



Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Research Brief: The Effects of Program Implementation and Longevity, 2011–2012 Through 2016–2017

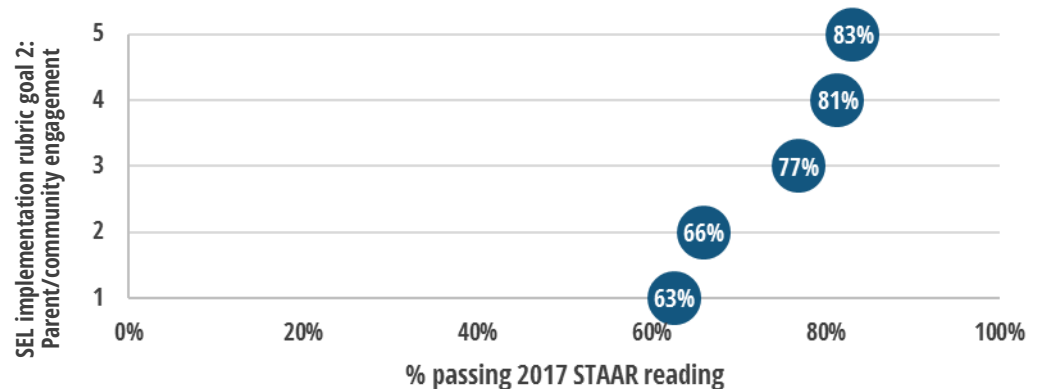
About This Report

Using the revised social and emotional learning (SEL) school-level implementation rubric, school-level analyses were conducted to determine if the degree to which schools implemented SEL with fidelity had more of an influence on program outcomes (i.e., school-level performance on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness [STAAR], school-level attendance, school-level discipline, school-level ratings of climate by students and staff) than did the number of years a school had participated in SEL. This research brief outlines key takeaways from the full report.

School-level SEL implementation matters.

Several positive results emerged suggesting that the degree to which schools implement SEL with fidelity relate to long-term outcomes associated with SEL. Many of these results also controlled for baseline data (i.e., data from 2010–2011, the year prior to district SEL implementation, which was available for most data sources) and longevity in SEL. One positive result was that elementary school students' performance on STAAR reading was higher at schools with more opportunities to engage family and community members in SEL than at schools with fewer opportunities, regardless of longevity in SEL (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Elementary schools that held more frequent opportunities to engage parents and community members in SEL predicted 2016–2017 STAAR reading performance, regardless of length of time in SEL.

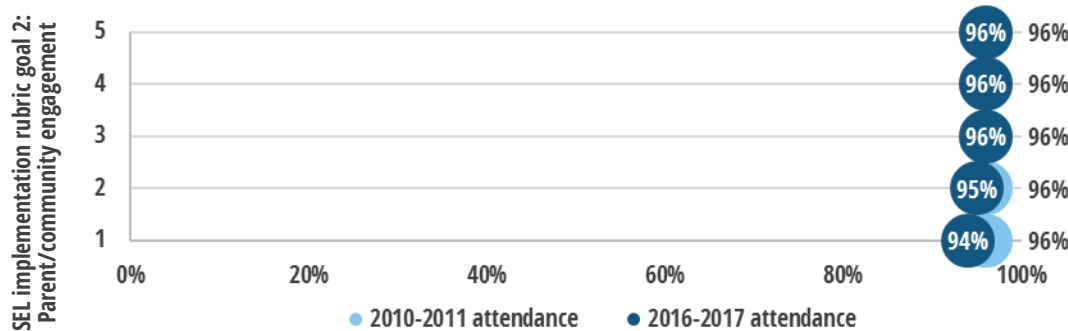


Source. 2016–2017 STAAR, school-level SEL implementation ratings, and school-level percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged

Note. $\beta = 1.73$, $p < .05$. Because the 2016–2017 STAAR exam differed so much from the 2011–2012 STAAR exam, this analysis controlled for the school percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged rather than 2012 STAAR performance.

Additionally, after controlling for baseline attendance rates (i.e., 2010–2011 attendance), elementary schools where parents and families felt engaged in opportunities to learn about SEL also had high attendance rates in 2016–2017 (Figure 2).

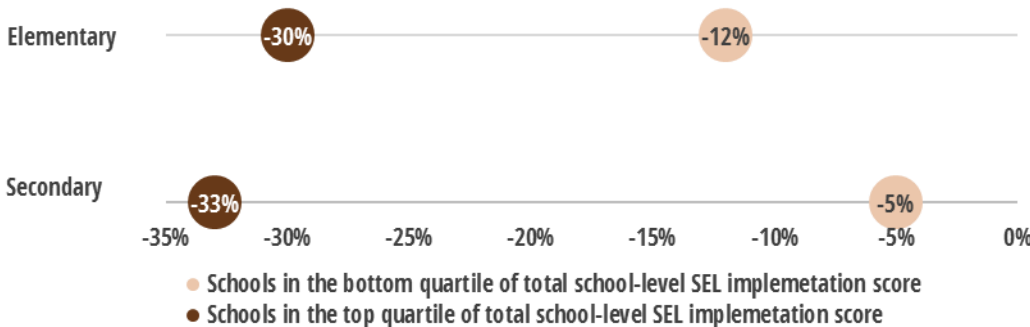
Figure 2. After controlling for 2010–2011 attendance, elementary schools where parents and families were provided more opportunities to engage in SEL predicted higher attendance rates in 2016–2017, regardless of length of time in SEL.



Source. 2010–2011 to 2016–2017 attendance and 2016–2017 school-level SEL implementation ratings
 Note. $\beta = .18, p < .05$

Positive results were also found relating to discipline. At the secondary level, schools in the top quartile of total implementation ratings had a greater percentage decrease in discipline rates than did schools in the bottom quartile of implementation ratings (a decrease of 33% compared to a decrease of 5%; Figure 3). Also of note, students’ reliable integrated trend scores (RITS) were lower at secondary schools where parents and community members were engaged in SEL activities than at schools where they were not engaged, regardless of longevity in SEL.

Figure 3. The percentage change in students receiving discretionary removals was greater at secondary schools in the top quartile of total school-level SEL implementation ratings than at secondary schools in the bottom quartile of total school-level SEL implementation ratings.



Source. 2010–2011 to 2016–2017 school-level percentage of students with discretionary removals
 Note. N counts are as follows: elementary $n = 16$, secondary $n = 17$
 Elementary schools with fewer than 1% of students receiving discretionary removals were excluded from the analyses. Additionally, Jordan and Norman were excluded because their discipline data were outside the normal range.

Data Sources Used in This Report

STAAR

The percentages of 3rd- through 8th-grade students passing the STAAR reading and math in 2016–2017 were analyzed.

AISD discipline data

The percentages of students with discretionary infractions (excluding mandatory removals) from 2010–2011 through 2016–2017 were analyzed.

AISD attendance data

Students’ average attendance rates, along with chronic absenteeism (i.e., 15 or more absences a year), from 2010–2011 through 2016–2017 were analyzed.

AISD Student Climate Survey

Students’ perceptions of school climate, including SEL-specific perceptions, were analyzed from 2010–2011 through 2016–2017 (when available).

SEL implementation

In 2016–2017, schools were rated across 18 domains considered integral to SEL implementation. Detailed information about the rubric can be found in Lamb (2017).

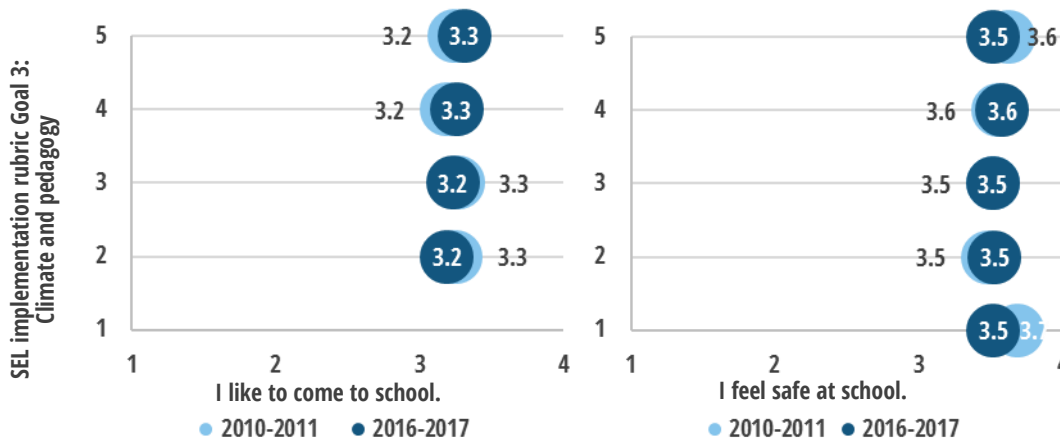
Staff climate and perceptions of SEL

SEL-related items from the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, Learning (TELL) Staff Climate Survey and the Employee Coordinated Survey were analyzed from 2010–2011 through 2016–2017 (when available).

School climate matters

Additionally, several important outcomes emerged relating to students' and staff's perceptions of school climate, after controlling for baseline data (i.e., 2010–2011 data when available) and longevity in SEL. For example, at the elementary school level, schools where SEL was more integrated into school climate and pedagogy had students who felt safer at school, and liked coming to school more than did students from schools with less integrated SEL (Figure 4). Similar results were not documented at the secondary level.

Figure 4. Elementary schools where SEL strategies were integrated into school climate and pedagogy had students with higher ratings of “I like to come to school” and “I feel safe at school” in 2016–2017 than did schools with less integrated SEL, regardless of years in SEL.

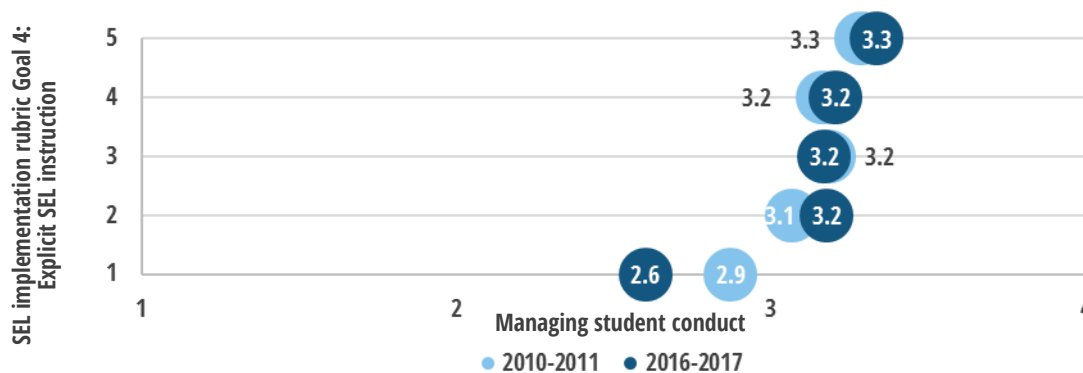


Source. 2010–2011 to 2016–2017 school-level Student Climate Survey ratings and 2016–2017 school-level SEL implementation ratings

Note. Survey ratings ranged from 1 = never to 4 = a lot of the time. $\beta = .03, p < .05$; $\beta = .03, p < .05$

In terms of staff's perceptions of school climate, secondary schools where SEL-explicit instruction was more frequent and student-driven had staff who felt more confident in their abilities to manage student behavior (Figure 5). Also at the secondary level, schools where SEL was integrated into school climate and instructional pedagogy had staff who believed their school was a good place to work and learn. Positive results were also documented at the elementary school level. For example, elementary schools where families and community members frequently engaged in SEL activities had staff who believed their school was a good place to work and learn than at schools with less frequent

Figure 5. Secondary school staff felt more confident in their ability to manage students' behavior in 2016–2017 at schools where SEL explicit instruction was more frequent than at schools where it was less frequent, regardless of longevity in SEL.



Source. 2010–2011 through 2016–2017 TELL Survey and 2016–2017 school-level SEL implementation ratings

Note. TELL response options ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree; ratings are rounded to the nearest tenth. $\beta = .11, p = .08$

Data sources used in this report, continued.

SEL-related personal development report card ratings

Teachers of elementary school students in prekindergarten through 6th grade provide ratings of their students' SEL-related personal development skills every 9 weeks. Students with scores during each time period were included. An average of the five common skills across grades and the four 9-week grading periods was computed. Data from 2013–2104 through 2016–2017 were analyzed.

Reference

Lamb, L. M. (2017). *Social and emotional learning technical report: An analysis of the revised school-level SEL implementation rubric and the SEL specialists' activity log* (DRE publication No. 16.46). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District.

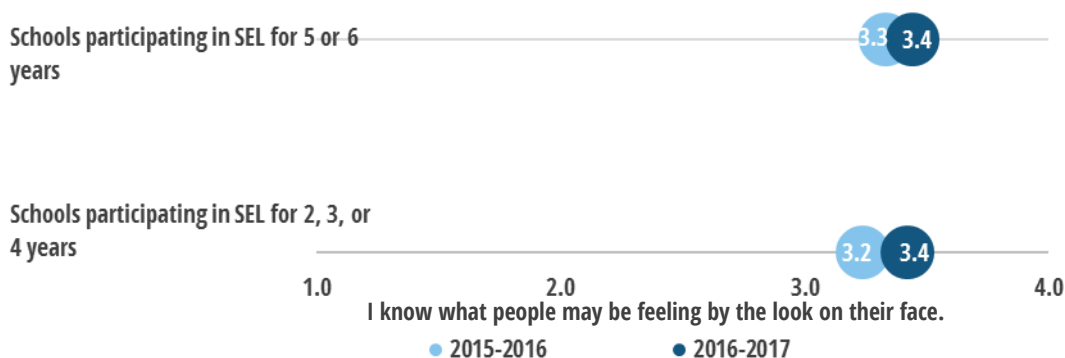
parent and community engagement. Also at the elementary school level, schools where teachers felt more autonomous in their work predicted high STAAR passing rates in reading. These results provide compelling evidence that the work the SEL specialists have done to improve school climate and culture has taken root at many schools in AISD, and likely drives effective SEL implementation. However, most of the positive trends related to students' perceptions of climate were at the elementary school level, suggesting additional support for the specialists' work might be needed to make these improvements at secondary schools.

Longevity in SEL matters less than implementation.

As discussed earlier, the degree to which schools implemented SEL with fidelity positively related to outcomes of interest, even after controlling for longevity in SEL. Indeed, few positive relationships emerged relating to longevity in SEL alone. For example, at secondary schools, students' abilities to recognize how their peers were feeling increased more at schools participating in SEL for a shorter period of time than at schools participating in SEL for a longer time (Figure 6). Additionally, elementary schools participating in SEL for fewer years had a higher percentage of students passing STAAR math than did schools participating in SEL for a longer time.

Figure 6.

Secondary schools participating in SEL for fewer years had a greater increase in students perceiving they know what others are feeling based on the looks on their faces in 2016–2017 than did schools participating in SEL for more years.



Source. 2011–2012 to 2016–2017 Student Climate Survey ratings and 2016–2017 school-level SEL implementation ratings.

Note. Student climate survey range from 1 = *never* to 4 = *a lot of the time*. $F(1, 77) = 5.71, p < .05$. Ratings are rounded to the nearest tenth.

What can schools do to improve SEL implementation?

Results from this report suggest that successful SEL implementation is not a result of the length of time a school has spent in the program, but rather a culmination of infusing SEL into the fabric of the school. Importantly, school administrators can work with their SEL specialist and facilitators to focus on the following areas to improve SEL implementation:

- Actively integrate SEL into the climate and culture of the school, including subject-specific curriculum
- Involve parents, families, and the school community in SEL-related learning opportunities
- Support staff members in improvement of their SEL skills

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January, 2018

Publication 16.55RB