SEL Data In Action at Mineola Public Schools, NY

"Inspiring each student to be a life-long learner, pursue excellence, exhibit strength of character and contribute positively to a global society"

Schools in Mineola, NY demonstrated gains in social-emotional learning (SEL) competency after targeting instruction to the skill areas of highest need based on SEL assessment data.

About the District

Mineola Union Free School District (UFSD) in New York serves 2,810 students in grades K-12 with a student population that includes: 32% economically disadvantaged; 30% Hispanic and 17% Black, Asian or Multiracial; 11% English Language Learners; and 12% Students with Disabilities.

The Challenge

Mineola UFSD was implementing a mindset-focused combination of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs but had no way to know how students were progressing with SEL skill development. Unlike other curricular areas where they regularly administered formative and summative assessments, Mineola educators had no assessment data to guide instruction and measure growth for SEL outcomes.

The Solution

In the fall of 2020 Mineola UFSD began implementing SELweb, a web-based system designed to assess key social-emotional skills that are associated with success in school and life and that are the targets of evidence-based social-emotional learning programs.

SELweb directly assesses children's understanding of others' emotions and perspectives, their social problem-solving skills, and their self-control. In the 2020-2021 academic year, Mineola students in grades K-4 completed SELweb assessments in the fall and in the spring and students in grades 5-6 were scheduled to begin the 2021-2022 academic year.

After each SELweb assessment administration, educators met in professional learning communities (PLCs) grouped by grade to review and analyze the data. Each PLC examined their students' assessment data relative to other students in the district (e.g. different grades) and to national norms.

Based on this analysis, each PLC selected the SEL competency area where students on average had the greatest need and set a goal for improvement. Program alignment documents provided with SELweb helped educators identify and implement SEL programs with lessons aligned to that competency area.

For example, in fall 2020 the Grade 1 PLC at Meadow Drive School identified social perspective-taking as the SEL competency area of greatest need with 72% of students performing at or above national averages.

Meadow Drive School: Grade 1 (N = 78)
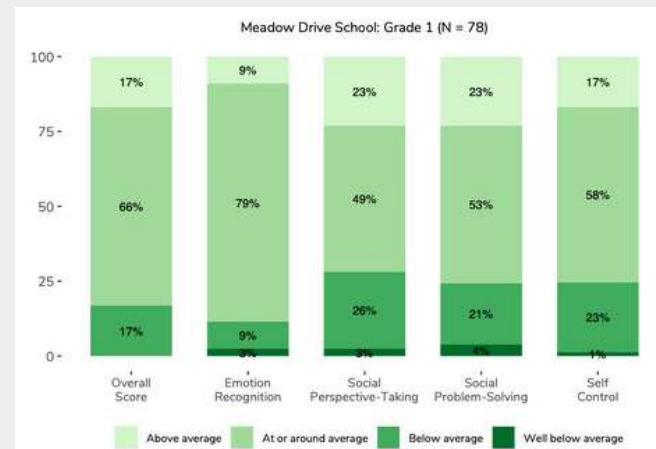
The PLC team set a goal to increase the percentage of students meeting national standards by the spring. With this goal in mind, they planned and implemented SEL instruction with a greater emphasis on social perspective-taking skills such as predicting feelings, having empathy, and engaging in conversation. For example, first grade teacher Andrea Romano implemented restorative circles to provide space for students to share and learn other's perspectives on classroom conflicts and problems.

"We can't expect students to have confidence without a measure of acknowledged competence."

Jennifer Maichin
Instructional Leader at Mineola UFSD

The Results

This data-informed approach to skill development and instruction improved teaching and learning and yielded significant growth in SEL outcomes.

Across grades K-4 districtwide 5% more students met or exceeded national standards for overall SEL competency in the spring of 2021 versus the fall of 2020. Students demonstrated growth across all four SEL competency areas, with the greatest gains (11%) in social perspective-taking, where many PLC teams had decided to focus greater attention. In addition, every K-4 grade-level team had the greatest increase in the competency in which they set their fall goal.

"Using data to set specific goals to build SEL competencies is effective" noted Jennifer Maichin, Instructional Leader at Mineola UFSD. In addition, with access to data to inform and measure SEL goals, Mineola honed their practices for developing specific SEL competencies as follows:
- Explicitly teach SEL skills and strategies
- Embed SEL competencies into curricula and benchmarks
- Make SEL competencies explicit to students
- Embed SEL skill-building into daily routines
- Practice SEL competencies throughout the school day in different environments

Next Steps

Based on insights gained from analyzing SEL competency data, implementing data-informed SEL instruction, and measuring growth for SEL outcomes, Mineola UFSD planned to expand their work along several dimensions.

First, they planned to continue using CASEL's Schoolwide Guide to SEL and District Resource Center to guide cultivation of SEL competencies and culturally responsive teaching as a lever for equity.

Second, they planned to integrate and make visible CASEL's SEL competency framework and New York State SEL Benchmarks in their SEL curriculum. Finally, they planned a series of SEL programs focused on self-regulation and academic mindsets to areas of need identified in the spring of 2021.

Implementing a direct assessment of SEL competencies enabled Mineola UFSD to target SEL instruction to the skill areas of highest need, deepen SEL programming with data-informed approaches, and demonstrate gains in SEL competency with an objective and reliable measure.

INFORM INSTRUCTION WITH HIGH-QUALITY SEL ASSESSMENT DATA

Contact us at **info@xsel-labs.com** for a free consultation to explore your SEL assessment options today! Learn more at **xsel-labs.com**.

ABOUT US

xSEL Labs supports teacher success and student social-emotional development by providing reliable and easy-to-use SEL assessments. Our core assessment, SELweb, is a web-based system designed to directly assess key social-emotional skills that are associated with success in school and life and that are the targets of evidence-based social-emotional learning programs.