



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative is to provide campus staff members with SEL training and implementation support. The 2019-20 budget for the SEL initiative was \$2,512,214, a decrease from \$3,744,874 in 2018-19 (Hinkley, 2019).¹

PURPOSE AND METHODS OF THE EVALUATION

This report summarized the context, process, and outcome data for the 2019-20 SEL initiative. Context data included information about services provided to campus staff members and students collected from SEL central staff members. Process data included implementation rubric data completed by district SEL coordinators with principals. Outcome data included fall discipline, attendance (student and teacher), teacher Climate Survey, and in-district retention (student and teacher) data. This report typically examines spring data instead of fall data; however, these measures were unavailable in 2019-20. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Texas Education Agency canceled some state assessments, and the district canceled local spring assessments and districtwide climate surveys after the district transition to at-home learning (beginning March 23, 2020).² The evaluator used frequencies to summarize available fall 2019 outcome data by 2018-19 by implementation level.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the context of the 2019-20 SEL initiative?

SEL in 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.”³ In 2017-18, district SEL staff members began providing SEL training to campus staff members. Beginning 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 five SEL-related groups.⁴ 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 planning, 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 SEL department. Coordinators provided campus staff members with professional development, coaching, observation and feedback, and support at campus meetings.⁵ Fourth, since 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 2019-20, most elementary campuses implementing SEL continued using the Sanford Harmony⁶ curriculum to teach SEL. Beginning in 2019-20, middle school campuses used Positive Action Kits and high school campuses used Community Matters from Facing History in Ourselves. SEL also was embedded into the social studies and reading and language arts curricula in 2018-19 and the math and science curricula in 2019-20. Sixth, each SEL campus in the district 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., morning greetings).

PSEL Study and Comparison Campuses

In 2017-18, the Dallas ISD began participating in the PSEL 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 PSEL Study and seven PSEL Comparison campuses participated in the two-phase study. Across phases, each campus worked with an OST partner provided by Big Thought to provide OST programming.⁷ In phase I, the

¹ The decrease can be partially attributed to the separation of the counseling and SEL departments in 2019-20.

² Examined assessments typically include *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)*, and *STAAR End of Course (EOC)*. Spring Student Experience and campus staff climate surveys are also typically examined.

³ Documentation provided by the SEL program manager on 09/20/18.

⁴ Groups included 1) Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSEL) Study campuses; 2) PSEL Comparison campuses;

3) SEL Partnership/Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) campuses; 4) SEL Partnership campuses; and 5) NonPartnership campuses.

⁵ Staff members (both campus and central) could also attend various district-level trainings related to SEL during the school year including training on Sanford Harmony and Positive Action curricula, building positive classroom systems, culturally responsive teaching, effective teacher language, morning meetings, and self-care.

⁶ <https://www.sanfordharmony.org/>.

⁷ Student attendance at after-school programming was not mandatory.

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, PSEL Study campuses also were provided with an SEL specialist (who coached and trained in the OST space but also attended daytime activities) and a site lead (who ran the OST program) by Big Thought.

While PSEL 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 PSEL Comparison campuses implement SEL in 2020-21, they will receive dedicated funds to support initial costs.

SEL Partnership/BARR Campuses

SEL Partnership/BARR (BARR) campuses used the BARR curriculum, an SEL curriculum designed to assist with the transition to high school.⁸ In 2019-20, BARR campuses included W.H. Adamson, H. Grady Spruce, W.T. White, and Woodrow Wilson high schools. Campuses could choose to engage in SEL outside of BARR as well; except for Spruce, all BARR campuses elected to do this.

SEL Partnership Campuses (SEL Partners)

SEL Partners campuses were district-supported SEL campuses not participating in PSEL or BARR. These campuses received all the common SEL components outlined previously. SEL Partners included 139 campuses (88 elementary schools, 7 combined elementary/middle school, 30 middle schools, 1 combined middle/high school and 13 high schools), an increase from 114 campuses in 2018-19.

NonPartnership Campuses

In 2019-20, nonPartnership campuses included 74 campuses (43 elementary schools, 2 combined elementary/middle schools, 5 middle schools, 4 combined middle/high schools, and 20 high schools). This is a decrease from 101 campuses in 2018-19 because more campuses became SEL Partners. NonPartnership campuses 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.

COVID-19

The SEL department has continued to support staff members, students, and families during at-home learning and to collaborate with partners (SEL Dallas, Big Thought, etc.). To support staff members, the department posted information on the SEL webpage, conducted webinars, and created monthly newsletters.⁹

To support students and families, the SEL department posted daily activities for all grades on the At-Home Learning website. The activities were available in English and Spanish and focused on topics aligned with the COVID-19 context, like self-care and the care of others, and the SEL learning standards.¹⁰ The SEL department also created videos modeling SEL practices for dissemination on districtwide social media and YouTube¹¹ and created a self-care video for parents of special education students in partnership with the special education department.

How were the SEL initiative components implemented in 2019-20?

A rubric was developed by Evaluation and Assessment and SEL central staff members to measure SEL implementation by campus. The mean score was 65.5 out of a possible 105 points (standard deviation = 15.0; range: 31.0 to 96.0). The rubric was highly reliable (21 items; $\alpha = .89$).¹² Implementation tended to be rated higher at PSEL sites than elementary level SEL Partner sites, which received a wider range of scores. Implementation was slightly lower at BARR sites compared to high school level SEL Partner sites even though they received a wider range of scores. Across campus levels, there was some evidence of increased percentages of campuses at the high implementation level (elementary and middle school) and the medium implementation level (high school).

How did 2019-20 student outcome data vary by SEL implementation level?¹³

Readers should not attribute causation based upon the results presented in this section. All results are descriptive and have not been experimentally examined. Additionally, the number of campuses within groups widely varied; thus, readers should use caution when comparing among groupings. Finally, these results are representative of the fall 2019 semester based on 2018-19 implementation data instead of spring outcomes data compared with spring implementation data of the same year; therefore, results should be viewed with additional caution. Discipline data results in particular should be viewed with even greater

⁸ www.barrcenter.org.

⁹ To explore this website, see <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/66052>.

¹⁰ To explore the SEL portion of the At-Home Learning website, see <https://sites.google.com/dallasisd.org/athomelearningplans/helpful-parent-resources/social-and-emotional-learning>.

¹¹ To explore the SEL videos, see <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpyhyA1qUPMZvbqEhZsLZYpNxQXXd8D2k>.

¹² Cronbach, 1951; 0.70 is considered acceptable, 0.80 is considered good, and 0.90 or higher is considered excellent. Only campuses implementing SEL were included in analyses.

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caution because results could be because of differences in reporting rather than actual incidences of behavior.

Results provided mixed evidence of an advantage for SEL programs. For example, high or medium implementation campuses outperformed low implementation campuses across campus levels on some, but not all, fall 2019 outcomes (Table 1).

Table 1: 2019-20 Fall Student Outcomes by 2018-19 SEL Implementation Level

Outcome	High	Medium	Low
Elementary Schools			
Discipline Referrals	13.9	10.6	5.5
Bullying Referrals	2.0	2.2	-
CD Referrals	1.5	6.4	2.7
Attendance (%)	95.0	95.5	95.3
Reenrollment (%)	82.9	84.5	83.3
Middle Schools			
Discipline Referrals	N/A	104.2	82.0
Bullying Referrals	N/A	2.9	3.0
CD Referrals	N/A	20.2	10.3
Attendance (%)	N/A	95.5	95.4
Reenrollment (%)	N/A	86.6	83.0
High Schools			
Discipline Referrals	N/A	93.3	114.0
Bullying Referrals	N/A	2.0	-
CD Referrals	N/A	3.9	1.0
Attendance (%)	N/A	92.7	93.1
Reenrollment (%)	N/A	84.1	78.8

Source: PEIMS demographic data (including enrollment data): 10/26/18 (2018-19), 10/31/19 (2019-20). Fall 2019 discipline data: 01/16/20 (2019-20). Fall 2019 attendance data: 01/24/20 (2019-20).

Note: - = no referrals in that category. CD = classroom disruption. Reenrollment = reenrollment year over year. N/A= not applicable.

How did 2019-20 campus staff member outcome data vary by SEL implementation Level?

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Some support was found for a possible SEL advantage for campus staff members. High and medium SEL implementation campuses outperformed low implementation campuses on several of the measured fall 2019 staff member outcomes, especially at the elementary level (Table 2).

Table 2: 2019-20 Fall Campus Staff Member Outcomes by 2018-19 SEL Implementation Level

Outcome	High	Medium	Low
Elementary Schools			
Days Absent	6.3	6.1	5.9
Retention (%)	86.8	84.9	83.0
Climate PCE (%)	77.1	70.3	75.6
Climate TTT (%)	85.0	80.7	82.9
Climate TPT (%)	82.4	73.9	79.0
Middle Schools			
Days Absent	N/A	6.9	6.3
Retention (%)	N/A	76.8	74.4
Climate PCE (%)	N/A	63.2	79.4
Climate TTT (%)	N/A	73.3	76.9
Climate TPT (%)	N/A	67.6	88.0
High Schools			
Days Absent	N/A	6.6	13.5
Retention (%)	N/A	84.0	86.8
Climate PCE (%)	N/A	53.2	70.1
Climate TTT (%)	N/A	68.2	78.7
Climate TPT (%)	N/A	55.8	92.7

Source: Fall 2019 absences data: 05/05/20 (2019-20). Retention data: 12/19/19 (October 2018 to October 2019). Fall 2019 Climate Survey data: 01/10/20 (spring 2020).

Note: Retention = returning to teach year over year. PCE = Positive Culture and Environment. TTT = Teacher-Teacher Trust. TPT = Teacher-Principal Trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue the SEL support provided to schools, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The work of SEL department staff members and campuses has increased the number of high implementation campuses (from 10 in 2018-19 to 18 in 2019-20). The department also provided continued support to staff members, students, and families during at-home learning thorough information on the SEL webpage, webinars, newsletters, and daily activities for all grades on the At-Home Learning website. It will be important to collect campus staff feedback related to the level of use and helpfulness of the SEL efforts to inform decisions related to future training and resource development.

Explore more direct methods of measuring SEL-related factors. The current evaluation was the first to be able to examine the relationship between level of campus SEL implementation and outcomes. As a next step, SEL should be measured directly. 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.

Examine whether the student and campus staff member outcomes used the past two years should be adjusted. As the Dallas ISD SEL program matures and expands, it will be important to ensure the indicators used to measure program effectiveness align with those found in best practices research.

REFERENCES

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