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SEL Defined

SEL stands for “social and emotional learning.” The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the leading organization dedicated to advancing the evidence base for, and implementation of, SEL.

CASEL defines SEL as “the process through which children and adults 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.” CASEL’s framework classifies SEL competencies into five areas: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship skills.¹

In Their Own Words: What Scholars Say About Social-Emotional Skill Development in Summer

Abstract

Summer learning programs have enormous potential to positively impact social-emotional skill development in youth. BellXcel supports the whole child with a comprehensive and evidence-based social-emotional learning (SEL) approach focused on six key skill areas: growth mindset, self-awareness, self-regulation, responsible decision making, social awareness, and interpersonal skills. While research shows that SEL interventions during the school year are having a positive impact on youth, is five or six weeks of summer programming long enough to also positively impact SEL development in youth? To measure growth in SEL skills, BellXcel administers the Partnerships in Education and Resilience (PEAR) Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) at the end of the program to scholars in Grades 4 and higher. In addition to the HSA questions, BellXcel administers additional survey questions, including open-ended questions asking scholars to list one or two ways in which they’ve improved during the summer program. To explore the question of impact in SEL skills during a five- or six-week summer program, BellXcel analyzed quantitative and qualitative survey results.

Quantitative results from the HSA survey questions showed strong, statistically significant growth across the six BellXcel SEL skill areas. To complement the quantitative survey results, BellXcel conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey results to highlight specific areas of growth according to the scholars’ own words.

This analysis uncovered a depth of insights about how scholars are responding to BellXcel’s summer SEL programming, including:

- improved self-confidence,
- recognizing how hard work helps achieve goals,
- awareness of the importance of kindness toward others,
- knowledge of how to manage emotions,
- development of critical thinking skills,
- the importance of reflecting on the consequences of decisions,
- understanding of one’s own feelings,
- acknowledgment of others’ feelings,
- understanding the value of friendships, and
- trusting teachers.

The analysis also showed the power of infusing SEL into every component and activity of a program. Numerous scholars spoke to their experience of SEL skill development in a math or literacy classroom experience.

¹ CASEL (2017). Core SEL competencies. <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>

Why Social-Emotional Learning Is Important for Student Success

Over the past two decades, the field of education has undergone a seismic shift in its understanding of how children learn. Research in the fields of psychology, social science, and brain science affirms that the foundation for strong academic learning is inextricably linked to the development of a suite of strong social and emotional (SE) skills and competencies; the approach to developing these skills and competencies is commonly referred to as social and emotional learning (SEL).

Research studies show that evidence-based SEL programs and interventions have a positive impact on youth. Children who participate in SEL-focused programs show gains in academic achievement and have fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, lower rates of drug use, improved self-confidence, improved school attendance, and increased positive attitudes toward school.^{2,3,4}

Implementation of evidence-based SEL programming is not just found during the traditional school day and school year, but also in afterschool and summer programs. Summer learning programs operate in a unique space during the months between school years and have the potential to provide additional programming in SEL. They often have more flexibility than schools to infuse SEL into literacy and math instruction, encourage connections between youth and adult role models, provide fun enrichment opportunities, and create a safe space to try new things.

In alignment with current research about the need to intentionally integrate social, emotional, and academic learning, BellXcel partners with schools and youth organizations to help scholars develop both the academic and SE skills they will need to be successful in school and beyond. BellXcel's approach is focused on teaching and supporting the whole child. The teaching of SE skills and competencies are seamlessly embedded in the curriculum and is a regular part of the academics and enrichment scholars experience during the day. The expectation is that, as a result of this integrated teaching, scholars will experience measurable growth in key SE skills.

BellXcel was interested to learn whether or not scholars felt their SE skills and competencies were improving. In summer 2019, BellXcel conducted a mixed-methods study to learn more about the scholar experience and to discover how, in their own words, scholars might describe their SE growth over the summer. BellXcel used both quantitative and qualitative results from this scholar survey. BellXcel hoped that exploration of the scholars' qualitative responses might strengthen the quantitative results and provide more depth and dimension to the quantitative data. This white paper provides results from this mixed-methods study on youth perceptions of SE growth and development.

2 Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82 (1). <https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/meta-analysis-child-development-1.pdf>

3 Taylor, R.D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development*, 88 (4). <https://casel.org/2017-meta-analysis/>

4 Princeton University & Brookings Institution (2017). Social and emotional learning. *The Future of Children*, 27 (1). <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/FOC-Spring-Vol27-No1-Compiled-Future-of-Children-spring-2017.pdf>

5 The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2019). *From a nation at risk to a nation at hope*. Author. <http://www.nationathope.org>

Snapshot of BellXcel Summer

BellXcel has developed a comprehensive summer intervention that addresses academic needs in literacy and math, SEL, as well as college and career readiness. BellXcel provides access to enriching afternoon courses and weekly field trips to ensure the experience is fun and engaging. BellXcel empowers partners—school and community-based organizations—to deliver its comprehensive model. The SE approach focuses on six core skills aligned to CASEL's framework:⁶

- **Growth mindset:** Scholars approach tasks with self-confidence, believing that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work.⁷
- **Self-awareness:** Scholars develop an accurate understanding of their emotions, thoughts, values, and abilities, noting their strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Self-regulation:** Scholars successfully manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in accordance with the demands of various situations. Scholars develop the initiative, discernment, and self-discipline necessary to achieve personal and academic goals.
- **Responsible decision making:** Scholars make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, and consequences. They effectively problem-solve and reflect, evaluating the possible impact of their actions on themselves and others.⁸
- **Social awareness:** Scholars empathize with others and see their perspectives. They appreciate diversity and understand ethical and social norms.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Scholars form and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults. They productively engage in teamwork, effective communication, active listening, and conflict resolution.

Staff Training and Implementation

Summer program leaders and instructional staff trained by BellXcel play a key role in helping scholars understand how SE skills and competencies will help prepare them to be successful learners and leaders in the 21st century. Staff are offered both pre-service (before the summer program starts) professional development activities, and ongoing resources and support while their program is in operation. BellXcel offers staff opportunities to engage with new SEL theories and approaches introduced via distance learning, program handbooks and materials, and in-person trainings. Each staff member participates in 20–30 hours of pre-service, targeted, content-driven professional development. Throughout the course of the summer, educators hone their practice in facilitating growth mindset, promoting positive behaviors, and creating engaging learning experiences.

Once the summer program starts, SEL is infused into almost every minute of a scholar's experience. Every day, scholars participate in 20 minutes of community time before academics. During this time, teachers and scholars engage in discussions and activities around growth mindset, conflict resolution, goal-setting, self-reflection, healthy lifestyle choices, and college and career readiness. The SE skills, mindsets, and values introduced during community time are reinforced throughout the day during the academic and enrichment blocks, lunch, and dismissal, and in teacher and family interactions.

Assessment and Evaluation of SEL

A key component of BellXcel's SEL model is assessment and evaluation of program implementation and scholar growth during the program. BellXcel utilizes short surveys with scholars, staff, and families to gauge perceived changes in scholar growth in key SEL skill domains. All surveys are retrospective in nature and implemented during the last week of the summer program. Surveys include a mix of numeric Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. Data from surveys are used to measure the impact of the summer SEL model and identify key areas for continuous growth and improvement.

⁶ CASEL (2017). Core SEL competencies. <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>
⁷ Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Ballantine Books.
⁸ CASEL. What is SEL? <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>

Overview of Study Approach

Two data sources were used for this study: the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), and a BellXcel-generated student survey.

Quantitative Data: To measure growth in scholars' SE skills, BellXcel uses the HSA, created by the Partnerships in Education and Resilience (PEAR) Institute at Harvard University and McLean Hospital. The HSA is a data-driven survey tool designed to measure SE development in students across 15 domains.⁹ (PEAR) conducted a crosswalk that maps the HSA domains to BellXcel's six SEL domains.¹⁰

The survey is retrospective and asks scholars to look back on their summer experiences and report on perceived change using a five-point Likert scale. An additional 15 questions developed by BellXcel were asked at the end of the survey. These questions were intended to provide a better sense of the overall scholar experience and to cover topics such as friendship, relationships with staff, and level of enjoyment of various aspects of the program.

The HSA is administered online to students in fourth grade and higher during the last week of their BellXcel summer program. In the summer of 2019, 35% of eligible scholars (over 1,700) completed the survey.

Qualitative Data: BellXcel analyzed scholar responses to two open-ended questions: "Overall, what was the best part of your experience during the Summer Program?" and "What are 1 or 2 ways in which you grew or changed for the better during the Summer Program?"

Data for this study were supplemented by end-of-program surveys of staff and family that asked, among other items, for their perceptions of scholars' SE growth. For more information on data collection, survey instruments, and analytic approach, see the appendices.

Summer 2019 Findings

Results of this mixed-methods study suggest that scholars perceive their growth in SE skills and competencies after participating in their summer program. This supports BellXcel's belief that as a result of its integrated approach to teaching, scholars will experience measurable growth in key SE skills. Between 78% and 85% of scholars reported positive growth in each of the BellXcel SEL domains, as measured by the PEAR HSA survey. These quantitative results are supported by a qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey question "What are 1 or 2 ways in which you grew or changed for the better during the Summer Program?" Further, responses to the survey question indicate that scholars also perceived that they grew in Learning Interest, Action Orientation, and Optimism. Finally, staff and family perceptions of scholars' SE growth

were consistent with the HSA and the student survey—BellXcel appears to foster growth in a number of SE skills and competencies.

Results are presented in three sections:

1. Quantitative and qualitative data about SE growth in the six BellXcel SEL domains
2. Additional ways that BellXcel supports SE growth
3. Staff and family perceptions of scholars' SE growth¹¹

⁹ See Appendix B, Table 2 for a full list of the 15 PEAR HSA domains and corresponding definitions and sample items.

¹⁰ See Appendix A, Table 1 for a description of the crosswalk of the PEAR HSA domains to BellXcel's SEL domains.

¹¹ See Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix D for a full set of quantitative and qualitative results.

Insights Into the Six BellXcel SEL Domains

As noted above, BellXcel's SEL domains align closely to the CASEL framework. This set of results merges HSA results and analysis of select scholar responses, to present findings for each of the six domains. For a longer list of scholar responses in each SEL domain, see Appendix E.

Growth Mindset

Eighty-three percent (83%) of scholars showed positive growth in the area of Growth Mindset as measured by the HSA, with 206 scholars' qualitative responses coded as Growth Mindset. Scholars who indicated growth in the area of Growth Mindset specifically referred to positive changes in self-confidence, recognizing the value of hard work in achieving goals, understanding how the learning process often includes learning from mistakes, and not giving up in the face of challenges.

In their own words: Growth Mindset

- "I learned how to do work in front of everyone in the class because before I was shy to do things in front of a lot of people...but now I can do it in front of people without being shy or if I did the work wrong because it's ok if you get it wrong because you learn from your mistakes"
- "I like to do hard things like math that will help my brain grow"
- "I learned to like doing math and not giving up"

Self-Regulation

Eighty-five percent (85%) of scholars showed positive growth in Self-Regulation as measured by the HSA, with 365 scholar responses coded as Self-Regulation. Scholars who reported growth in Self-Regulation shared details about learning to manage their emotions and behaviors, improvements in attitude, and possessing the motivation and discipline to see positive changes in personal relationships and academic achievement.

In their own words: Self-Regulation

- "My attitude got better and my anger issues are under control"
- "Listening more and paying attention more too"
- "I changed by getting along with others"

Self-Awareness

Eighty-four percent (84%) of scholars showed positive growth in Self-Awareness as measured by the HSA, with 303 scholar responses coded as Self-Awareness. Scholars who indicated positive change in Self-Awareness not only focused on self-improvement and how they believe they can change for the better, they also showed an understanding of their own behavior, thoughts, and emotions.

In their own words: Self-Awareness

- "I am more kind to others"
- "I found out that people don't just see me as the kid that gets emotional/angry fast and for everything but as a friend they can trust"
- "Caring less about what people think about me... And also to not give up"

Responsible Decision Making

Eighty-three percent (83%) of scholars showed positive growth in Responsible Decision Making as measured by the HSA, with 288 scholar responses coded as Responsible Decision Making. Scholars who shared information about growth in Responsible Decision Making focused on making better choices, developing critical thinking skills, and reflecting on the consequences of the decisions they make.

In their own words: Decision Making

- "I grew more brain cells, and became smarter in choices..."
- "I started to question and understand more"
- "I learn to be more careful with people I trust"
- "I learned to be more open in classes and learn my work in a different way"

Spotlight on Summer Friendships

84% of scholars reported making new friends over the summer. When asked about the best part of their summer experience, 305 scholars indicated that friendship was the best part, both spending time with friends and making new friends. Scholars shared the following about friendship:

- “Spending time with the people I care about”
- “The best part was that I got to know everyone and they were so nice to me and it was the best time ever. I want to come back to this summer school.”

Social Awareness

Eighty-three percent (83%) of scholars showed positive growth in Social Awareness as measured by the HSA, with 288 scholar responses coded as Social Awareness. Scholars who indicated growth in Social Awareness largely discussed various aspects of empathy: helping other people, understanding their feelings, and acknowledging other perspectives.

In their own words: Social Awareness

- “To be more supportive and to be more kind”
- “Being nice to people and helping more”
- “I listen to others before reacting and I try to help others when they are upset”
- “More accepting of other people”
- “To be more understanding to others”

Interpersonal Skills

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of scholars reported positive change in Interpersonal Skills as measured by the HSA, with 249 scholar responses coded as Interpersonal Skills. Scholars who showed growth in Interpersonal Skills referred to improved relationships with adults and their peers, often detailing the ways in which those relationships grew over the summer. They also indicated improved attitudes about friendship and relationships with adults in their summer program. Scholars also indicated that friendship, including making new friends and spending time with their friends, was the best part of their summer experience.

In their own words: Interpersonal Skills

- “I like to hang out with my teachers because they listen to me when I talk to them”
- “To be connected with people and more comfortable to work in a team”
- “Be more active, not just in sports but my social life too. I like to make more friends who I can trust and talk to when I’m feeling down”
- “I changed by telling my teachers my problems”
- “I now can trust people! Also, feel like a family”

Summary

Overall, a large majority of scholars (78% or higher) self-reported positive change across the six BellXcel SEL domains, indicating that participation in a BellXcel summer program is a driver for SE growth. Our qualitative data also back this up, as we saw scholars describe in their own words the ways in which the summer program positively affected their SE skills.

Additional Ways BellXcel Supports SE Growth

The PEAR HSA domains Learning Interest, Action Orientation, and Optimism do not align with BellXcel's SEL domains. Therefore, this section provides additional qualitative insights that supplement what was learned about perceived SE growth in the six domains.

Over 180 scholar responses were coded with Learning Interest; scholars said the following:

- "I learned a lot of new things..."
- "At first I thought we were doing boring learning but now I love it and I love learning, learning rules!"

Regarding Action Orientation, just over 100 scholars reflected on how they grew. Some of their insights are below:

- "I got better at Basketball"
- "I can dance better and I learned I'm good at baseball"

Some scholars (24 scholars) also indicated that they grew in Optimism. They shared the following details:

- "I feel a little better with myself"
- "I felt happier and have more courage"

Supporting Evidence: Staff & Family Survey Results

BellXcel administered end-of-program surveys to instructional staff and scholars' families via SurveyMonkey or by distributing a paper version of the survey. These surveys ask a number of questions, including items about scholars' SEL.

Approximately 22% (over 3,400) of families responded to the survey. The staff survey response rate was much higher, totaling approximately 71% of respondents (over 1,800). Findings, presented in Tables 1 and 2 below, corroborate what our scholar data show: strong SE growth in scholars who participate in the BellXcel summer experience.

Table 1: Staff Perceptions of Scholars' Growth in BellXcel's Social-Emotional Learning Domains

BellXcel Social-Emotional Learning Domain	Staff Reporting Scholars Showed Positive Growth
Growth Mindset	88%
Interpersonal Skills	83%
Responsible Decision Making	80%
Self-Awareness	82%
Self-Regulation	80%
Social Awareness	81%

Table 2: Family Perceptions of Scholars' Social-Emotional Growth

	Families Reporting Children Showed Positive Growth
Attitude Toward School & Learning	88%
Ability to Overcome Challenges (Growth Mindset)	88%
Eagerness to Give the Effort to Grow and Improve (Growth Mindset)	91%
Eagerness to Learn	88%
Self-Confidence	89%

A large majority of stakeholders identified scholars' growth in various SE areas. Additionally, results from families, staff, and scholars look similar, which indicates a consensus in opinions across stakeholders on scholar development in SE areas. These findings are indicators of strong SE growth in scholars who participate in the BellXcel summer experience.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summer learning programs have enormous potential to positively impact SE skill development in youth. BellXcel supports the whole child with a comprehensive and evidence-based SEL approach focused on six key skill areas: growth mindset, self-awareness, self-regulation, responsible decision making, social awareness, and interpersonal skills. While research shows that SEL interventions during the school year are having a positive impact on youth, is five or six weeks of summer programming long enough to also positively impact SEL development in youth?

To measure growth in SEL skills, BellXcel administers the PEAR HSA at the end of the program to scholars in Grades 4 and higher. In addition to the HSA questions, BellXcel also administers additional survey questions, including open-ended questions asking scholars to list one or two ways in which they've improved during the summer program. To explore the question of impact in SEL skills during a five- or six-week summer program, BellXcel analyzed quantitative and qualitative survey results.

Quantitative results from the HSA survey questions showed strong, statistically significant growth across the six BellXcel SEL skill areas. These results, however, provide only a partial picture of the impact the summer program is having on scholar SEL skill growth. To complement the quantitative

survey results, BellXcel conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey results to highlight specific areas of growth according to the scholars' own words.

This analysis uncovered a depth of insights about how scholars are responding to BellXcel's summer SEL programming, including: improved self-confidence, recognizing how hard work helps achieve goals, awareness of the importance of kindness toward others, knowledge of how to manage emotions, development of critical thinking skills, the importance of reflecting on the consequences of decisions, understanding of one's own feelings, acknowledgment of others' feelings, understanding the value of friendships, and trusting teachers. The analysis also showed the power of infusing SEL into every component and activity of a program. Numerous scholars spoke to their experience of SEL skill development in a math or literacy classroom experience.

Recommendations for the field

As the national conversation around the importance of SEL for youth grows louder, out-of-school time (OST) and summer learning providers will increasingly be called upon to provide evidence-based SEL interventions for participating youth. Every place a young person spends his or her time is important to growth and development. Ideally, OST providers, schools, communities, and families will complement each other in their support of a young person's SE growth. BellXcel's experience developing, implementing, and measuring the impact of a summer SEL model can offer helpful tips for other OST providers and schools looking to do the same.

- **Positively impacting the SEL skills of youth starts with a strong evidence base.**
A strong SEL intervention for youth starts with a foundational framework or model that outlines the key skills an intervention intends to focus on. The model or framework can help inform programming, staff professional development, and any evaluation or assessment approaches and tools used to measure quality and growth. Use a nationally developed model or framework such as CASEL's Core Competencies, or develop your own based on your organization, school, or program's needs and target population. In addition to evidence-based models, practitioners can implement evidence-based practices, which are more discrete actions that adults take to support SEL throughout lessons and across the day. Infusing evidence-based practices across a scholar's day expands exposure to opportunities to build SE skills and competencies.¹²

¹² Little, P., & Pittman, K. (2019). Building partnerships in support of where, when, and how learning happens . Aspen Institute on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. http://nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/aspens_yd_final_2_web-11.18.pdf

- **SEL interventions work best when integrated into every part of a young person's day.**

As the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development asserted, “learning is social and emotional,”¹³ therefore SEL interventions do not have to operate as stand-alone components of programs or schools. An SEL intervention can be very impactful when integrated into existing components of each day, such as academic instruction, physical education, enrichment education, community time, and meal time. Growth mindset skills, in particular, can be successfully integrated into literacy and math instruction with a focus on encouraging youth to persevere through challenging lessons and problems. One approach to SE integration is to use kernels of practice—low-cost, evidence-based strategies that represent the essential active ingredients of more comprehensive SEL programs that are known to be effective. Kernels target a specific behavior and can be taught quickly.¹⁴ Kernels are compelling because they do not have to be tied to a specific comprehensive curriculum (in fact, they appear in many evidencebased curricula) and because they are typically low-cost and relatively simple to use. Because kernels can be implemented across settings (e.g., classrooms, after school, recess, playgrounds), they can provide continuity of experiences across the many settings where young people spend their time.

- **It is critical to communicate to policymakers the importance of SEL to academic learning and well-being.**

Policies governing OST programs and schools should enable and support an emphasis on SE skills, encouraging locally developed models that meet the needs of all learners. Young people are better able to engage in rigorous academic learning and make greater academic progress when learning environments include and prioritize SE competencies, attitudes, and mindsets.¹⁵ When educators and youth development professionals have opportunities to learn and engage with evidence-based SE practices, and definitions of school and program success are expanded to include measures of culture, climate, and positive learning environments, all students benefit.

- **Implementation of an SEL assessment is important in understanding how well your model is supporting SE skills.**

Once you have developed a strong SEL framework for your OST program or school, one of the next steps is selecting an assessment approach to help you understand how well your framework is supporting SE growth. As the marketplace for SEL interventions and curricula has grown, so has the market for SEL assessments. There are numerous research-based, valid, and reliable SEL assessments on the market today that can fully or partially align to your program's SEL model and help you understand what's working and what needs improvement. Taking a continuous-improvement approach to SEL creates a low-stakes way for your program or school to collect SE skills development data and use it to improve the overall approach.

- **Quantitative SEL assessment outcomes only tell part of the story.**

While the quantitative data from SEL assessments are key for setting benchmarks and reporting outcomes, they only tell part of the story. Outcomes data from SEL assessments often are limited to specific domains or sub-domains and rarely provide item-level results. Data from SEL assessments are rarely specific enough to capture the depth, details, or complex interactions of an SEL intervention. Quantitative survey results are served best when complemented by open-ended survey questions (or other qualitative research approaches).

- **Open-ended survey items are powerful tools for understanding scholar experiences.**

Open-ended survey items or other qualitative research methods such as focus groups or in-depth interviews have the potential to capture additional details about scholars' experiences participating in an SEL intervention. Even simple questions asking scholars to list a few ways in which a program changed their thinking or behavior can provide insights that would not be accounted for if just using quantitative survey items. Open-ended survey responses can also capture the complex and overlapping interactions of various SEL competencies and the ways that simple actions or components can lead to growth or change in various domains. For example, if a scholar has a strong positive experience with a math teacher who encourages teamwork to tackle a difficult new math problem, that scholar is experiencing SEL through a positive adult role model, developing interpersonal skills, and utilizing a growth mindset to work through a new and challenging problem. Quantitative survey items may not capture that complex interaction.

13 Jones, S., & Kahn, J. (2017). The evidence base for how we learn. Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. http://nationathope.org/wp-content/uploads/final_cds-evidence-base.pdf

14 Jones, S. M., Bailey, R., Brush, K., & Kahn, J. (2017). Kernels of practice for SEL: Low-cost, low-burden strategies. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/kernels-of-practice-for-sel-low-cost-low-burden-strategies.aspx>

15 The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2019). From a nation at risk to a nation at hope. Author. <http://www.nationathope.org>

Appendix A: Study Analytical Methods and Limitations

Quantitative Analysis

BellXcel's approach focuses on six SEL skills. PEAR conducted a crosswalk that maps the PEAR HSA domains to the BellXcel SEL skill areas (Table 1). Three HSA domains did not fit into BellXcel's SEL model: Action Orientation, Learning Interest, and Optimism; however, these domains were measured to keep the HSA survey intact. For a full list of the PEAR HSA domains, domain definitions, and HSA items, see Appendix B.

Table 1: Crosswalk of PEAR HSA domains to BellXcel's Social-Emotional Learning Domains

BellXcel Social-Emotional Skill	Pear HSA Domain
Growth Mindset	Growth Mindset – Character Mindset Perseverance
Self-Awareness	Growth Mindset – Character Mindset Reflection
Self-Regulation	Emotion Control Reflection Assertiveness Academic Motivation
Responsible Decision Making	Critical Thinking Reflection
Social Awareness	Empathy Reflection
Interpersonal Skills	Relationship with Peers Relationship with Adults School Bonding Empathy Trust

The PEAR HSA domains are rated on a five-point scale: 1=Much less now, 2=Less, 3=About the same, 4=More, and 5=Much more now. A scholar receives an average score on each domain using this scale. A score above 3.0 represents a positive change as a result of the BellXcel summer program, whereas a score less than 3.0 represents a negative change; the higher the score, the more self-change a scholar is reporting in each domain.

Using these scores, BellXcel then calculated its own averages based on the crosswalk between the BellXcel skills and the PEAR HSA domains and created a composite score for the BellXcel SE constructs. For example, in order to calculate a Social Awareness score, scores on the PEAR HSA Empathy and Reflection domains were averaged together. BellXcel then determined what percentage of scholars showed an average of over 3.0 for each of the BellXcel SEL skill areas.

For the additional questions included by BellXcel at the end of the survey, 11 are on a three-point scale; depending on the question, the scale is either 1=Not at all, 2=A little, 3=A lot, or else 1=Yes, 2=No, 3=Don't know. The remaining four items are open-ended and ask scholars to describe their favorite enrichment class, their favorite field trip, the best part of their experience, and one or two ways in which they grew or changed during their summer program. Analysis of these open-ended questions is discussed in the next section. For a full list of the additional questions asked in the survey, see Appendix C. See Appendix D for quantitative and qualitative results from the scholar survey.

Qualitative Analysis

BellXcel analyzed scholar responses to the following two openended questions: "Overall, what was the best part of your experience during the Summer Program?" and "What are 1 or 2 ways in which you grew or changed for the better during the Summer Program?"

Qualitative analysis computer software, MAXQDA, was used to code the data. All responses were hand-coded, rather than using a lexical query to mass-code responses. An initial review of the data resulted in a tentative list of codes based on what seemed significant at first. These codes were reviewed, adjusted, and consolidated where necessary. Three rounds of coding and review were completed.

For our second question—"What are 1 or 2 ways in which you grew or changed for the better during the Summer Program?"—the PEAR HSA SE domains were applied to the data, and the definitions of the domains were used to guide the analysis. Initial codes were revisited and consolidated where appropriate. Then the PEAR HSA codes were combined into the six BellXcel SEL skill areas.

Not all responses fit within the PEAR HSA or BellXcel SE framework domains. Some of those results were nonetheless presented here, as they still offer valuable insights into the scholar experience.

Limitations

Quantitative

Data collection tools and guidance are provided by BellXcel, though implementation of surveys varies by program. Thirty-five percent (over 1,700) of scholars in the fourth grade or higher completed the PEAR HSA. Completion rates are important to understanding how reflective each of these samples is of the overall scholar population. It is theorized that people who opt to respond to surveys may have certain characteristics that differ from nonrespondents, which could skew results.¹⁶ While all stakeholders are engaged in data collection, it is difficult to estimate the effect of the nonrespondent in results across more than 160 partnering programs. Due to reading ability and best practices in scholar surveying, scholar surveys can only be answered by those in Grade 4 or higher. This does limit the interpretation of these results to only a small subset of scholars.

While self-reported survey data provide valuable information, response sets may influence this feedback. Response sets are ideas that respondents may have about the need to answer in certain ways. These include but are not limited to answering for social desirability, or tending to agree or disagree.¹⁷ These concerns are taken into account in survey development, but may still impact results.

Quantitative

Coding individual survey responses, particularly with a high response rate, is labor intensive and tedious.¹⁸ Furthermore, coding was completed by an individual researcher, which could lead to bias and subjectivity.¹⁹ The use of qualitative-analysis computer software can also lead to certain limitations, including over-coding, or "losing the forest for the trees."²⁰

16–20 Krathwohl, D. R. (2009). *Methods of educational and social science research: The logic of methods* (3rd ed.). Waveland Press.

Appendix B: PEAR HSA Domains

Table 2: Definitions and Sample Items of PEAR HSA Domains

Domain	Definition	Sample Item
Action Orientation	Engagement in physical and hands-on activities.	I like to move my body.
Emotion Control	Self-regulation in distress and management of anger.	I react to things so quickly I get in trouble.
Assertiveness	Confidence in putting oneself forward, advancing personal beliefs, wishes or thoughts and standing up for what one believes	I stick up for myself against unfair rules.
Perseverance	Persistence in work and problem solving despite obstacles.	When I try to accomplish something, I achieve it.
Trust	Perception of other people as helpful and trustworthy.	I think most people are fair.
Empathy	Recognition of others' feelings and experiences.	I like to help people with their problems.
Reflection	Inner thought processes and self-awareness, and internal responsiveness toward broader societal issues.	I try to understand the world I live in.
Optimism	Enthusiasm for and hopefulness about one's life.	More good things than bad things will happen to me.
Relationships with Peers	Positive and supportive social connections with friends and classmates.	I have friends who care about me.
Relationships with Adults	Positive connections and attitudes toward interactions with adults.	There are adults who I look to and admire.
Learning Interest	Desire to learn and acquire new knowledge.	I try to learn new things outside of school.
Critical Thinking	Examination of information, exploration of ideas, and independent thought.	I think carefully before believing things people tell me.
Academic Motivation	Incentive to succeed in school, without necessarily including general interest in learning.	I will get good grades on school exams.
School bonding	Positive personal connections and the sense of belonging in one's school.	I care about my school community.
Growth Mindset (Learning)	Belief that one's success at school and one's positive identity as a student can be developed through effort.	Mistakes are good because I can learn from them.

Appendix C: Additional Survey Questions

1. How much did you enjoy coming to the Summer Program?
2. How much did you enjoy your Reading class?
3. How much did you enjoy your Math class?
4. How much did you enjoy the afternoon enrichment classes?
5. How much did you enjoy the field trips?
6. How much did you like learning about science while in the Summer Program?
7. Would you tell your friends to come to the Summer Program?
8. Would you come to the Summer Program again?
9. Did you make any new friends this summer?
10. Did a BellXcel teacher or staff person say something positive or nice to you during the summer?
11. Was there an adult at the summer program who you felt you could trust or cared about you?
12. What was your favorite afternoon enrichment class in the Summer Program?
13. What was your favorite field trip you went on during the Summer Program?
14. Overall, what was the best part of your experience during the Summer Program?
15. What are 1 or 2 ways in which you grew or changed for the better during the Summer Program?

Appendix D: Additional Tables and Figures

Table 3: Scholar Growth in BellXcel's Social-Emotional Learning Domains

BellXcel Social-Emotional Learning Domain	Scholars Who Reported Positive Growth
Growth Mindset	83%
Interpersonal Skills	78%
Responsible Decision Making	83%
Self-Awareness	84%
Self-Regulation	85%
Social Awareness	83%

Table 4: Number of Scholar Responses to "What are 1 or 2 ways you grew or changed as a result of your Summer Program?" Using the BellXcel Social-Emotional Learning Domains

BellXcel Social-Emotional Learning Domain	Number of Coded Responses Per Domain
Growth Mindset	206
Interpersonal Skills	249
Responsible Decision Making	288
Self-Awareness	303
Self-Regulation	365
Social Awareness	288

Table 5: Number of Scholar Responses by Code to "Overall, what was the best part of your experience during the Summer Program?"

Best Part of Experience During the Summer Program	Number of Coded Responses
Extracurricular Activity/Enrichment Trip/Field Trip	716
Friends	344
Math	140
Learning New Things	109
Everything	91
Teachers	82
Having Fun	58
Reading & Writing	52
Food	23

Table 6: Percent of Scholars Answering Positively to BellXcel-Developed Questions

Survey Question	Percent of Scholars
How much did you enjoy coming to the Summer Program?	93%
How much did you enjoy your Reading class?	87%
How much did you enjoy your Math class?	88%
How much did you enjoy the afternoon enrichment class?	94%
How much did you enjoy the field trips?	90%
How much did you like learning about science while in the Summer Program?	77%
Did you make any new friends this summer?	84%
Did a BellXcel teacher or staff person say something positive or nice to you during the summer?	75%
Was there an adult at the summer program who you felt you could trust or who cared about you?	73%

Appendix E: Additional Scholar Responses

Growth Mindset	"Making better grades and trying to do better"
	"I learned other things and my brain grew"
	"I grew more brain cells..."
	"I got my brain working during the summer..."
	"Learning to try new things before I say I don't like it or I don't want to do it"
	"By trying my best no matter how hard it was or how hard it would get..."
	"...I have become nicer than I was before"
	"I am a better person"
	"I got more mature and responsible"
	"I changed by getting along with others"
	"To not bully"
	"Doing better on the core values in life..."
	"Being honest"
	"...Learning and getting stronger at math and to not give up"
"I got smarter and started to work harder"	

Self-Awareness	"I changed by learning how to trust people more and to not be as shy"
	"That I need to be nicer..."
	"I'm better at math and I know how to handle situations better."
	"I grew or changed when I started ignoring the people who are distracting me."
	"I have gotten better in math and I have become nicer than I was before."
	"I am more responsible."
	"I became more positive about learning."
	"I started to talk to people more"
	"Stepping out of my comfort zone a little."
	"1. I got better on math. 2. I work well with other students."
	"I became more tolerable of people"
	"One way I changed was to be kind, nice, and respectful"
	"I changed for the better by having a more positive attitude about school."
	"Opening up to people because I don't want to get hurt again"
"I learned how to care about myself and make math fun."	

Self-Regulation	"My attitude got better and my issues are under control"
	"I changed because I learned to be more calm..."
	"Attitude got better"
	"I listen to others before reacting..."
	"Not get mad that easy"
	"Getting a better hold on my anger"
	"I don't get angry as much..."
	"I am learning to get better and not get angry over things"
	"I changed my attitude"
	"I am more calm under pressure."
	"I am more courageous and more confident"
	"I stick up for myself more..."
	"I became less shy"
	"...taking school more seriously"
	"I studied more"

Responsible Decision-Making	"Whenever we would read, I would think to myself how I could do things correctly instead of failing"
	"I learned new methods to solve problems"
	"By being respectful and learning in different ways"
	"When teachers told me rules and when we went to new places and we had to be on our best behavior."
	"Getting my work done and doing what is best for me"
	"Don't talk back and get good grades"
	"I changed because now if I need help I'll ask and try not to just guess the problem"
	"Follow the rules"
	"By listening and doing good ways to do problems"
	"One way that I changed was by stopping hanging around the people that I don't like"
	"I now know hard problems and I help others"
	"...To put a limit on things because if you get too loose then you tend to get in trouble."
	"I learned to think before I speak"
	"I learned better ways to respect people and how to get along with everyone"

Social Awareness	"I learned new ways to communicate with other people around me..."
	"Care about other people"
	"Being more helpful. Also caring about things."
	"Some things I grew at were learning and listening to others thoughts"
	"I learned better ways to respect people and how to get along with everyone."
	"Learning and helping other kids when they do not understand things."
	"Helping people"
	"...I try to help others when they are upset"
	"How to help people and to always stay kind"
	"Trust and understanding"
	"...I help others"
	"I have a better view point of people"
	"I now try to help my friends"
	"More understanding"
"Helping and being kind"	

Interpersonal Skills	"I changed a lot and feel smarter thanks to my teacher"
	"Being kind and making new friends"
	"I learned how to make friends"
	"I have the teachers on my side to help me not get bullied"
	"I learned not to just watch TV at home every day, and I realized you don't need TV to make you happy...you need friends and family"
	"I met a lot of new friends"
	"I learned new things and met new people I've never met"
	"...I put more effort in making friends"
	"I want to work harder, and meet a lot of other friends and teachers"
	"Care less about what people think about me. My assistant teacher taught me that"
	"My teacher inspired me not to give up!"
	"Getting to know other students and teachers"
	Ms. [teacher name]'s class made me change and I learned new stuff"
	"I made a lot of friends quicker...I like my teachers"