

Social Emotional Learning

Research Brief: The Effects of Program Implementation and Longevity, 2011–2012 Through 2015–2016

Purpose and Background

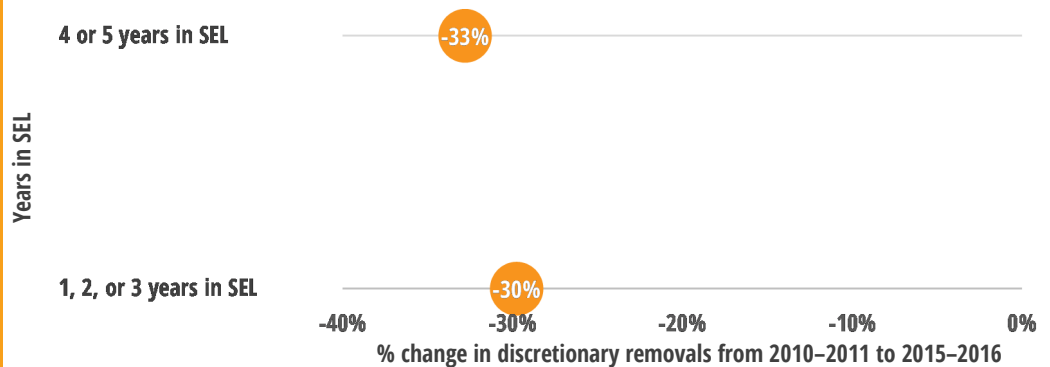
This research brief summarizes analyses presented by Lamb (2016) that sought to answer the following question: Do outcomes associated with the Austin Independent School District’s (AISD) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program improve more because of length of time in the program or program implementation? As district leaders move from focusing on district-wide implementation of SEL to ensuring that SEL is part of the culture and climate of AISD, it is imperative to document which factors are most critical to the program’s success.

SEL was implemented district wide in 2015–2016, with cohorts of schools joining the program, beginning in 2011–2012. As a result, years of participation in SEL varied from 1 year to 5 years. Because schools joined SEL at different time points, analyses were conducted with each of the key outcome variables, from 2010–2011 (when applicable) through 2015–2016. Analyses to assess the influence of implementation included school-level SEL implementation rubric ratings and students’ and staff members’ ratings of climate.

Did length of time in SEL positively influence program outcomes?

Analyses examining outcome variables from 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 revealed instances when length of time in SEL led to stronger program outcomes. For example, secondary schools with more years in SEL experienced a greater reduction in student discretionary discipline removals since 2010–2011 than did secondary schools with fewer years in SEL (Figure 1). At the elementary school level, the percentage change in

Figure 1.
Over the 5-year period, secondary schools with more years in SEL experienced a slightly greater reduction in discretionary infractions than did schools with fewer years in SEL.

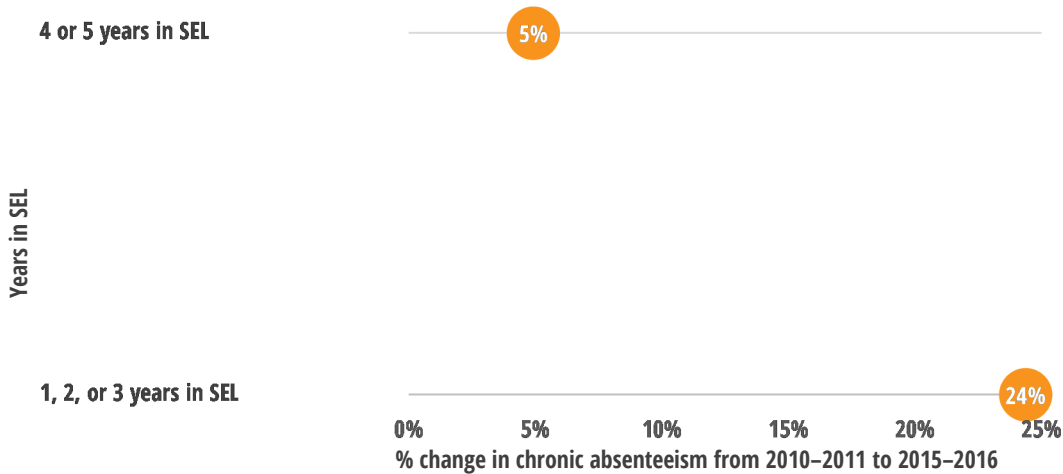


Source. 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 AISD discipline data
Note. The Alternative Learning Center (ALC) and International High School were excluded from the analysis.
 $F(1, 26) = 3.15, p < .05$



chronic absenteeism decreased more at elementary schools participating in SEL for 4 or 5 years than at elementary schools participating in SEL for 3 or fewer years (Figure 2).

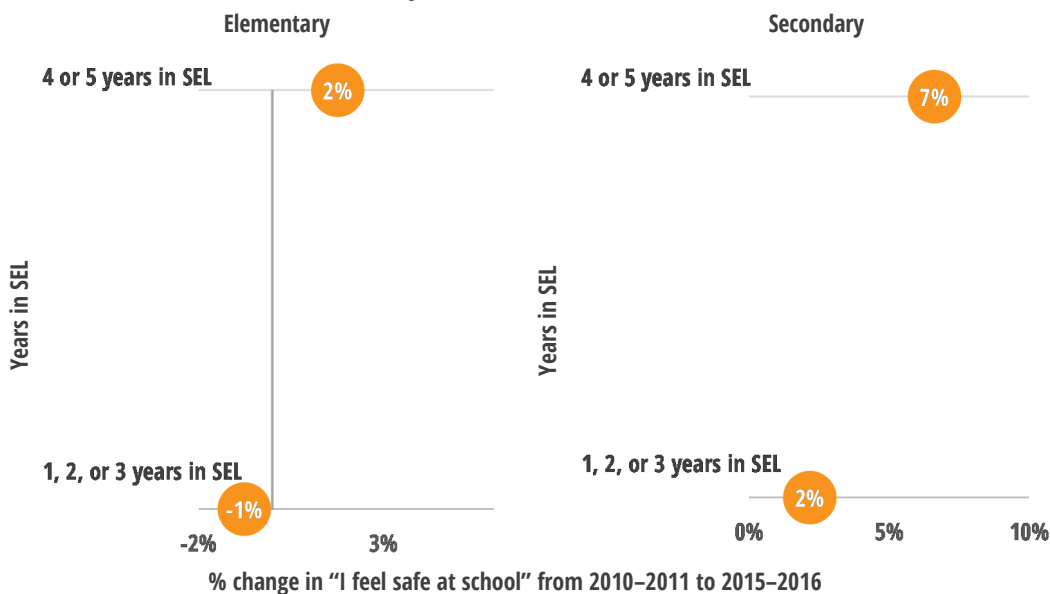
Figure 2. The percentage change in the rate of chronic absenteeism increased more at elementary schools with fewer years in SEL than at elementary schools with more years in SEL.



Source. 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 chronic absenteeism
Note. DAEP was excluded from the analysis. $F(1, 76) = 3.94, p < .01$

Additionally, elementary and secondary students experienced greater improvements in school safety at schools participating in SEL for 4 or 5 years than at schools participating in SEL for 3 or fewer years (Figure 3). Several other positive effects related to longevity in SEL and student climate and can be found in the full report (Lamb, 2016).

Figure 3. Elementary and secondary students from schools participating in SEL for at least 4 years experienced greater improvement in ratings of “I feel safe at my school” than did students from schools with fewer years in SEL.



Source. 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 Student Climate Survey ratings
Note. DAEP was excluded from the analysis. For elementary, $F(1, 74) = 5.86, p = .02$; for secondary, $F(1, 25) = 4.81, p = .03$

Data Analyzed in this Report

State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

STAAR reading and math data for 3rd through 8th grades from 2011–2012 to 2015–2016 were analyzed.

AISD discipline data

The percentages of students with discretionary infractions (excluding mandatory removals) from 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 were analyzed.

AISD attendance data

Students’ average daily attendance rates, along with chronic absenteeism (i.e., 15 or more absences a year), from 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 were analyzed.

AISD Student Climate Survey and SEL Skills

Students in grades 3 through 11 participated in the AISD Student Climate Survey. SEL-related items were analyzed from 2010–2011 through 2015–2016. In addition, students in grades 6 through 11 were asked to self-assess their SEL skills. A sample of elementary school students in grades 3 through 5 also participated in the survey.

SEL implementation

Schools participating in SEL are rated by their SEL coach across 10 domains considered integral to SEL implementation. The rubric was revised slightly in 2015–2016. Scores on each domain ranged from 1 to 5, with a maximum score of 50 across 10 domains.

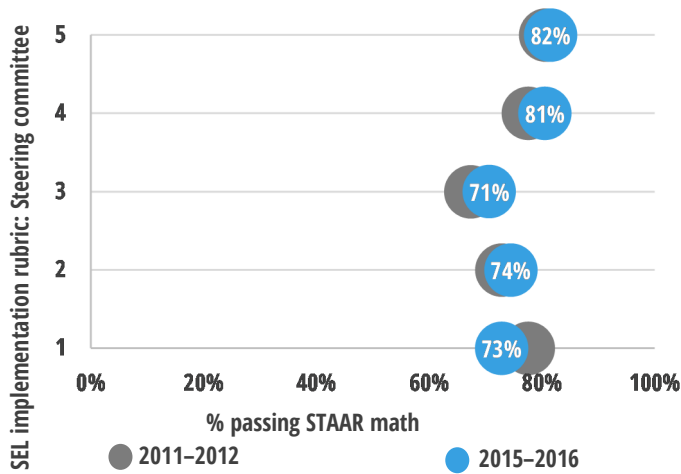
Staff climate and perceptions of SEL

SEL-related items on the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey (2010–2011 through 2015–2016) and the 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey (ECS) were analyzed.

Did degree of SEL implementation influence program outcomes?

Results analyzing longevity in SEL were positive; however, results examining the influence of school-wide SEL implementation told a slightly different story. For example, after controlling for baseline STAAR math performance and years in SEL, elementary schools with highly integrated SEL steering committees, compared with schools with low SEL integration, predicted high STAAR math performance in 2015–2016 (Figure 4). Similarly, elementary schools where SEL was integrated into more classrooms experienced a greater reduction in student discretionary discipline removals from 2010–2011 to 2015–2016 than did elementary schools where SEL was integrated into fewer classrooms, regardless of years in SEL or baseline disciplinary data (Figure 5).

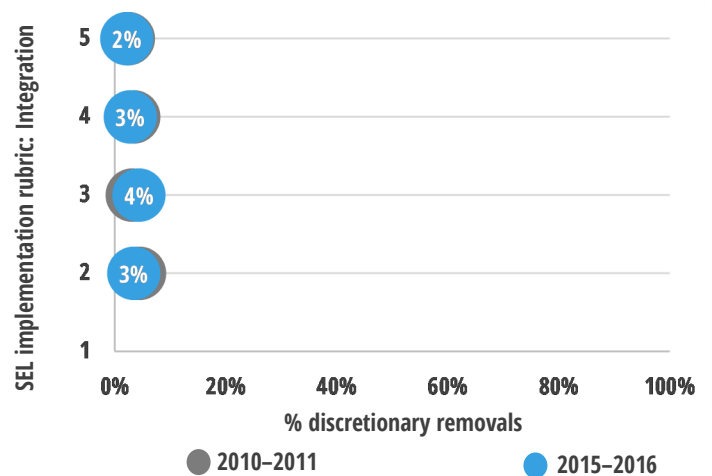
Figure 4. After controlling for baseline year, elementary schools with strong steering committees predicted 2015–2016 STAAR math performance, regardless of length of time in SEL.



Source. 2011–2012 through 2015–2016 STAAR data and 2015–2016 SEL implementation ratings

Note. $\beta = 1.29, p < .05$

Figure 5. Elementary schools where SEL was integrated with more fidelity experienced a greater reduction in discretionary removals in 2015–2016 than did elementary schools where SEL was implemented with less fidelity.

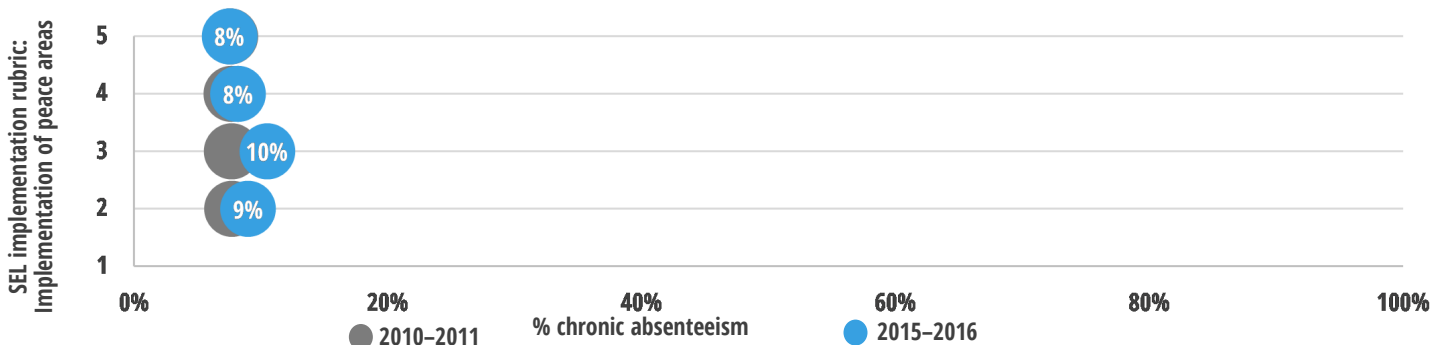


Source. 2010–2011 through 2015–2016 AISD discipline data and 2015–2016 SEL implementation ratings

Note. Schools with fewer than 1% of students receiving a discretionary infraction in 2010–2011 or 2015–2016 were excluded from the analysis. DAEP was excluded from the analysis. $\beta = -.70, p = .04$

After controlling for 2010–2011 chronic absenteeism, elementary schools where at least 90% of classrooms implemented peace areas had lower rates of chronic absenteeism in 2015–2016 than did schools where fewer classrooms implemented peace areas, regardless of length of time in SEL (Figure 6).

Figure 6. After controlling for 2010–2011 chronic absenteeism, elementary schools where at least 90% of classrooms implemented peace areas predicted low rates of chronic absenteeism in 2015–2016, regardless of time in SEL.



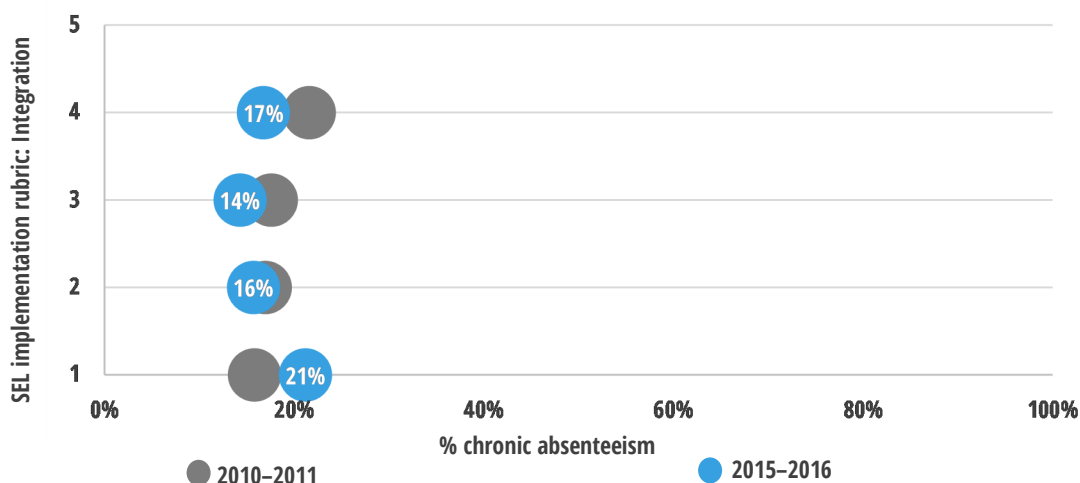
Source. 2011–2012 through 2015–2016 chronic absenteeism data and 2015–2016 Student Climate Survey data Note. Student Climate Survey response options ranged from 1 = never to 4 = a lot of the time. DAEP was excluded from the analysis.

$\beta = -.56, p = .05$

Similarly, at the secondary level, schools where at least 50% of classrooms integrated SEL predicted lower rates of chronic absenteeism in 2015–2016 than at schools where fewer classrooms integrated SEL, regardless of length of time in SEL (Figure 7). As reported by Lamb (2016), analyses of students' SEL skills found that elementary school students' ratings of several SEL skills were higher at schools with high SEL implementation ratings than at school with low SEL implementation ratings. These results suggest that longevity in SEL is not the only factor contributing to program success: the degree to which SEL is implemented with fidelity also matters.

Figure 7.

After controlling for 2010–2011 chronic absenteeism, secondary schools where at least 50% of classrooms integrated SEL predicted low rates of chronic absenteeism in 2015–2016, regardless of length of time in SEL.



Source. 2011–2012 through 2015–2016 chronic absenteeism data and 2015–2016 Student Climate Survey data. Note. Student Climate Survey response options ranged from 1 = *Never* to 4 = *A lot of the time*. ALC and International High School were excluded from the analysis.

$\beta = -1.3, p = .06$

Conclusion

Taken together, these results suggest that if schools wish to improve their students' social and emotional learning, longevity in the program is not the only key to success. In some instances, schools that had participated in SEL for a longer period of time experienced more positive results than did schools that had participated in SEL for fewer years; however, level of implementation also mattered. Most importantly, if schools wish to improve outcomes such as attendance, discipline, and academic achievement, they should focus on specific and consistent ways to improve school climate and culture, which will in turn improve SEL implementation. These improvements will then drive positive changes in lasting, long-term program outcomes related to student achievement, attendance, and discipline.

Reference

Lamb, L. M. (2016). *Social and emotional learning: The effects of program implementation and longevity, 2011–2012 through 2015–2016*. (DRE Publication No. 15.73). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District.

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