

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative is to provide campus staff members with SEL training and implementation support. The 2020-21 budget for the SEL initiative was \$3,210,455, an increase from \$2,512,214 in 2019-20 (Hinkley, 2020).

In response to COVID-19, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning from March 12, 2020 until the end of the 2019-20 school year. In 2020-21, Dallas ISD delayed the start of the 2020-21 school year until September 8, 2020 and implemented at-home learning districtwide for the first four weeks. On October 22, 2020, the district announced that campuses would provide in-person and virtual learning throughout the rest of the school year and parents could choose how their children participated in instruction.

PURPOSE AND METHODS OF THE EVALUATION

This report summarized the context, process, and outcome data for the 2020-21 SEL initiative.¹ Context data included information about the services provided to campus staff members and students collected from SEL central staff members. Process data included implementation rubric data completed together by district SEL coordinators and campus staff members and professional development (PD) satisfaction data. Outcome data included analyses of student (in-district retention, Student Experience and SEL Student survey, and academic) and teacher (in-district retention, absence, and Climate Survey) data. The evaluators used frequencies to summarize all outcome data by implementation level.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the context of the 2020-21 SEL initiative?

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.”² In 2017-18, district SEL staff members began providing SEL training to campus staff members. Beginning in 2018-19, staff-member SEL training continued with a new focus on introducing SEL concepts to students. To foster SEL at the campus level, in 2020-21, the SEL Department continued partnering with the

Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI) and Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) at selected campuses and began offering SEL support services to all campuses in the district at one of three levels: Intensive, Moderate, or Consultation Only.

Elements of comprehensive SEL in the Dallas ISD

In December 2020, the SEL Department updated the elements of the district approach to SEL to include: climate and culture (engagement with signature practices, respect agreements, and calming areas/strategies), explicit skills instruction (a dedicated time and curriculum to teach SEL), content integration (integrating SEL into core curricula), and family engagement. Focus on these four areas subsequently made up the day-to-day work of the SEL Department staff members, who directly supported campuses with SEL implementation efforts.

Systems for Effective Implementation

The five recommended systems and supports for effective SEL implementation were suggested across all campuses; however, these components were more consistently implemented at PSELI, BARR, Intensive, and Moderate campuses because Consultation Only campuses interacted less consistently with the SEL Department. Even so, these systems were implemented at varying levels at campuses that received more support. First, campus steering committees fostered SEL by planning, leading, and supporting campus SEL implementation, and set goals around the four elements of comprehensive SEL. Second, campus champions added SEL leadership and capacity to campuses. They served as steering committee members and SEL experts, provided feedback, and served as a bridge between campuses and the SEL Department. Third, district SEL coordinators served as a link between campuses and the SEL Department and provided implementation and coaching support for campuses and the goals campuses set around the four elements of comprehensive SEL.³ Beginning in 2020-21, all campuses had a district SEL coordinator assigned via network as potential support; however, that support varied based on the campuses selected level of SEL support. Fourth, since 2018-19, all campuses implementing SEL ideally designated times in the schedule and a specific curriculum for teaching SEL standards, as reflected in the elements of comprehensive SEL mentioned previously. In 2020-21, all campuses were expected to conduct explicit SEL instruction for 45 minutes each week. In 2020-21, most elementary campuses continued using the Harmony SEL curriculum to

¹ Portions of this report were adapted from Hinkley (2019, 2020).

² Documentation provided by the SEL program manager on 09/20/18.

³ Staff members (both campus and central) also could attend various district-level virtual trainings related to SEL.

teach SEL.⁴ Middle school campuses had several curriculum options including the Positive Action Kits used in 2019-20, and Random Acts of Kindness, Everfi, and Facing History and Ourselves. High school campuses used one of two curricula: Community Matters: A Facing History Approach to Advisory from Facing History and Ourselves or Everfi. Fifth, SEL was embedded into the social studies and reading and language arts curricula in 2018-19 and the math and science curricula in 2019-20. Even so, in 2020-21 SEL Department staff members reported that teachers were still being trained on intentional integration of the SEL standards and skill-building into the academic curricula.

PSEL Study and Comparison Campuses

In 2017-18, the Dallas ISD began participating in the multi-year 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.⁵ In phase I, the study campuses received SEL support while the comparison campuses did not. However, in response to COVID-19 and its impacts, the Wallace Foundation decided to allow all districts participating in PSEL to begin providing SEL support to Phase II campuses one year earlier than planned (if the district chose to do so). Dallas ISD chose to begin supporting Phase II campuses earlier; thus, all 14 sites received SEL support in 2020-21. All PSEL campuses were expected to engage with the systems for effective implementation mentioned previously including working with a district SEL coordinator, having steering committees, campus champions, and designated times and methods for explicit SEL instruction. In 2020-21, Phase II sites received SEL implementation support and funding to help support campuswide SEL implementation [\$10,000 per campuses for online PD (registration fees to attend virtual SEL training, conferences, etc.) and \$5,000 per campus for SEL supplies (SEL-related books for staff, classroom supplies, etc.)].⁶

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.⁷ In 2019-20 and 2020-21, BARR campuses included W.H. Adamson, H. Grady Spruce, W.T. White, and Woodrow Wilson high schools. These campuses also selected a level of district SEL support. Adamson,

White, and Woodrow selected the Moderate level and Spruce selected the Intensive level.

SEL Partnership Campuses (SEL Partners)

In the past, only some campuses were formally involved in the SEL initiative. In 2020-21, all campuses were required to select one of three levels of SEL support (Intensive, Moderate, or Consultation Only). Intensive campuses (39 campuses) received direct support from SEL Department staff members and committed to working to further SEL on their campuses. Moderate campuses (122 campuses) made the same commitments and still received direct support with SEL, however, it was less often. Consultation Only campuses (68 campuses) did not receive direct, regular support, however, they were provided with SEL-related PD assistance and resources.

COVID-19

When the district transitioned to at-home learning in spring 2020, the SEL Department supported staff members, students, and families and collaborated 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.⁸ All of this work has continued in 2020-21. Additionally, the SEL Department partnered with the Mental Health Services and Counseling Department to deliver Maslow Before They Can Bloom trainings for administrators, secondary teachers, and elementary teachers. The trainings were designed to highlight key considerations around the impact of COVID-19, trauma, and racism/inequality issues as they started their school year.

To support students and families, the SEL Department posted daily activities for all grades on the At-Home Learning website.⁹ The activities remained available and applicable in 2020-21. The SEL Department also created videos modeling SEL practices for dissemination on districtwide social media and YouTube¹⁰. In 2020-21, the department continued to add videos to the YouTube playlist including videos about mindfulness, brain breaks, and other SEL related practices. In addition, the family engagement coordinator developed videos with family-focused content¹¹ and department staff offered online resources and virtual discussion groups/activities to share information/resources with parents and caregivers.

⁴ More information regarding the Harmony SEL curriculum (previously called Sanford Harmony) can be found at <https://www.harmonysel.org/>.

⁵ Student attendance at after-school programming was not mandatory.

⁶ The district also supported Phase I sites with flexible classroom seating and other calming supplies for each classroom.

⁷ More information about BARR can be found at www.barrcenter.org.

⁸ To explore this website, see <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/66052>.

⁹ 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>.

¹⁰ To explore the SEL videos, see <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpyhyA1qUPMZvbqEhZsLZYPnxQXXd8D2k>.

¹¹ To explore these videos, see https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpyhyA1qUPMaaO_NImRaEsXZ02JCezbB.

How was the SEL initiative implemented in 2020-21?

A rubric was developed by Evaluation and Assessment and SEL central staff members to measure SEL implementation by campus.¹² Overall, the mean score was 65.2 out of a possible 105 points (standard deviation = 14.0; range: 22.0 to 99.0). The rubric was reliable (21 items; $\alpha = .85$).¹³ Implementation tended to be rated lower at PSEL sites than elementary level SEL Partner sites. Implementation was also lower at BARR sites compared to high school level SEL Partner sites. Across campus levels, there was some evidence of decreased percentages of campuses at the low implementation level and increased or the same percentages at the medium implementation level (elementary and middle school). There was no consistent pattern in change of implementation level at the high school level.

The SEL Department provided 46 types of PD across five categories. Overall, most attendees (at least 90% across categories and questions) rated the PD they received positively (four or five on a five-point scale). This met the department goal that 85 percent of participants would report being satisfied with PD sessions. Participants were most often satisfied with summer PD (97% or greater across questions) but were less commonly, though still highly, satisfied with RDA training (90% to 93% across questions).

How did 2020-21 student outcome data vary by SEL implementation level?

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, variation because of the continued impacts from COVID-19 cannot be accounted for; therefore, results should be viewed with additional caution.

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, 2020-21 outcomes (Table 1), some *Measures of Academic Progress Growth (MAP)* assessments at the High Average growth quintile (range: -7 percentage points from medium to low implementation levels on grade one Spanish reading to +17 percentage points from the high to low implementation level on grade two Spanish reading), some *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* 3-8 and *End-of-Course (EOC)* assessments (range: 6 percentage points lower, high to medium implementation grade five

science Approaches+, grade 6-8 mathematics Approaches+, and grade seven writing Meets+ to 58 percentage points higher, high to low implementation, English II Meets+).¹⁴ Examining change over time also indicated some small support for SEL (Table 1). For STAAR, fewer students completed the assessments in 2020-21 than in past years because of lingering impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Results should be reviewed with caution. With few exceptions, across implementation levels and assessments, students demonstrated two-year rate decreases at both the Approaches+ and Meets+ standards.

Table 1: 2020-21 Student Non-Assessment Outcomes by SEL Implementation Level

Outcome	2020-21			1-Year Change*		
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low
Elementary Schools						
Reenroll (%)	84.8	84.1	84.0	1.9	-0.4	0.7
Self-eff (%)	54.8	56.9	56.2	-	-	-
Self-man (%)	62.5	64.7	61.1	-	-	-
Soc Aw (%)	65.8	66.8	63.3	-	-	-
Sup Rel (%)	83.3	84.2	82.6	-	-	-
Stu Exp (%)	82.8	79.9	73.6	-	-	-
Middle Schools						
Reenroll (%)	89.1	89.7	85.4	-	3.1	2.4
Self-eff (%)	57.2	49.3	49.6	-	-	-
Self-man (%)	76.2	70.1	67.1	-	-	-
Soc Aw (%)	66.6	62.4	59.5	-	-	-
Sup Rel (%)	81.3	79.0	78.3	-	-	-
Stu Exp (%)	74.0	71.1	71.0	-	-	-
High Schools						
Reenroll (%)	89.4	87.0	N/A	-	2.9	-
Self-eff (%)	37.0	37.5	N/A	-	-	-
Self-man (%)	72.0	71.8	N/A	-	-	-
Soc Aw (%)	63.0	62.6	N/A	-	-	-
Sup Rel (%)	78.0	78.0	N/A	-	-	-
Stu Exp (%)	77.0	74.2	74.6	-	-	-

Source: PEIMS demographic data: 10/26/18 (2018-19), 10/31/19 (2019-20), and 10/30/20 (2020-21). Reenrollment data: 10/31/19 (2018-19 to 2019-20) and 11/02/20 (2019-20 to 2020-21). SEL Survey data: 11/16/20 (2020-21). Student Experience Survey data: 07/12/21 (2020-21).

Note: * Change in reenrollment is from 2018-19 to 2019-20 and 2019-20 to 2020-21. Med = medium. Reenroll = reenrollment year over year. % = percentage points. Eff = efficacy. Man = management. Soc Aw = social awareness. Sup Rel = supportive relationships. - = no prior measure was available for change calculations.

How did 2020-21 campus staff member outcome data vary by SEL implementation Level?

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, variation because of the continued

¹² In 2020-21, an OST rubric was developed for PSEL campuses participating in OST work; because of the small number of campuses involved, those data were not reported.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data files dated 10/26/18 (2018-19) and 10/30/20 (2020-21). Approaches+ = Approaches Grade Level or Above. Meets+ = Meets Grade Level or Above. STAAR data files dated 09/11/19 (2018-19) and 06/28/21 (2020-21). STAAR EOC data files dated 08/27/19 (2018-19) and 06/17/21 (2020-21). MAP data file dated 06/23/21 (2020-21).

impacts from COVID-19 cannot be accounted for; therefore, results should be viewed with additional caution.

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 2020-21 staff member outcomes, especially at the high school level (Table 2). Some changes over time also showed greater increases over two years for medium implementation campuses at the middle and high school levels compared to low implementation campuses.

Table 2: 2020-21 Campus Staff Member Outcomes by SEL Implementation Level

Outcome	2020-21			2-Year Change*		
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low
Elementary Schools						
Retention (%)	87.6	90.1	88.1	0.8	5.2	5.1
Absen (Days)	12.1	15.6	13.4	-1.3	2.8	1.2
Clim PCE (%)	78.6	75.0	77.2	3.6	2.3	7.4
Clim TTT (%)	75.5	82.6	85.6	-8.6	0.3	8.4
Clim TPT (%)	81.9	76.7	92.9	0.1	0.4	23.5
Middle Schools						
Retention (%)	77.0	84.5	78.9	-	7.7	4.5
Absen (Days)	18.5	17.5	15.0	-	1.8	-2.7
Clim PCE (%)	59.7	62.2	58.2	-	6.1	8.6
Clim TTT (%)	78.7	70.4	66.3	-	-0.6	7.7
Clim TPT (%)	56.2	61.8	57.5	-	-0.4	-5.0
High Schools						
Retention (%)	91.5	86.8	-	-	2.8	-
Absen (Days)	25.1	15.5	17.7	-	-1.2	-5.9
Clim PCE (%)	95.3	64.0	58.8	-	14.3	-4.6
Clim TTT (%)	85.0	74.1	72.1	-	9.1	-8.9
Clim TPT (%)	100.0	68.5	52.5	-	9.0	-31.7

Source: Retention: 12/19/19 (2018-19 to 2019-20) and 10/13/20 (2019-20 to 2020-21). Absences: 06/13/19 (2018-19) and 06/21/21 (2020-21). Climate Survey: 06/03/19 (spring 2019) and 07/23/21 (spring 2021).

Note: * Change in retention is from 2018-19 to 2019-20 and 2019-20 to 2020-21. All other changes are from 2018-19 to 2020-21. Med = medium. Retention = returning to teach year over year. Absen = absences. % = percentage points. Clim = climate survey. PCE = Positive Culture and Environment. TTT = Teacher-Teacher Trust. TPT = Teacher-Principal Trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to provide support to schools as students return to in-person learning. As students return to campuses in-person full-time for 2021-22, it is important that the department continue to support campuses with SEL implementation so that campus staff members and students can grow in their SEL skills and be successful.

Work to improve self-efficacy in students across campus levels. Self-efficacy was consistently the lowest competency on the SEL Student Survey (range: 37% high implementation high schools to 57% medium implementation elementary schools and high implementation middle schools). SEL department staff members should support teachers in improving the self-efficacy of their students.

Ensure consistent implementation by campus support level. There was shifting of campuses within support levels during 2020-21. There was also inconsistency in elements of programmatic implementation (e.g. only half of campuses having steering committees). The department should work to ensure that campuses are classified appropriately into support levels and receive/implement the elements required for each level of support.

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