![Department of Research and Evaluation — Austin Independent School District]

2013–2014 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Update:
Analysis of the Tri-Level Program Implementation Rubric

INTRODUCTION

Starting in 2012–2013, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) coaches in Austin Independent School District (AISD) rated SEL program schools on the degree to which they implemented 10 domains program staff believed to best exemplify program goals. Some schools were rated in 2012–2013, and all 71 participating schools were rated in 2013–2014. This report describes key findings from a study of the validity and reliability of the SEL tri-level program implementation rubric (Lamb, 2014).

SCHOOL SEL IMPLEMENTATION RATINGS

Results showed schools received inconsistent scores over time, across levels, and across SEL coaches. Five domain scores and the total implementation score at the elementary school level in 2013–2014 were significantly higher

than were scores at the secondary school level (Figure 1; Appendix A). Similarly, the total implementation score and all but one domain score on the rubric were significantly higher in 2013–2014 than in 2012–2013. It is unclear if improvements in scores should be attributed to greater fidelity of implementation or resulted from the addition of SEL coaches in 2013–2014. Importantly, analysis of total implementation scores for each SEL coach found that one of the seven SEL coaches consistently rated schools lower than did the other coaches, and another consistently rated schools higher than did some of the other coaches. Differences across SEL coaches also emerged, although they were not significant, based on school level assigned.
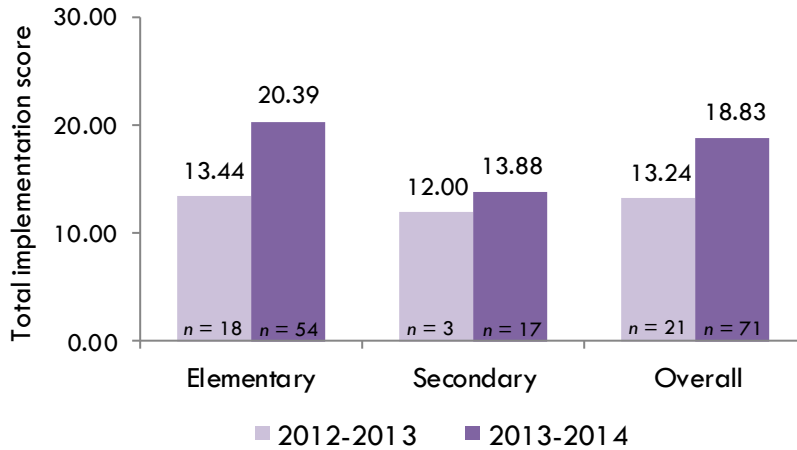

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

In 2011–2012, AISD began implementation of the SEL program to help students and staff acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. The SEL program aims to improve students' and staff members' attitudes and beliefs about SEL competencies, to improve the culture on campuses, to promote SEL skills, to decrease disciplinary referrals, and to improve student achievement. In 2011–2012, the first cohort of schools began implementing SEL, with all schools set to implement the program by 2015–2016.

Lindsay M. Lamb, Ph.D.

Figure 1. Average Scores on the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Tri-Level Program Implementation Rubric, by Level and Year

Overall scores were higher in 2013–2014 than in 2012–2013, and elementary scores were higher, on average, than were secondary scores.

Although total scores were higher in 2013–2014 than they were the previous year, total scores did not vary based on SEL cohort (i.e., the year a school implemented the SEL program). Schools were rated significantly higher in 2013–2014 than in 2012–2013, regardless of SEL entry year.
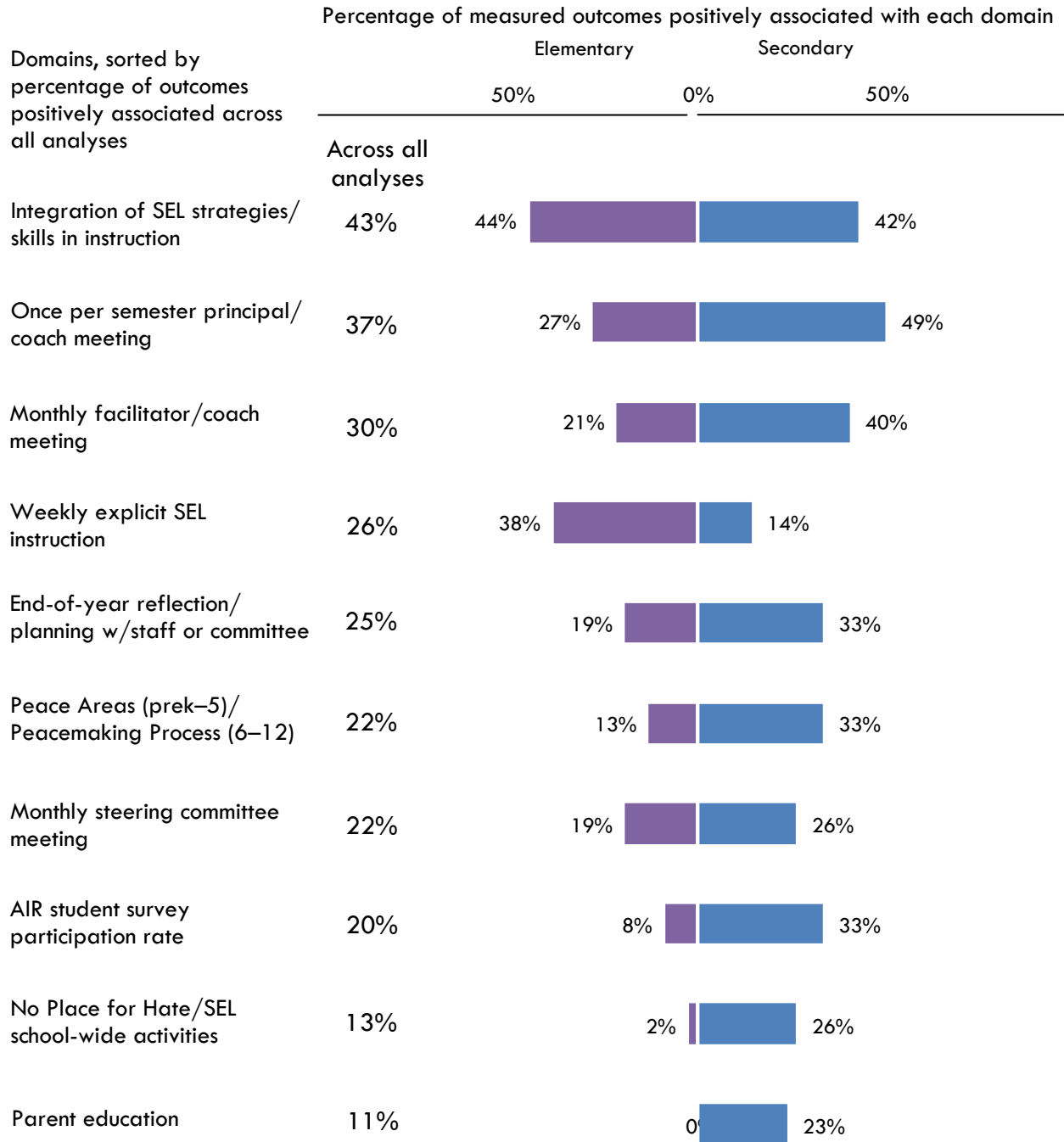
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IMPLEMENTATION RATINGS AND OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

Analyses documenting relationships between the tri-level program implementation rubric and outcome measures of interest showed some, but not all, domains positively related to program success (Figure 2). Integration of SEL activities was the domain most consistently related to outcomes of interest. Differences emerged according to school level, and relationships were generally stronger at the secondary level than at the elementary level. At the elementary school level, but not at the secondary school level, ratings of weekly explicit SEL instruction were strongly related to several outcome measures. Ratings of once per semester principal/coach meetings were positively related to program outcomes at the secondary level, but were less so at the elementary level. Notably, participation in No Place for Hate activities, implementation of parent education classes, and participation in the American Institutes for Research (AIR) survey were least consistently related to program outcomes.

Rubric domains most related to outcomes of interest

Integration of SEL skills

Weekly explicit SEL instruction

Once per semester principal/coach meetings

Figure 2. Percentage of Positive Outcomes Associated With Each 2013–2014 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Tri-level Program Implementation Domain, by Level

Scores for integration of SEL strategies/skills in instruction positively related to nearly half of the outcomes at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Domains, sorted by percentage of outcomes positively associated across all analyses	Across all analyses	Percentage of measured outcomes positively associated with each domain	
		Elementary	Secondary
Integration of SEL strategies/skills in instruction	43%	44%	42%
Once per semester principal/coach meeting	37%	27%	49%
Monthly facilitator/coach meeting	30%	21%	40%
Weekly explicit SEL instruction	26%	38%	14%
End-of-year reflection/planning w/staff or committee	25%	19%	33%
Peace Areas (prek–5)/Peacemaking Process (6–12)	22%	13%	33%
Monthly steering committee meeting	22%	19%	26%
AIR student survey participation rate	20%	8%	33%
No Place for Hate/SEL school-wide activities	13%	2%	26%
Parent education	11%	0%	23%

Note. Percentages were computed by summing the total number of positive correlations above .30 and dividing by the total number of possible correlations (i.e., 48 at the elementary level, 43 at the secondary level, 91 across all).

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE RUBRIC

Analysis of the internal consistency of the rubric found that not all domains were strongly related to each other. Similarly, analysis assessing the reliability of tri-level program implementation domain scores from 2012–2013 to 2013–2014 revealed that only two domains (i.e., weekly explicit SEL instruction and integration of SEL skills and strategies) produced consistent estimates over time. Although this may reflect true differences in implementation over time, it appears that the tri-level program implementation rubric could benefit from some revisions.

A composite reliability estimate was computed across all domain scores to determine how well the complete rubric measured SEL implementation. Estimates were also produced to determine if the overall reliability of the rubric improved if a specific domain was dropped. Results showed the combination of all 10 domains reliably measured SEL implementation at both the elementary and secondary levels. However, at the elementary level, the reliability of the implementation rubric improved slightly when parent education and participation in the online AIR student survey were dropped from the rubric. At the secondary level, the reliability of the implementation rubric improved when peacemaking areas and participation in the online AIR student survey were dropped from the rubric.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the domains on the tri-level implementation rubric appear to measure SEL implementation as a concept. However, examinations of each domain suggest that not all domains measure SEL implementation as effectively as do others. Reliability analyses of each domain over time suggest the tri-level program implementation rubric might better measure program implementation if it were limited to integration of SEL strategies or skills in instruction, weekly explicit SEL instruction at the elementary school level, and once-per-semester principal/SEL coach meetings at the secondary school level. However, it is important for program staff to work together to ensure that the elements included in the implementation rubric truly measure concepts integral to program implementation. Other domains may be more relevant than some of those previously measured.

SEL coaches were not provided with ongoing training to calibrate implementation ratings. Regardless of school level or SEL cohort, many individual domain scores, including the total implementation score, were significantly higher in 2013–2014 than they were in 2012–2013. Given that only two coaches provided implementation ratings in 2012–2013, it is unclear if implementation ratings were higher in 2013–2014 because of the addition of new SEL coaches, or if schools were simply better at implementing SEL in 2012–2013 than in 2013–2014. Analyses of the 2013–2014 SEL tri-level program implementation ratings across the seven SEL coaches found that one SEL coach consistently provided ratings significantly lower than those of five of the six remaining coaches. Although not statistically significant, it appeared that SEL coaches at the secondary level rated schools lower than did SEL coaches at the elementary school level. These differences could reflect greater fidelity of implementation at the elementary level than at the secondary level, which would suggest the rubric should differ for elementary and secondary schools.
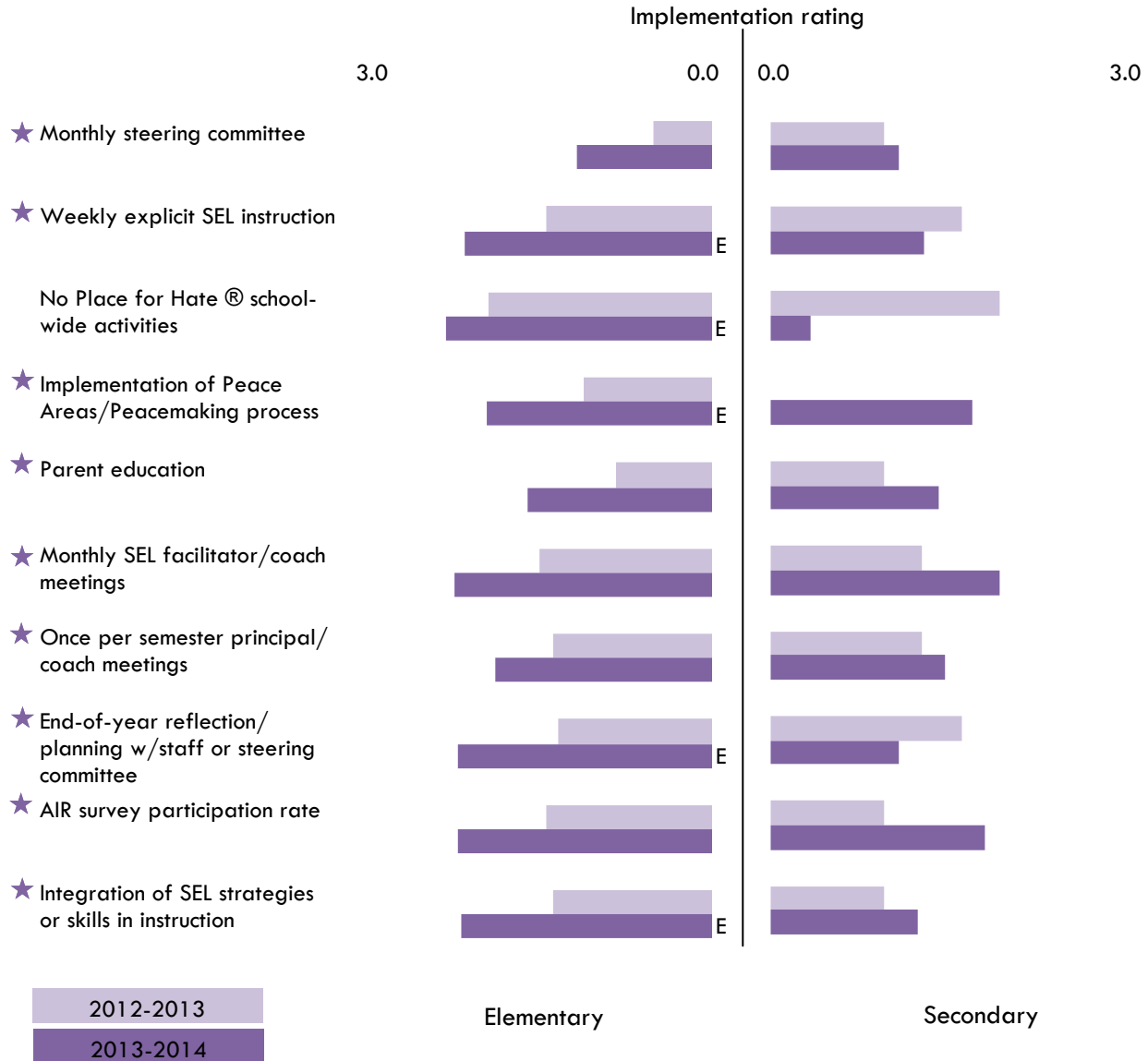
Although the SEL tri-level program implementation rubric is a good first step at measuring program implementation, addressing the following recommendations will help ensure the rubric more strongly measures SEL implementation.

1. **Remove domains from the tri-level program implementation rubric that are inconsistent over time or do not relate to program outcomes.** Some program implementation domains appeared more effective at measuring SEL implementation at the elementary school level than at the secondary level (or vice versa). To keep the implementation rubric consistent across school levels, removing participation in monthly steering committee meetings, participation in No Place for Hate activities, implementation of parent education classes, and participation in the AIR survey would create a stronger measure of program implementation. Also, given that program staff reported that weekly explicit SEL instruction, implementation of peace areas/peacemaking processes, and SEL integration were integral to measuring SEL implementation, implementation scores could be based on these three domains alone. Alternatively, the rubric could be adjusted so these domains receive more weight when computing total implementation scores.

2. **Create two rating systems for SEL schools: one that is based on program implementation and one that is a checklist for participation in specific SEL activities.** Some of the domains that were weakly related to program outcomes or produced inconsistent ratings over time seemed to reflect basic SEL requirements or participation in certain activities (e.g., participation in monthly steering committee meetings, student participation rates in the AIR survey). Although these elements might be important to monitor ongoing program participation, they might not be integral to measuring the quality of program implementation. Therefore, creating two separate forms (i.e., a program implementation rubric and a separate checklist for program activities) might benefit the program.

3. **Add a domain to the implementation rubric that documents the extent to which campuses address SEL competencies.** To determine if AISD's implementation rubric aligns with the SEL competencies established by CASEL and measured by AIR (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision making) a domain measuring the degree to which each SEL competency is integrated on campuses might benefit the program.

4. **Increase the range of possible scores on the implementation rubric to allow campuses to demonstrate more growth over time and to increase the range of scores.** If the goal of the SEL tri-level program implementation rubric is to monitor how campus implementation ratings improve over time and to distinguish campuses that are implementing well, increasing the range of possible scores (e.g., increasing ratings from 0–3 to 0–5 in each domain) might provide schools with greater opportunity to do so. A wider spread in ratings would increase the variability between schools and make it possible to better identify schools that implement SEL more effectively than do others.

5. **Provide ongoing training for SEL coaches to calibrate ratings across SEL coaches.** To ensure that SEL coaches provide similar ratings regardless of which schools they rate, ongoing training on the SEL rubric would benefit the program. During the training, coaches should rate a hypothetical situation in each domain and discuss ratings as a group to reach a consensus on the appropriate rating. Such training will improve the reliability of implementation ratings across SEL coaches and improve reliability of scores over time.

6. **Ensure that SEL coaches rate campus implementation without input from campus representatives (e.g., principals, SEL facilitators, counselors).** Discussions with program staff revealed that principals sometimes influenced their campuses' final implementation score even when SEL coaches disagreed. To ensure that schools receive an objective implementation score, SEL coaches should rate campuses without the influence of campus staff. After scores have been finalized, SEL coaches could have a feedback meeting with principals and other campus administrators to discuss their implementation ratings and talk about strengths and weaknesses in their ratings. If a disagreement arises, principals could be given the opportunity to file a grievance with SEL program staff.

Appendix A. Average Scores on the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Tri-Level Program Implementation Rubric, by Level and Year

Overall scores were higher in 2013–2014 than in 2012–2013 for five domains, and elementary scores were higher, on average, than were secondary scores for the same five domains.

Note. Elementary n =18 in 2012–2013 and n = 54 in 2013–2014; secondary n = 3 in 2012–2013 and n = 17 in 2013–2014.

★ Overall ratings were significantly higher in 2013–2014 than in 2012–2013 ($p < .05$).

E Elementary ratings were significantly higher than were secondary ratings in 2013–2014 ($p < .05$).

Appendix B. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Tri-Level Program Implementation Rubric

Domain	Implementation level		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
1. Monthly steering committee	Monthly steering committee – meet 6 times	Monthly steering committee meetings – meet 7 times	Monthly steering committee meetings – include parents or students – meet 7 times
2. Weekly explicit SEL instruction	Weekly explicit SEL instruction (30 minutes/week) using curriculum and resource provided by district – 50% of staff implementing (HS in advisory or seminar)	Weekly explicit SEL instruction – 70% of staff implementing	Weekly explicit SEL instruction – 90% of staff implementing
3. No Place for Hate®/ SEL school-wide activities	3 No Place for Hate®/ SEL school-wide activities	3 No Place for Hate®/ SEL school-wide activities – teachers involved in at least one activity	3 No Place for Hate®/ SEL school-wide activities – teachers and parents involved in at least one activity
4. Implementation of peace areas (PK-5)/ peacemaking process (6-12)	Implement Peace Areas (PK-5) / Peacemaking Process (6-12) in 50% classrooms/common areas	Implement Peace Areas (PK-5) / Peacemaking Process (6-12) in 70% classrooms/common areas	Implement Peace Areas (PK-5) / Peacemaking Process (6-12) in 90% classrooms/common areas
5. Parent education	Parent Education – 1 session SEL related	Parent Education – 2 sessions SEL related	Parent Education – 3 sessions SEL related
6. Monthly SEL facilitator/SEL coach meeting	Monthly facilitator/coach meeting – at least 6 meetings	Monthly facilitator/coach meeting – at least 7 meetings, including 3 collaborative classroom visits	Monthly facilitator/coach meeting – at least 8 meetings, including 4 collaborative classroom visits
7. Once per semester principal/SEL coach meeting	Once per semester principal/coach meeting	Once per semester principal/coach meeting – one administrative action goal agreed upon and implemented	Once per semester principal/coach meeting – two administrative action goals agreed upon and implemented
8. End-of-year reflection/planning with staff or steering committee	End-of-year reflection/ planning with staff or steering committee	End-of-year reflection/ planning with staff – 90% staff participating in person or in writing	End-of-year reflection/ planning with staff – 90% staff participating in person with facilitator and coach
9. American Institutes for Research (AIR) online student survey participation rate	AIR online survey at 3rd, 7th, 10th grades – 50% participation	AIR online survey at 3rd, 7th, 10th grades – 70% participation	AIR online survey at 3rd, 7th, 10th grades – 90% participation
10. Integration of SEL strategies or skills in instruction	Integration of SEL strategies or skills in instruction – evident in 30% of classrooms in campus visits	Integration of SEL skills or strategies in instruction – evident in 60% of classrooms in campus visits	Integration of SEL skills or strategies in instruction – evident in 90% of classrooms in campus visits

Source. 2013–2014 SEL Tri-level Implementation Plan for prekindergarten through 12th grade
Note. Schools received a score of 0 if their level of implementation was less than 1.

REFERENCES

Lamb, L. M. (2014). *2013–2014 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) update: Analysis of the tri-level program implementation rubric* (DRE publication No. 13.91). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District.