)	84.5	84.8	+3.7	+9.0
Clim PCC (% pts)	44.1	49.6	-1.6	-19.7
Clim TTT (% pts)	66.2	72.6	+0.6	-5.5
Clim TPT (% pts)	50.3	52.9	-2.2	-23.7

Source: Absences data: January 08, 2019 (2017-18), June 13, 2019 (2018-19). Retention data: February 02, 2018 (October 2016 to October 2017), January 08, 2019 (October 2017 to October 2018). Climate Survey data: January 20, 2019 (spring 2018), June 03, 2019 (spring 2019).

Note: PSELI = Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning. Comp = comparison. Retention = returning to teach year over year. Clim = climate survey. PCC = Positive Culture and Climate. TTT = Teacher-Teacher Trust. TPT = Teacher-Principal Trust. % pts = percentage points. BARR = Building Assets, Reducing Risks. **Blue bold** = more favorable for SEL campuses.

SEL Partners. Campus staff results generally were less favorable for SEL Partners compared to Non-Partners in 2018-19. Some one-year changes were more favorable for SEL Partners than for Non-Partners (Table 4).

Table 4: 2018-19 SEL Partner and Non-Partner Campus Staff Member Outcomes by Campus Level

Outcome	2018-19		1 Year Change	
	SEL Partner	Non-Partner	SEL Partner	Non-Partner
Elementary				
Absences (Days)	13.0	23.0	-1.2	+0.3
Retention (% pts)	83.5	85.6	+3.2	+0.9
Clim PCP (% pts)	71.9	77.9	+ 2.8	+ 2.2
Clim TTT (% pts)	81.7	83.7	+3.4	+ 3.1
Clim TPT (% pts)	74.8	80.4	+1.4	+ 2.8
Middle				
Absences (Days)	16.0	15.0	-0.2	+1.0
Retention (% pts)	77.5	83.1	-3.2	0.0
Clim PCP (% pts)	58.2	59.5	-1.3	-11.3
Clim TTT (% pts)	71.0	67.3	+1.6	-1.4
Clim TPT (% pts)	65.4	62.9	-2.5	-13.0
High				
Absences (Days)	18.0	17.0	-0.2	+0.2
Retention (% pts)	79.3	80.7	-1.1	-0.1
Clim PCP (% pts)	55.2	65.2	-5.8	-1.2
Clim TTT (% pts)	66.5	76.5	-3.6	+1.0
Clim TPT (% pts)	66.5	71.1	-5.5	-3.3

Source: See sources in Table 3.

Note: SEL = social and emotional learning. Retention = returning to teach year over year. Climate = climate survey. PCC = Positive Culture and Climate. TTT = Teacher-Teacher Trust. TPT = Teacher-Principal Trust. % pts = percentage points. **Blue bold** = more favorable for SEL campuses.

Recommendations

- **Continue implementing SEL with SEL Partner campuses in the district.** Evidence was found for an advantage of SEL on many metrics, particularly at the student level for campuses implementing small and formal programs concentrated in a small set of schools (PSELI and BARR Study campuses). Although first-year results for SEL Partners were less favorable than for Non-Partners on many metrics, SEL Partners showed more positive change over time than Non-Partners on many outcomes. This finding indicates that SEL may be fostering growth on campuses, and that program leadership should continue to standardize and monitor the program as much as possible throughout the district.
- **Explore more exact methods of measuring SEL-related factors.** The data collected from the SEL implementation rubric should be used to examine the extent of SEL program implementation in the coming years. Plans to expand the initiative to serve more schools in the future will hinder the ability to designate valid comparison groups, as was done for this year's evaluation. Thus, the ability to examine the relationship between level of campus implementation and outcomes will be a more meaningful method of program evaluation in future years. In addition, a districtwide, direct measure of SEL for students and staff members does not currently exist. The district should invest in a tool that interferes minimally with classroom instruction but provides a valid bridge to connect implementation first to SEL and then to outcomes. Finally, SEL program staff members should improve systems used to track services provided to campuses to allow for a more accurate understanding of what has been delivered to campuses under the initiative.

References

- Cronbach, L. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16, 297-334.
- Weir, D. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of the Social and Emotional Learning Initiative. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.
- An electronic version of this report, as well as the full 2018-19 report, can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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