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Evaluation Brief

# EPISD Social-Emotional Learning
## 2019-2020 Program Evaluation

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) began implementing the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) program during the 2016-2017 school year with five pilot schools. During 2019-2020 a total of 63 campuses, including alternative schools, were implementing the program. All campuses had an implementation schedule that follows a logical sequence of professional development and resource deployment to maximize implementation fidelity. During 2019-2020, there were four cohorts of implementation, one per academic year. Cohort 1 was comprised of the five pilot schools and had the most experience implementing the program, and Cohort 4, was the newest Cohort of schools to begin implementation. By the 2020-2021 school year, all schools in EPISD will be trained in and implement the SEL program.

The goal of the SEL program was to build the SEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness) in students K-12. Additionally, at EPISD, the SEL program was not only geared toward students, it also intended to change the culture of the organization from district offices to teachers in classrooms. To that end, school teams are trained and expected to model and implement the SEL competencies and practices at their schools. The program also had a parental engagement component to facilitate family awareness and support for the SEL program. The ultimate goal of the program was for students to experience the principles of the SEL program not only at school but in their home environment as well.

### SCOPE OF EVALUATION

The SEL program has been annually evaluated since it began its implementation in EPISD. The current report focused on evaluating a new SEL assessment program (Panorama Education Student Growth

Measure) acquired by the Student and Family Empowerment Department, as well as the professional learning and coaching developed for the four implementing Cohorts. Total costs for program implementation, as well as cost analysis for the Panorama Education Student Growth Measure, are presented.

## PROGRAM COSTS

The SEL program had an operating budget of $554,863 for the 2019-2020 school year. The program was funded mainly by the State Compensatory Education fund and supplemented with local funds. The operating budget reflected the costs associated with implementing the program, including substitute teachers, contracted services, required travel, materials, and supplies. The SEL program served a total of 40,862 students across the district. Therefore, the cost per student for the SEL program was $13.58, obtained by dividing the operating budget by the number of students served.

In addition to providing the cost per student for the SEL program, an additional analysis was conducted on the Panorama Education Student Growth Measure, which was funded through the SEL operating budget. The cost per student for Panorama was $4.35 (obtained by dividing the actual price of the program, $66,500, by the number of students using it, 15,270). Further information on costs and benefits are provided in the Panorama Education Student Growth Measure Cost Analysis section of this evaluation (pages 2-3).

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The significant findings from this evaluation were that a newly purchased student assessment program was effective in measuring student SEL competencies, as well as providing educators actionable information on how to improve campus-wide SEL. Additionally, cohorts implementing the SEL program were provided with professional development opportunities and coaching support within the scope of the Student and Family Empowerment Department's capabilities.

## PANORAMA EDUCATION STUDENT GROWTH MEASURE COST ANALYSIS

The Panorama Education Student Growth Measure was implemented to establish a valid measure for SEL competencies. Prior to the purchase of Panorama, the district had relied on internal metrics to measure SEL implementation. Some of the metrics used to measure SEL were attendance and discipline, which indirectly measure SEL competencies and are dependent on a high degree of fidelity of implementation across several years. Those metrics, although related to SEL, were not designed to measure SEL competencies in students. The Panorama Education Student Growth Measure has been in use since the 2018-2019 year. During 2019-2020, Cohorts 1-3 participated in the assessment. At the elementary level, students in grades 3-5 took the SEL assessment; in middle school and high school, all students took the assessment- a total of 15,270 students across all levels.
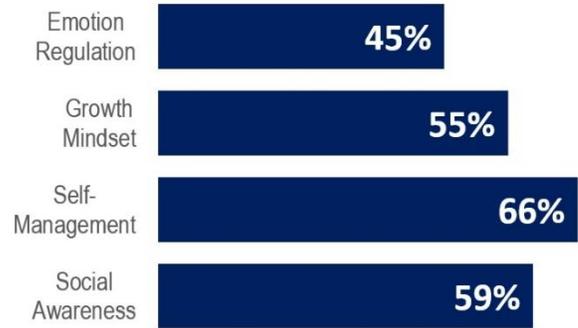
The Panorama Education Student Growth Measure consists of various questions that directly measure the competencies students are mastering through their SEL instruction:

emotion regulation, growth mindset, self-management, and social awareness. The tool is administered twice, once in the Fall semester, and once in the Spring semester. Fall figures are intended as a baseline for SEL implementation, and Spring figures are intended to show student growth after explicit SEL instruction. The figures on page 3 show the results for the Fall administration. Spring data collection was halted due to the COVID-19 district closure. At baseline, the district's SEL rated in the top quintile in Growth Mindset across elementary and secondary levels. Baseline figures for students displaying the major SEL competencies are presented below:

| *Figure 1: Baseline Ratings for Elementary* | *Figure 2: Baseline Ratings for Secondary* |
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| Emotion Regulation — **58%** | Emotion Regulation — **45%** |
| Growth Mindset — **52%** | Growth Mindset — **55%** |
| Self-Management — **67%** | Self-Management — **66%** |
| Social Awareness — **69%** | Social Awareness — **59%** |

After every administration, teachers, campuses, and district personnel overseeing the SEL implementation received a results report. The report was presented on the online platform for Panorama Education. The online presentation allowed end-users to navigate to relevant sections, bookmark important data, and print reports. Teachers were able to navigate to their classroom and develop strategies for SEL instruction based on their students' results. Administrators at the campus were able to see their own campus data, and compare their results to campuses across the district, as well as national trends. District leaders were able to get a bird's eye view of the district as a whole, and navigate to each campus to understand their implementation trajectory. District leaders were also able to see reports by Cohort to ascertain whether there is growth within and between Cohorts of implementation.

In addition to measuring SEL competencies, Panorama Education provided actionable tools for each campus, as well as the district. Included in the reports is a "Playbook," which was designed to help the educator analyze their results and develop plans of action for areas of need. For example, if a teacher reviewing their classroom results noticed that emotion regulation in her classroom was low compared to district averages, the teacher could then navigate to the Playbook. There, they would find a plethora of resources to guide their students toward feeling more confident in the management of their emotions. The playbook is available for teachers, counselors, campus administrators, and district administrators. The solutions in Playbook are tailored to the level of data being analyzed. That is, a classroom teacher would see different solutions from a campus administrator looking at campus-wide trends.

The overall cost of the Panorama Education Student Growth Measure for the 2019-2020 year was $66,500. The program served a total of 15,270 students. The price per student, obtained by dividing program cost by students served, was $4.35 per student. A benefit analysis revealed that the program offered an SEL-specific assessment that the district did not previously have available. Further, Panorama Education created audience-specific reports for

SEL stakeholders, including teachers, campus administrators, and district leaders. Finally, the Panorama Education Program provided solutions for data outcomes contained in reports that are necessary for continuous improvement/implementation of the SEL program.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES**

The SEL program offered extensive professional development for implementing campuses. One of the unique ways EPISD has staggered the program's implementation is by creating cohorts of schools that implement the program each year. As mentioned elsewhere in this evaluation, the implementation of the program began with five Cohort 1 campuses during the 2016-2017 year. To date, four cohorts, one per academic year, were at various stages of program implementation. The purpose of implementing the program in a staggered manner is twofold; first, the number of schools implementing the program was manageable for the staff in charge of providing professional development to ensure enough sessions and feedback opportunities were available for each campus. Second, lessons learned and areas of improvement were analyzed for each Cohort and implemented or changed for subsequent cohorts. The program has been implemented with the same amount of SEL coordinators to provide frontline implementation support since 2016-2017. However, it is important to note that the department has added a Family Engagement SEL Coordinator and an SEL Director. The two positions, although central to the inititative, are not in charge of direct campus implementation support. Several documents were analyzed to determine whether the department can sustainably implement the program for all district schools.

To evaluate the professional development plan for the SEL program, two factors were considered: (1) whether sufficient sessions were offered for each Cohort and, (2) whether the sessions ranged in topics based on implementation status. A review of the professional development learning plan provided by the SEL Director revealed that each Cohort was offered an adequate number of sessions, based on the information each cohort must cover for successful implementation. Further, each Cohort was offered learning that was tailored to their implementation status. For example, Cohort 1 (which has been implementing SEL for four years), was offered professional learning on evidence based programming, student growth measures, implementing SEL professional learning communities at the campus, involving families in SEL, all of which are highly specialized SEL topics. Whereas Cohort 4 (which is in its first year of implementation), was offered sessions on how to create teacher buy-in, SEL 101, adult SEL, modeling SEL, all of which are topics for schools that have no experience implementing the program.

The total number of professional learning sessions are presented in Figure 3. It is important to note that the professional learning trajectory for Cohorts 1-3 included a series of half-day sessions, which doubled the total number of sessions for those days. Half-day sessions were transformed to full-day equivalents (that is, two half day sessions were counted as one full day for comparison purposes). Cohort 4 was provided full-day sessions (based on their implementation status). Half-day sessions for Cohorts 1-3 were based on highly specialized topics such as mindfulness, trauma informed practices, etc. The topics are considered specialized because they rely on Cohort implementation experience.

Observations were conducted at half-day breakout sessions available to Cohorts 1-3, and a full-day professional learning day for Cohort 4. Breakout sessions were highly specialized, hands-on events that required participants to have a working knowledge of SEL (which is expected from Cohorts already implementing the initiative). The professional learning day for Cohort 4 included an introduction to evidence-based programming, reminders about key SEL practices, terms, expectations, and ample opportunities for planning. During the first two years of SEL implementation, all cohorts received full-day campus team professional learning opportunities, as the program has expanded to more schools it has become unfeasible to offer the same strategy for professional learning. Adaptations have been made each subsequent year to provide learning to all schools while maintaining other implementation priorities.

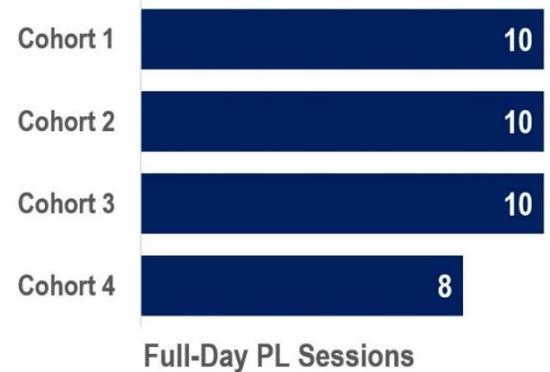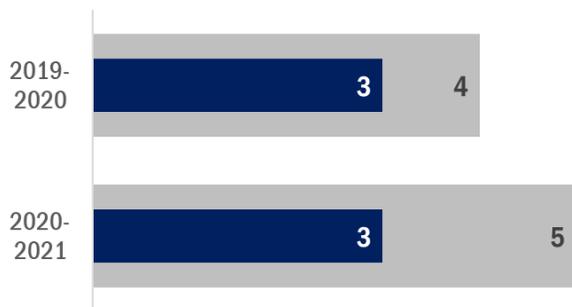*Figure 3: Professional Development Offerings*



**Full-Day PL Sessions**

*Figure 4: Sustainable Implementation Staff Needs*



**The Student and Family Empowerment Department**
SEL dedicated staff was lower than **CASEL** sustainability analysis suggested for optimal implementation.

In addition to in-person professional development, the SEL department conducts extensive on-campus coaching for teachers and administrators. During the first two years of implementation, coordinators scheduled a minimum of two coaching sessions per campus. As the program has expanded, the number of coaching sessions has been reduced to at least one per campus. Coaching sessions offer a variety of benefits, mainly the ability to gauge implementation fidelity and offer support to campuses who are behind on their SEL implementation. Several sustainability analyses conducted by the Student and Family Empowerment Department, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) have determined the need for additional dedicated coordinators to implement the initiative with fidelity. The SEL program will be implemented district-wide during the 2020-2021 year, at an approximate implementation staff capacity of 56% based on CASEL recommendations. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department seek additional personnel or devise a strategy to enlist other available district or campus staff to ensure implementation fidelity across campuses.

Although robust professional development opportunities for campuses are provided along with some coaching, there is a limited ability to support fidelity of implementation of the program due to staffing. However, it is important to note that the department has increased it's capacity to implement the initiative by the addition of a Family Engagement Coordinator, charged with the parent component of the initiative, and an SEL Director to oversee implementation.

## CONCLUSION

Two areas of implementation were evaluated for the Social Emotional Learning Program: the addition of a student SEL growth measure (Panorama Education), and the professional development provided to campuses implementing the initiative. Data from the student growth measure revealed a cost per student of $4.35, or $66,500 total. The student growth measure provided the district with actionable information to guide its SEL implementation. The analysis of professional learning offerings for the SEL program revealed an extensive, cohort-specific range of opportunities that were supplemented with on-campus coaching, with a need to monitor fidelity of implementation.

## PROGRAM CONTACTS

- Ray Lozano, Executive Director, Student and Family Empowerment
- Sandra Montes-Uranga, Director, Social and Emotional Learning

## DATA SOURCES

- Budget: Executive Director, Student and Family Empowerment
- Panorama Education Students Served: Panorama Education Platform
- Professional Development Scope and Sequence: Director, Social Emotional Learning
- Professional Development Observations: Evaluator Attendance at Scheduled Professional Development
- Sustainability Data: Executive Director, Student and Family Empowerment Department
- Sustainability Data: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning