



EL PASO INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Social Emotional Learning: Implementation Year 1 (2016-2017)

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Executive Summary

The El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) implemented the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative during the 2016-2017 school year. In order to select the first cohort of schools, all district schools were asked to apply for consideration if they desired to implement the program in its first year. Seven schools were selected to serve as the first cohort of implementation. The schools were represented by six elementary schools (Crosby, Johnson, Lee, Park, Roberts, and Western Hills), and one middle school (Terrace Hills). The seven lead sites were chosen, among other factors, because of their likelihood of implementing the program with fidelity. In addition to a strategic push to include social emotional learning in the academic curriculum of the students at EPISD, the district also made the commitment to make social emotional learning a part of the larger staff culture. As such, the district encouraged central office staff to attend several training sessions aimed at increasing their social emotional competence. The district's decision to implement this initiative is part of the strategic priorities set in EPISD 2020 (EPISD, n.d.). The qualitative data to date suggests that the SEL trainings have been effective in stimulating interest, commitment, and growth from both the first school cohort and the general central office staff at EPISD. The quantitative data is trending in the desired direction. Typically, programs that focus on social and emotional growth show small but stable changes over time. The focus is not necessarily on immediate returns, but on long-term sustained growth that impacts all areas of student development, including academic achievement, over a period of years. The major recommendations stemming from this evaluation are that campus personnel be informed about evidence-based programs, and that an instrument be established to measure implementation success for central office staff.

Recommendations

The Social Emotional Learning initiative had a successful implementation year. Cohort 1 campuses received five capacity building training sessions along with extensive campus coaching and training and are showing early signs of implementation success. The initiative has also been successful at the district level with several well-attended and positively-rated capacity building sessions. In order for the initiative to continue building upon its success the following recommendations are made:

- First, the SEL implementation data shows a gap in knowledge from campus personnel with respect to evidenced-based SEL instruction. Current and subsequent cohorts should be informed about the differences in evidence-based programming for SEL. The Department of Student and Family Empowerment will begin training sites and laying the groundwork for the implementation of a SEL-based evidence-based program during the 2017-2018 school year. Adoption of the program is expected to take place during the Fall 2018 semester.
- Second, the Departments of Student and Family Empowerment, Strategy and Evaluation, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning should work together to design or implement an instrument designed to measure social emotional learning and growth for central office staff. EPISD is one of the few districts that has made a commitment to extend SEL district-wide. The success of that endeavor should be quantitatively measured.

Program Description

During the 2016-2017 year, the El Paso Independent School District embarked on a mission to improve learning for its students. One of the largest and most ambitious initiatives to come out of the district's 2020 plan was to incorporate social emotional learning (SEL) into every aspect of the district's operations. The vision of the SEL initiative is that all students, teachers, administrators, and staff will become socially and emotionally intelligent individuals that can self-regulate and deal with the stresses of everyday life.

Our society has changed in several important ways, but our educational system has struggled to catch up. One of the important areas of change has been how students relate to each other and their teachers. Incidents of student bullying and teacher stress are at an all-time national high (Jones, Bouffard, and Weissbound, 2013). The same is true of an overworked and overstressed workplace where mental health concerns are on the rise (Kelly & Colquhoun, 2005; and see Schonert-Reicht, 2017, for burnout effects on teachers). Often, the lack of a social/emotional buffer leads to achievement consequences for students, and productivity decreases for staff (Payton, Wardlaw, Graczyk, Bloodworth, Tompsett, & Weissberg, 2000; Rock, 2008). There is mounting evidence that initiatives that focus on social and emotional growth have an impact that extends well beyond emotional well-being. Districts across the country are finding that investing in the social emotional health of students and teachers has a large academic impact (McClelland, Tominey, Schmitt, & Duncan, 2017; Payton et al., 2000). We have also known for decades that there is a large return on investment for staff development in the social emotional domain (Rock, 2008). As such, the district has made a commitment to implementing an effective, evidence-based, social emotional learning initiative to improve outcomes for students and staff at the district.

The 2016-2017 school year serves as the baseline year to establish indicators to measure implementation success. The program started its implementation during the fall semester. During the implementation year, the seven Cohort 1 schools have received five training sessions in a

variety of topics to begin developing the groundwork for their schools to thrive as they implement SEL. Similarly, district staff has received five trainings to incorporate the SEL philosophy into the individual work of employees, departments, and the district as a whole. The SEL capacity building is a collaborative effort between the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Department of Student and Family Empowerment. The results so far show trends in the positive direction, meaning preliminary data is showing initial signs of positive impact. The presence of small but positive findings is encouraging especially because initiatives that focus on whole-child outcomes often lag in tangible signs of progress. The success of SEL initiatives is measured in long-term, sustained impact. Given the early implementation results there is cause for optimism and celebration for the work being done at EPISD.

Program Owner(s)

The Social and Emotional Learning program is housed under the Department of Student and Family Empowerment, Executive Director Ray Lozano oversees its implementation.

Program Funding

Expenditures for the 2016-2017 school year amount to \$563,380.07. The initiative is funded through the State Compensatory Education fund.

Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

In extensive collaboration with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Department of Student and Family Empowerment, the baseline criteria for evaluating the Social Emotional Learning initiative through the 5-year implementation period were established. Subsequent evaluations will track academic data longitudinally for Cohort 1 schools.

- 1- How was Social Emotional Learning capacity built during the implementation year?**
- 2- How has Social Emotional Learning impacted climate and perception at the Cohort 1 campuses?**
- 3- How has Social Emotional Learning impacted discipline and attendance rates at the Cohort 1 campuses?**
- 4- How do Cohort 1 Campuses view their implementation success?**

Major Evaluation Questions and Results

1- How was SEL capacity built during the implementation year?

Five semi-monthly training sessions have taken place since the implementation of the SEL initiative at EPISD. The seven Cohort 1 schools attended training sessions together, and a separate training day was provided to central office staff. All trainings covered topics appropriate to their audience, although themes often overlapped.

Methodology

The evaluator attended the capacity-building trainings and the Department of Student and Family Empowerment provided data on participant evaluations.

Results

There has been observable growth by the schools implementing the SEL initiative at their campuses. The first training, where schools were given an overview of social emotional learning, its effectiveness, and an introduction to growth mindset; was characterized by questions regarding how to begin SEL implementation. The school teams were participative in the activities, and there was an observable effort to get to know other Cohort 1 school teams to develop collaborative relationships.

The second training, was noticeable because school teams used their Texas academic performance report (TAPR) data to identify areas of growth. Schools also collaborated on activities that they could take back to their campuses. The final topic introduced was the vision statement. Schools were tasked with starting the process of creating a vision statement that included every key stakeholder at their campus from students, to parents, to staff.

During the third training, schools revisited their progress on developing a vision statement and how that process had unfolded thus far. Further, Western Hills Elementary shared their approach to morning meetings and the entire set of schools worked in groups to develop plans for morning meetings that would be successful at their campus. The third training was noticeable because all SEL sites felt comfortable with the material presented, they discussed their school data,

and they talked about targeted SEL interventions for their specific population. This is an important finding because SEL is implemented differently at every campus. Understanding the campus population (including teachers) is key to SEL success.

Illustration 1.1: Cohort 1 Embeds TEKS in SEL Instruction

The fourth capacity building training focused on implementing Social Emotional Learning standards into the school curriculum. Cohort 1 schools practiced learning the material, and finding ways to incorporate their learning to their daily campus operations. Further, each Cohort 1 school was provided with a detailed data report. Schools were tasked with finding strengths and weaknesses based on their data. Data presented included student and staff perceptual data as well as attendance and discipline data. Finally, Cohort 1 schools committed to taking the SEL Implementation survey detailed later in this evaluation.

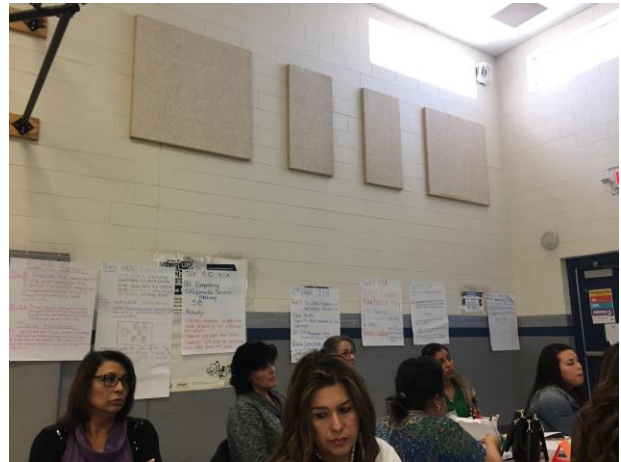


Illustration 1.2: Cohort 1 May Capacity Building Session



The final capacity building training during the implementation year focused on the coaching model, debriefing by the campuses on their year 1 experiences, and planning for year 2 implementation. Every campus member present at the capacity building got to practice the coaching model for developing SEL capacity. In the coaching model, every member observed a morning meeting, focused on positive aspects and areas for growth, and debriefed each morning

meeting teacher on their observations. The coaching model will be used extensively by Cohort 1 campuses to guide Cohort 2 campuses as they implement SEL campus-wide during the 2017-2018 year. Cohort 1 campuses similarly shared their experiences implementing SEL. Most campuses shared positive experiences and changes at their school, with their student population and their teachers. More noticeably however, campuses who had tumultuous academic years shared the powerful influence social emotional learning had on their ability to overcome challenges. One campus, for instance, noted that they had lost two administrators and a counselor. They noted the deep challenges the vacancies created for the operation of their campus. The campus also shared how the implementation of social emotional learning provided a buffer that developed the resilience necessary to weather the changes with a positive attitude. These experiences are indicative of a successful implementation year as campuses extend their learning beyond classroom activities to campus climate.

In sum, the five capacity building sessions for Cohort 1 covered a wide range of topics rooted in the fundamental principles of social emotional learning. Campus participants mostly rated the sessions as excellent. There was high participation during the sessions and campus teams were consistently engaged. Table 1.1 presents the topics covered during the training sessions.

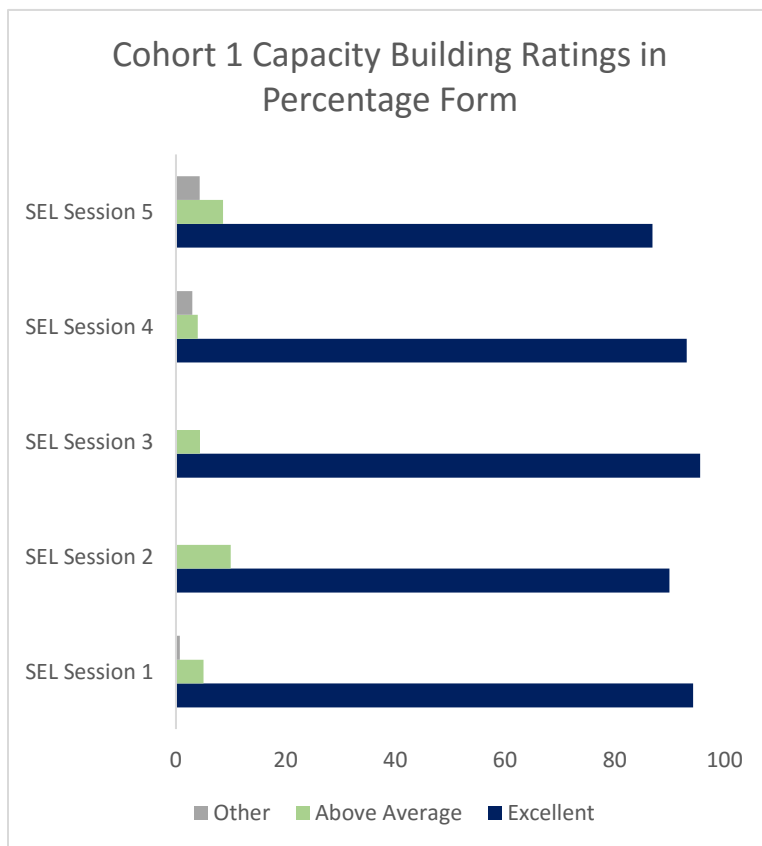
Table 1.1: Cohort 1 Capacity-Building Sessions¹

Session	Date	Topic(s)
1	10/4/16	Overview Growth Mindset The Invisible Backpack SMART Goals
2	11/7/16	School Climate TAPR Data Developing a Shared School Vision Intro to Morning Meetings
3	12/14/16	Vision Statements Morning Meetings

¹ Data Source: Capacity Building Handouts

4	2/08/17	SEL Core Competencies SEL Standards Morning Meeting Mindfulness Campus-based Data SEL Staff Survey
5	5/19/17	The Coaching Cycle Cohort 1, Year 1 Experiences Year 2 Planning/Scheduling

Figure 1.1: SEL Cohort 1 Monthly Training Ratings²

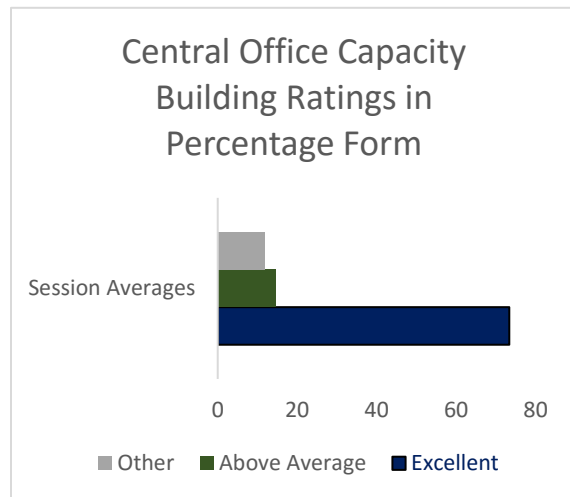


The school trainings are provided by four coordinators from the Department of Student and Family Empowerment along with two consultants from CASEL. The trainings are structured to run from 8:00am-4:00pm. Breakfast is provided to all school teams and the session breaks for lunch. During the training, school teams are provided with ample reading and activity material and the sessions run in a structured but flexible manner. Figure 1 graphically depicts the results of Cohort 1 capacity building training

evaluations. The five capacity building training sessions have been the core of the implementation for Cohort 1 schools, as such the reviews are a positive indicator that the SEL implementation is on track for a successful year.

² Data Source: Internal Department of Student and Family Empowerment Evaluations Conducted during Capacity Building

Figure 1.2: SEL Cohort 1 Monthly Training Ratings by Central Office Staff ³



The second aspect of the Social Emotional Learning implementation at EPISD is the capacity building effort for central office staff. The rollout of the initiative at EPISD has followed a two-pronged approach. First, EPISD campuses will implement SEL on a rolling basis. Second, capacity will be built among central office administrators through semi-monthly 2-hour sessions. The sessions for

central office staff focus on the SEL core competencies and apply many of the activities and lessons to the actual office environment. The five sessions offered during the 2016-2017 year were well-attended and participants appeared engaged in the material.

Table 1.2: Central Office Capacity-Building Sessions⁴

Session	Date	Topic(s)
1	10/5/16	Introduction Growth Mindset/The Invisible Backpack
2	11/8/16	S.C.A.R.F. Model
3	12/15/16	S.C.A.R.F. Assessments Developing a Vision for your Department
4	2/09/17	Community Circles Mindfulness Practices SEL Core Competencies
5	5/18/17	Vision Boards SEL Core Competencies

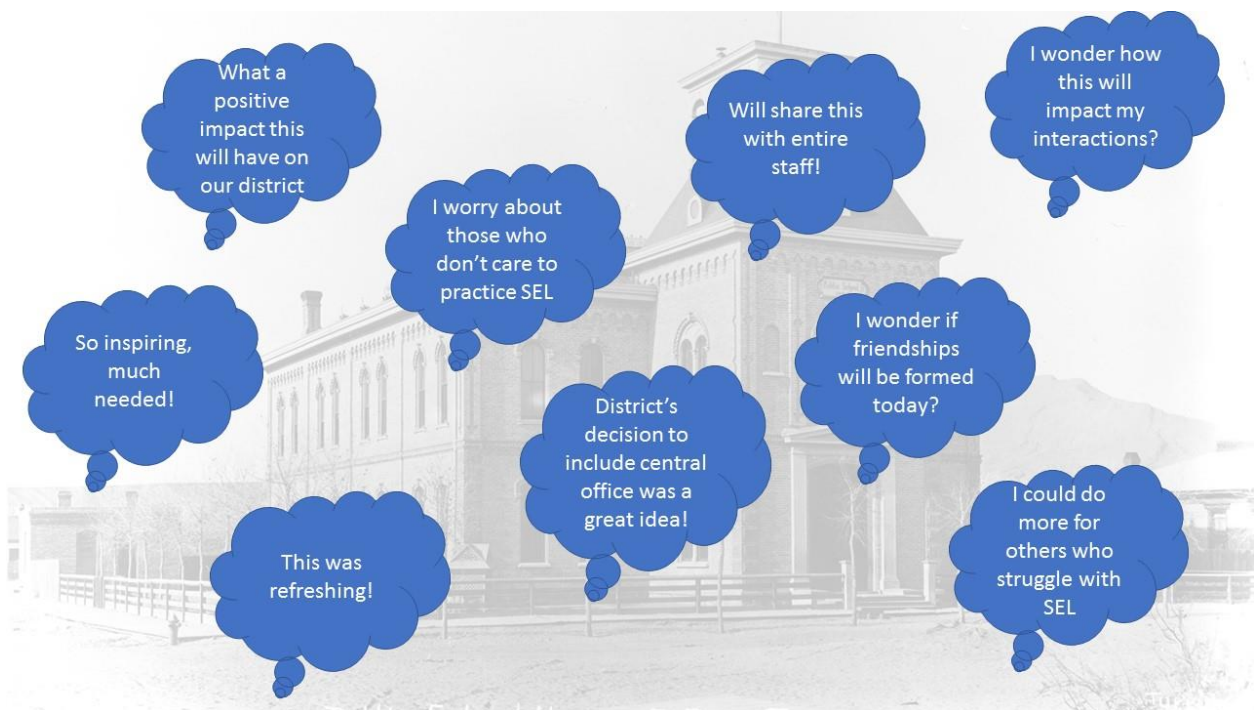
Central office implementation success indicators have not been established thus far. The district launches a yearly employee satisfaction survey; however, more than 70% of the sample in that survey is represented by teachers thereby skewing the results. A measure should be developed

³ Data Source: Internal Department of Student and Family Empowerment Evaluations Conducted during Capacity Building

⁴ Data Source: Capacity Building Handouts

to track implementation success at the central office level since the district has committed extensive resources to extending SEL implementation at all levels. Note that staff satisfaction data is available at the campus level and was used extensively in planning for Cohort 1 schools. Nevertheless, Figure 1.2 depicts evaluation ratings for the capacity building sessions for central office employees. As can be seen, the sessions are rated highly positively. Since three sessions are offered at every capacity building day, the data was averaged across the five main sessions, and three attendance opportunities (15 sessions total). Participants at every session shared their thoughts about the implementation of SEL at central office. Illustration 1.3 depicts some of the thoughts and ideas shared.

Illustration 1.3: Central Office Capacity Building Comments



2- How has Social Emotional Learning impacted climate and perception at the Cohort 1 campuses?

In order to gauge climate and perception at the Cohort 1 campuses, select questions from the EPISD School Climate Survey and the Gallup National Poll were analyzed.

Methodology

The School Climate Survey was redesigned during the 2016-2017 year. As such, there is no prior year data to compare for the Cohort 1 schools. Implementation year data will be used to establish a longitudinal trend for Cohort 1 schools.

Nine questions were selected from the Gallup Poll due to their relatedness to SEL competencies. Every school in the SEL cohort performed the survey for the 2016-2017 year. Only 5 schools completed the survey for 2015-2016, their responses are listed where appropriate. Baseline data is provided for the two schools that began participating in the survey this year. The elementary schools are instructed to administer each of the surveys solely to 5th graders.

Results

School Climate Survey Results

The School Climate Survey is 20 questions in length. The questions range in their measurement of climate, strategic priorities, parental involvement, and school resources. Five questions were selected due to their relatedness to SEL competencies. The questions are formatted for students to answer on a Likert-type scale where 1= Strongly Agree, 2= Somewhat agree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Somewhat disagree, and 5= Strongly disagree.

The results for the six elementary schools (Crosby ES, Johnson ES, Lee ES, Park ES, Roberts ES, and Western Hills ES) were largely positive. Most students agreed with the statements that reflected they learn to respect others, feel safe, are encouraged by teachers, and see teachers get along at their school. The third question: “I have been insulted or teased more than once at my school” was not reverse coded for the purposes of these analyses. Therefore, higher ratings generally mean that students disagree with the statement. For elementary campuses, student responses approximate the neutral option.

At the middle school level, responses are consistently more positive than at the elementary. Student responses are closer to the ‘strongly agree’ category for the statements that reflect climate. Students at Terrace Hills MS feel they are learning to respect others, feel safe, feel teachers believe in them, and see that teachers get along with each other. Likewise, the question that addresses bullying is rated higher (meaning there is less perceived bullying) than at the elementary campuses. Indeed, the district school climate report shows that perceptions of bullying tend to decrease as students transition to middle- and high school (Strobach Oronoz, 2017). The School Climate Survey was implemented district-wide during the months of February, March, and April. It is unclear whether these positive responses can truly be considered baseline ratings because the schools had experienced Social Emotional Learning at their campus for more than half the year. The ratings for both elementary and middle school campuses were exceptionally positive. These ratings are evidence that students perceive a positive climate at their campuses, albeit with teasing and insulting among students continuing to be an area of strategic focus. Cohorts implementing Social Emotional Learning during the 2017-2018 year and beyond will have true baseline data that will allow a comparison for student experiences prior to SEL implementation.

Table 2.1: Select School Climate Survey Indicators of SEL Competencies⁵

<i>School Climate Item</i>	<i>Average Response: Cohort 1 Elementary</i>
<i>I learn to respect others at my school.</i>	<i>2.07</i>
<i>I feel safe at my school.</i>	<i>2.57</i>
<i>I have been insulted or teased more than once at my school.⁶</i>	<i>2.95</i>
<i>I feel my teachers believe in me.</i>	<i>2.13</i>
<i>I see that teachers get along with each other.</i>	<i>1.98</i>

⁵ Data Source: EPISD School Climate Survey

⁶ The question that addresses bullying in schools was not reverse coded such that a high rating means that students generally disagree with the statement.

<i>School Climate Item</i>	<i>Average Response: Cohort 1 Middle School</i>
<i>I learn to respect others at my school.</i>	<i>1.44</i>
<i>I feel safe at my school.</i>	<i>1.84</i>
<i>I have been insulted or teased more than once at my school.⁶</i>	<i>3.19</i>
<i>I feel my teachers believe in me.</i>	<i>1.38</i>
<i>I see that teachers get along with each other.</i>	<i>1.30</i>

Rating Scale: Strongly Agree= 1; Agree=2; Neither Agree nor Disagree= 3; Disagree= 4; and Strongly Disagree= 5

Gallup Poll Results

Every October, the Gallup Poll issues a survey to school districts across the nation. The survey is 24 questions in length and measures the following dimensions: engagement, hope, entrepreneurial aspiration, and career/financial literacy. The survey is sent to each school and their results are compared to the larger district, and the total U.S. responses. The survey had been optional in prior years, 2016-2017 was the first year where the district required schools to participate. Each question is ranked on a scale of 1-5, 1 indicates that the item is not present at the school, 5 indicates that the item is largely present at the school. Notice that the ratings on the Gallup Poll are reversed from the ratings in the School Climate Survey. Higher Gallup Poll averages indicate a better or more positive perception.

The ratings overall show the schools rate highly on all selected questions (see Table 2.3). For the schools for which there is prior-year data available, there are two selected questions for which all schools rated higher for the current year than last year, the first: “The adults at my school care about me.” This is a promising finding for the SEL program. The other question in which schools rated higher was “I have a great future ahead of me.” Other notable increases are depicted in green.

Another Gallup data finding (see Table 2.3) is that the experiences at the middle school are consistently rated lower than those at the elementary schools. There is a notable dip in the areas of

⁶ The question that addresses bullying in schools was not reverse coded such that a high rating means that students generally disagree with the statement.

safety and fun at school. Students also rated lower on question 5 which deals with teacher reinforcements for work done at school. The middle school however showed gains in every question except question 4, which deals with having a best friend at school. These gains signal a positive shift at the middle school. Notice similarly that while the Gallup responses for middle school are consistently lower than at the elementary level, the pattern for the school climate responses presented earlier is reversed. The Gallup poll, as mentioned earlier, is conducted during the month of October. Therefore, the current year responses can be considered a truer baseline perceptual measure of student perception regarding SEL competencies.

Narrowing in specifically on overlapping questions on the Gallup and School Climate surveys, one can see that for the question dealing with student safety the ratings seem consistent across the two instruments. Similarly, the question dealing with adults caring about students at school shows consistency across instruments. Given that both sets of data are nearly at ceiling for positive responses, it will be interesting to see whether the trend continues upward, and whether SEL implementation enables Cohort 1 schools to maintain their positive trends.

Table 2.2: Select Gallup Poll Indicators of SEL Competencies⁷

Gallup Poll Select Questions	
1	My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.
2	I feel safe in this school.
3	I have fun at school.
4	I have a best friend at school.
5	In the last seven days, someone has told me I have done good work at school.
6	The adults at my school care about me.
7	I have at least one teacher who makes me excited about the future.
8	I have a great future ahead of me.
9	I have a mentor who encourages my development.

⁷ Data Source: Gallup Student Poll Fall 2016 Scorecard (select questions)

Table 2.3: Longitudinal Gallup Responses⁸

Q#	Crosby 15-16	ES 16-17	Johnson 15-16	ES 16-17	Lee 15-16	ES 16-17	Park 15-16	ES 16-17	T. Hills 15-16	MS 16-17
1	4.38	4.38	4.65	4.54	4.49	4.58	4.59	4.63	3.85	4.04
2	4.14	4.08	3.84	4.48	4.31	4.29	3.71	4.34	3.51	3.55
3	4.07	4.22	4.38	4.29	4.42	4.45	4.39	4.31	3.61	3.73
4	4.6	4.89	4.59	4.67	4.64	4.53	4.56	4.91	4.43	4.31
5	3.67	4.01	4.31	4.03	4.11	4.08	3.86	4.52	3.47	3.58
6	4.13	4.21	4.35	4.49	4.53	4.6	4.25	4.51	3.59	3.7
7	4.3	4.14	4.61	4.65	4.49	4.31	4.49	4.69	4.03	4.19
8	4.44	4.68	4.55	4.7	4.65	4.66	4.49	4.74	4.41	4.43
9	3.83	4.1	3.88	3.85	4.15	4.36	4.00	4.43	3.53	3.63

Rating Scale: Strongly Agree= 5; Agree=4; Neither Agree nor Disagree= 3; Disagree= 2; and Strongly Disagree= 1

Table 2.4: Baseline Gallup Responses for First-year Participating Campuses⁹

Q#	Roberts ES 16-17	Western Hills ES 16-17
1	4.75	4.68
2	4.43	4.00
3	4.66	4.09
4	4.73	4.68
5	4.45	4.05
6	4.59	4.38
7	4.78	4.65
8	4.76	4.69
9	4.24	4.25

⁸ Data Source: Gallup Student Poll Fall 2015 and 2016 Scorecard (select question responses)

⁹ Data Source: Gallup Student Poll Fall 2016 Scorecard (selection question responses)

3- How has Social Emotional Learning impacted discipline and attendance rates at the Cohort 1 campuses?

One of the academic achievement indicators SEL is thought to have an impact on is attendance. If students feel safe and valued in school, they are more likely to attend on a regular basis (which in turn, over an extended period of time, impacts their academic performance).

Similarly, the earliest sign of success of SEL implementation at the campus level is a noticeable decrease in discipline incidents. This indicator is typically captured earlier because the program focuses heavily on the social and emotional aspect of the students and teachers. Discipline rates are an important indicator for the success of Social Emotional Learning initiatives because they signal a mind shift in how educators interact with students and how culture, responsibility, and growth mindset is embedded in day-to-day interactions at the schools.

Methodology

Attendance rates were obtained from *The Pulse*, EPISD's live online dashboard. Attendance rates did not consider absence type and instead considered schoolwide attendance. Discipline rates were obtained from *Data Warehouse*, EPISD's live data management system. Discipline incidents were included irrespective of severity.

Results

Attendance rates do not appear to have increased during the implementation year. It is important to note that the SEL program began its capacity building during the month of October, so it is likely that robust gains in attendance would not be evidenced until the program had been faithfully implemented at the campus for at least one year. Similarly, it is possible that some of the calendar scheduling might have impacted student attendance over breaks and holidays; specifically over the Christmas break where the semester ended later than usual leading to decreased attendance across the district. Nonetheless, 2016-2017 attendance data provides an important benchmark for

the program and baseline comparisons as Cohort 1 continues to grow in its implementation of Social Emotional Learning at their campus.

Table 3.1: Attendance Percent by School Year¹⁰

School	2015-2016	2016-2017
Crosby Elementary	93.31%	93.27%
Johnson Elementary	93.41%	93.18%
Lee Elementary	96.04%	93.89%
Park Elementary	96.33%	94.22%
Roberts Elementary	94.97%	93.59%
Western Hills Elementary	95.78%	93.22%
Terrace Hills Middle School	94.94%	94.40%

In contrast to attendance, an important and noticeable decrease in reported discipline incidents has taken place at most of the Cohort 1 campuses. Five out of the seven Cohort 1 schools showed decreases in discipline referrals. The decreases were greatest at the elementary level. Crosby ES had a decrease of 3.5%, Park ES had a decrease of 71.8%, Roberts ES had a decrease of 91.6%, and Western Hills ES had a decrease of 92.9% in discipline referrals. At the middle school level, Terrace Hills MS had a decrease of 29.9% in discipline referrals. Collectively, the five schools had a 57.94% reduction in discipline referrals.

Two schools did not see reductions in discipline. In fact, both Johnson ES and Lee ES saw increases in discipline referrals. Johnson ES experienced an increase of 16.1%, and Lee ES experienced an increase of 30.3%. It is unclear whether the implementation of SEL lagged in its effect on school discipline data, or whether there were other climate and event-related considerations that led the two elementary schools to show trends opposite most of the Cohort 1 campuses. Nevertheless, on average, including the data from the schools that showed opposite discipline trends, Cohort 1 experienced a discipline referral drop of 34.7%.

¹⁰ Data Source: The Pulse

The finding with regard to discipline referrals is powerful not only in that it shows an early positive result for the implementation of the program, but also because the district had been plagued by discipline referral rates that were significantly higher than neighboring districts, and districts of its size across the state. Indeed, one of the reasons for implementing Social Emotional Learning at the district was the alarming rate of discipline referrals (Cabrera, 2017). Although the district has seen a steady reduction in referrals since 2013, the average drop for the district during current academic year was 9%. The SEL sites, on average, saw reductions more than three times the district average.

Social Emotional Learning programs emphasize culture building, restorative discipline, and growth mindset. Together, these tenants shift the classroom conversation away from punitive practices and toward the growth of the child. On their face, the results from the seven cohort schools show that in addition to district policies leading to reductions in referrals; the lead sites are shifting their classroom expectations and behaviors toward discipline.

Table 3.2: Discipline Incidents at the SEL Cohort 1 Schools¹¹

School	2015-2016	2016-2017
<i>Crosby Elementary</i>	369	356
<i>Johnson Elementary</i>	47	56
<i>Lee Elementary</i>	94	135
<i>Park Elementary</i>	294	83
<i>Roberts Elementary</i>	48	4
<i>Western Hills Elementary</i>	57	4
<i>Terrace Hills Middle School</i>	708	496

¹¹ Data Source: EPISD Data Warehouse

4- How do Cohort 1 Campuses view their implementation success?

The district collaborated with CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, to implement the Social Emotional Learning initiative at the district. The collaborative works with 10 districts nationwide implementing social emotional learning programs. Through the collaborative, districts become members of the Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI), where districts can participate in data-sharing. One of the data collection activities that districts in the CDI can perform is the Social Emotional Learning School Implementation Report. Data from that report is presented here to determine how Cohort 1 schools view their implementation success.

Methodology

The Social Emotional Implementation Report (CASEL, 2017) provided by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning was used to gauge how Cohort 1 schools view their implementation success. The extensively validated survey contains 50 questions on 6 core areas (developing a vision for SEL, assessing SEL resources, SEL professional learning, evidence-based SEL programs, schoolwide SEL integration, and SEL continuous improvement). Cohort 1 schools committed to participating in the survey as part of their professional learning day during the month of February 2017. The total participation rate was 91% across Cohort 1 campuses. All campus personnel were encouraged to participate irrespective of role.

Results

The overall Cohort 1 results show a positive trend in perceptions for campus personnel for the implementation of Social Emotional Learning. Most respondents believe a SEL vision is being developed at their campus. Items under this core area included whether the campus had developed a vision; whether the vision was communicated; whether leaders had established SEL as a campus priority; and whether leaders, students, parents, and teachers were involved in creating the vision. Staff were also asked whether they believed SEL was an important component of their job performance.

Similarly, respondents had positive perceptions of resource assessment. Items under this core area focused on whether schools were carefully reviewing programs and data. Additionally, the survey asked whether the school had conducted a needs assessment, whether it was shared, and whether it led to the creation of long-term goals. The results for this core area are fundamental to the success of the initiative. Data-based decisions and long-term planning are crucial to the development and growth of new programs at campuses.

The third core area focused on professional learning. Staff at Cohort 1 schools responded positively to being provided with opportunities to learn about Social Emotional Learning. Questions under this core area focused on whether professional development focused on Social Emotional Learning; whether connections were made to student outcomes; and whether staff was instructed on how to incorporate the skills into everyday practices. Further, the survey asked teachers whether they were provided with coaching, professional learning communities, or other resources to develop SEL competency in their professional development.

The survey further asked respondents to answer questions about evidence-based programs. Although respondents responded positively to these items, no evidence-based program has been implemented thus far. Rather, all Cohort 1 schools have been trained in the fundamentals of SEL implementation, they have learned about specific SEL tools available for use during instruction, and most schools implement positive behavior intervention strategies (PBIS) at their campus. However, no formal program has been purchased to aid in the implementation of Social Emotional Learning at the district. Perhaps it is the case that respondents think either their SEL trainings are an evidence-based program, or that PBIS is the evidence-based program that goes along with the implementation of SEL. It is likewise possible that the wording of the question lent itself to multiple interpretations by the staff at the Cohort 1 schools. The department of Student and Family Empowerment is working on strategies to more broadly inform the cohorts about evidence-based programs and whether those will become available.

Another core area measured in the survey was schoolwide implementation of SEL. The questions were centered around whether adults were expected to promote the social and emotional

development of students; whether the school had enough support and coordination for the program; whether discipline practices were reflective of SEL; and whether school activities were woven through the lens of social emotional learning. Notably, 89% of all Cohort 1 campus staff responded positively to questions under this area. The results indicate that beyond Cohort 1 teams, most of the campus staff has perceived that SEL is part of their campus culture. This finding is indicative of a highly successful implementation of SEL at Cohort 1 schools.

The final area of focus in the survey was continuous improvement. The questions used to measure this core area focused on whether implementation was monitored actively, and whether climate data informed school practices. Most schools responded positively to this question. Additionally, recall from the professional development data, one of the capacity building training sessions focused on skill development in analyzing school data to enable campuses to look at their data critically to make decisions and establish goals.

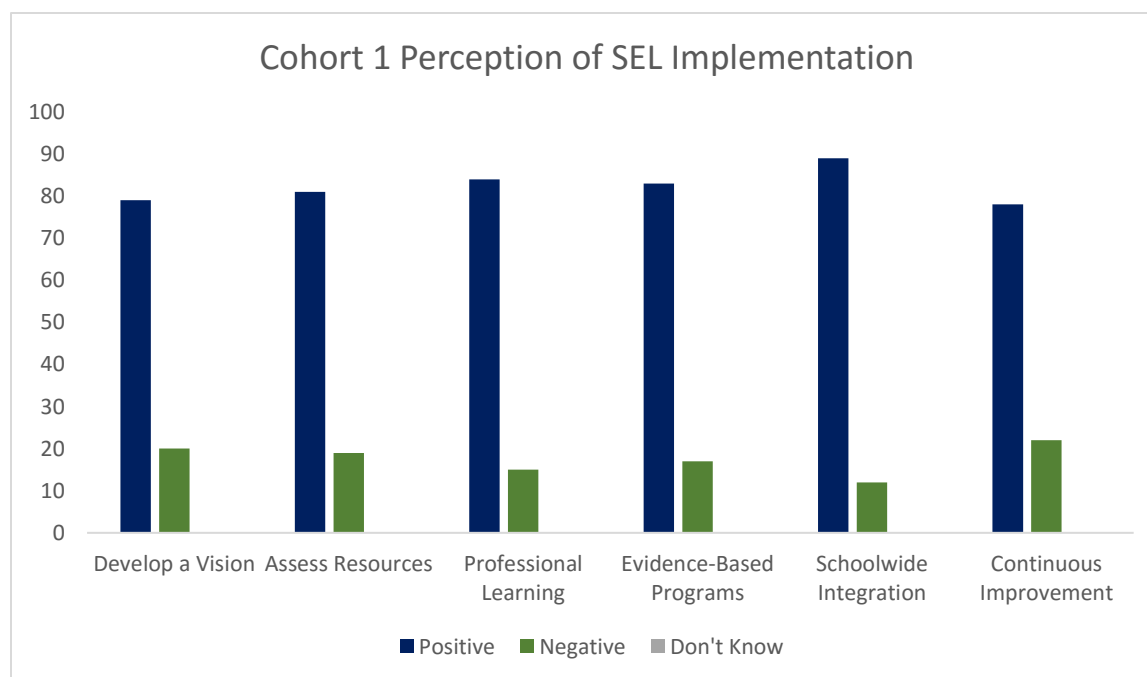


Figure 6.1: Cohort 1 Perception of SEL Implementation¹²

¹² Data Source: CASEL Implementation Survey

The data from the SEL implementation survey showcases a highly successful implementation year, despite a possible misconception about the adoption of an evidence-based program. School staff perceives an involvement and commitment to the SEL vision, they believe their campus has adequate resources to implement the initiative, and they believe they receive sufficient professional development to implement SEL successfully. Similarly, the staff believes SEL has been woven into the campus culture and perceived that decisions are made based on available data.

These findings are important first because they highlight a successful start to the district-wide implementation of SEL, and perhaps more importantly, they highlight a first cohort that will be able to train and mentor future cohorts as they implement SEL. The goal of the program moving forward is to follow a model where Cohort 1 schools provide extensive training and coaching to future cohorts. Therefore, successful year 1 implementation was necessary to enable the subsequent cohort to thrive.

Summary

The Social Emotional Learning program implementation had a successful implementation year. Data from capacity building sessions show that Cohort 1 schools had positive experiences and were engaged in learning at the capacity building sessions. Furthermore, perceptual student data show that students have positive school climates and view their school as a safe place to learn. The program did not show attendance gains at the Cohort 1 schools during implementation year; however, there was a robust decrease in discipline incidents at most Cohort 1 campuses. Staff data similarly show that the overall staff at the Cohort 1 schools is invested and aware of the implementation of Social Emotional Learning at their campus. One noteworthy finding from the staff data is that staff believe an evidence-based program is already being implemented. Although evidence-based programs are being considered, no final decision has been made and no program has thus far been purchased. Similarly, there is a need to develop a measure to determine whether SEL implementation has been successful for central office staff.

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