
Cumulative Impact on the Lives of Middle School Students 2017-2023



TRINITY@MCCORMACK

A Healing & Inclusive
Educational Community of
Trinity Boston Connects



Evaluation &
Report by
SEED Impact

Trinity@ McCormack

is an embedded, clinical, school-based program focused on supporting middle school students at the new Boston Community Leadership Academy / McCormack (BCLA-McCormack) 7-12 School (formerly McCormack Middle School). Our program emerged in 2013 to support students with chronic absenteeism. Students were referred because of attendance and behavior data that categorized them (based on national standards) as “high risk” of not completing high school.

Rapidly, in that first year, a collaborative partnership with the BCLA-McCormack school began to emerge. Most critical was developing a community where students felt seen, heard and understood, especially in a school with disproportionate numbers of students managing the impact of trauma.

Over time, the result has been cultural change: an educational environment that understands, embraces and supports the holistic needs of each student.



“I let people help and re-direct me now when crossing a line. This has helped me stay out of trouble for most of the year.... People see me as more than just the bad stuff I did. It helped me make better relationships with some of the people at school. I set goals for school this year, and I did many of them.”

-9th-grade Participant, 4th year with Trinity



Today, working closely with school staff through individual counseling, case management and school and community support, students gain social-emotional competencies, such as self-regulation and relational skills critical to school engagement and well-being. Wrap-around support from dedicated clinical therapists ensures students learn to:

- set and achieve academic and personal goals
- build strong relationships with youth and adults
- advocate for their needs in appropriate ways
- persevere through challenges at school and home

As illustrated throughout this report, Trinity@McCormack equips students with what they need to achieve regular attendance and, ultimately, a high school diploma.

This report summarizes the program's impact over six school years, during which a systematic evaluation based on **social and emotional learning (SEL)** was implemented.

The Difference We've Made, 2017-23

GROWTH in SEL competencies for students engaged for three years:

34 percent



WHO:

36 middle school participants

21 students

58%

attended for just one school year

7 students

19%

participated for two school years

6 students

17%

participated for all three years at middle school

2 students

6%

attended all three middle school years plus one year of high school

So What?

Research confirms SEL equips youth and adults to:



Develop healthy personal relationships



Solve problems



Think creatively



Advance in education and the labor market



Contribute to a healthy democracy



Treat others with respect and dignity

Trinity@McCormack clinicians established a discipline of conducting monthly SEL assessments for each youth on three competency results ladders. Their updates included ladder placement with narrative reflections on recent growth or setbacks. SEL data were observed side-by-side with other markers of student success, including attendance, classroom behavior and academic achievement.

How We Measure SEL Gains

Trinity@McCormack has utilized the SEED Impact Competency Ladders™ to assess and accelerate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for our middle school participants for the past six years, resulting in actionable findings.

We measure growth across three domains to support whole-child development:

BEING

comfort with self

DOING

aptitude with new skills

RELATING

interpersonal relationships



“My English language proficiency is low and I don’t have many friends. But I have a very positive relationship with my family, clinician and teachers.”

-8th grade participant, 2nd year with Trinity

“Trinity really cares about who students are and what they want. Not a lot of people do. They really listen and don’t tell you what to do; they do stuff with you.”

- 8th grade participant, 2nd year with Trinity

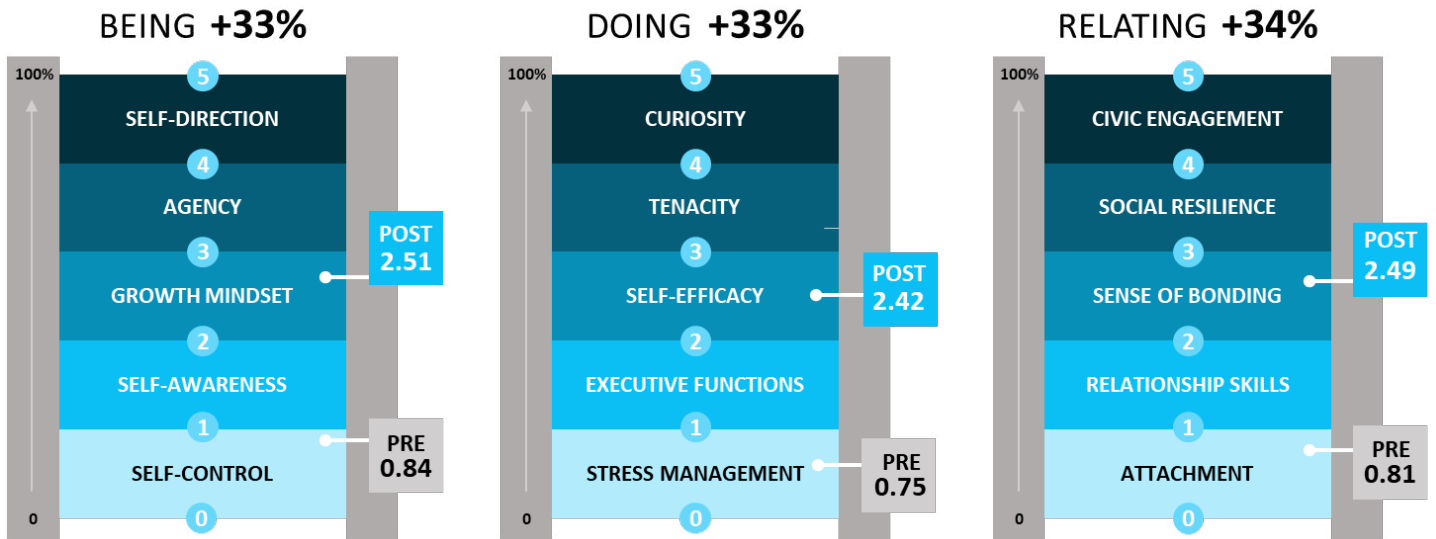
Life-Changing Results in Three Years

Below are the pre-post SEL competencies for eight students who returned to the program for three and four years. **Overall average SEL increase: 34%, across being, doing and relating.**

Trinity@McCormack 2017-23

Average Pre-Post SEL Competencies Students Returning 3+ Years

N=8



As shown in the SEL competency ladders, students enrolled for three and four years achieved nearly a two-stage gain, on average, with movement in:

BEING

from Self-Control to Growth Mindset

DOING

From Stress-Management to Self-Efficacy

RELATING

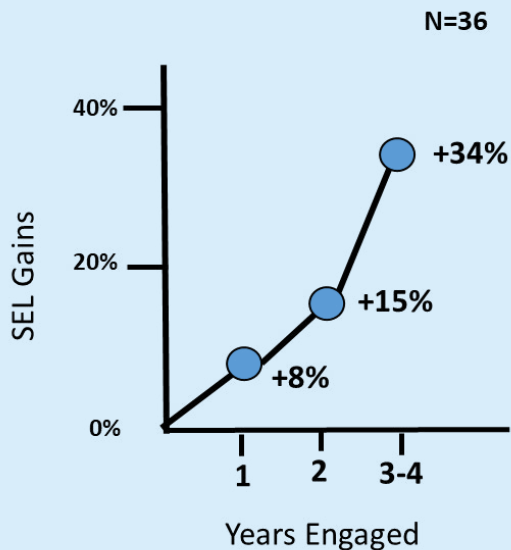
from Attachment to Sense of Belonging

SEL Results Deepen Over Time

As shown below, returning students achieve exponentially more significant gains:

TRINITY@McCORMACK 2017-2023

Cumulative SEL Gains by Years in Program



ONE YEAR

Students realized an average SEL gain of **8 percent**

- Their largest gains were in **BEING and DOING**

TWO YEARS

Students achieved a combined average SEL gain of **15 percent**

- Their most significant gains were in **BEING and RELATING**

THREE & FOUR YEARS

Students realized a combined average SEL gain of **34 percent**

- Their greatest gains were in **RELATING** and significantly higher than that of first and second year students.

Ever-increasing SEL gains over multiple years demonstrate:

- the positive impact of Trinity@McCormack and
- importance of continued participation for deeper results.

“Since joining Trinity, I have learned how important it is to be respectful to teachers and other adults and not talk back. Before, I would never leave my house and wouldn’t want to meet new people. Now I feel confident when I meet new people.”

-10th-grade participant, 4th year with Trinity

“I have been learning to reflect on positive aspects of me and think about my strengths and abilities.”

-8th grade participant, 2nd year with Trinity

SEL Competencies Correlate with School Success



SEL Benefit 1: **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Student **grades increased by 21 percent over three years.** From 2019-2022, SEED Impact found a strong correlation (0.68) between SEL growth and improved academic performance for students in grades 6-8 despite significant disruptions. If not for Trinity@McCormack, many highly traumatized students referred by teachers to receive Trinity's intensive support may not have graduated 8th grade, much less have raised their academic performance.



SEL Benefit 2: **CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE**

As observed by their clinicians throughout the school year, a modest correlation (0.41) affirms that **SEL competencies delivered by Trinity@McCormack, particularly in Being and Doing, were associated with more consistent attendance.** This further demonstrates the decision made by McCormack Middle School teachers to refer students with low attendance to be enrolled in the Trinity@McCormack community and benefit from consistent, personalized clinical support.



SEL Benefit 3: **EMOTIONAL REGULATION**

As observed by their clinicians throughout the school year, **students exhibited marked improvements in their abilities to self-regulate during classroom hours.** Before the pandemic, eight classroom teachers documented student classroom behavior monthly. These findings were compared closely with the SEL data, resulting in a strong correlation of 0.7.

“Getting my attendance up was my proudest and most useful experience with Trinity because I saw my progress in school increase dramatically.”

-7th grade participant, 2nd year with Trinity

Change in School Culture - Whole School Restorative Justice

[Learn about Trinity's approach](#) to Restorative Justice and why youth recommend it as standard educational practice in every school.

Restorative Justice within the BCLA-McCormack School was officially adopted during the 2014-2015 school year. Gradually, over the first three years, most people in the school opted-in for training and support.

In 2018, the school applied for and was chosen by Boston Public Schools to have a specific Restorative Justice Coordinator. Despite acquiring this important position, opportunities to hold restorative circles for community building and to reduce harm were constrained by: 1) ongoing racial violence in Boston and other cities—a pandemic in itself, 2) the COVID-19 pandemic, and 3) the demands of merging two separate schools. Even with limited capacity to focus systemically on implementing Restorative Practice structures, the work was consistently supported. In fact, 2019-2021 were the height of Restorative Justice school culture efforts:

- **Diverse stakeholders in the school requested and participated in circles**
- **Community and harm-oriented circles took place regularly throughout the school**
- **Every student in the school participated in Monday Circle time once weekly**
- **Teachers and Administrators integrated Restorative Practices in all staff meetings**
- **The School held regular training and support for Circle Keepers**
- **The School employed positive interventions rather than punitive actions for discipline**





During COVID-19, more teachers than ever utilized circles regularly in their virtual classrooms. School Wide Professional Development was run by Trinity and focused on its three Essential Community Practices: Racial Equity, Trauma Inclusive Care and Restorative Justice.

In 2022, McCormack and BCLA formerly began merging the two schools. One principal became responsible for maintaining two campuses in two different parts of the city (until the 2024-25 school year, when all grade levels will be represented under one roof). Merging academic institutions is a challenging and dynamic process in the best of times. As partners in the school, Trinity@McCormack witnessed the complexity within a post-pandemic context. It has been difficult for the school to be intentional and strategic about building a restorative culture while having limited time to become a new community as the merger was implemented. The understandable regression in progress has focused the Trinity@McCormack team more than ever on promoting communal healing among the staff to re-establish the Restorative Culture for the well-being of students and faculty.

Thank You to Our Supporters



Trinity Boston Connects is grateful for the foundational, multi-year financial and thought partnership support provided by the Willow Tree Foundation for the development of the Trinity@McCormack program over the past eight years and for the new multi-year funding received from the State Street Foundation for the past two years. Sincere thanks to our sustaining annual financial and thought partners, the Charlotte Foundation, John W. Alden Trust, the Boston Evening Clinic, the Trustees of the Sears and Other Funds, and the Catholic Health Foundation for their belief in the impact that Trinity@McCormack program has been having on the 370 young people and their families at the McCormack Middle School in Dorchester, MA. Together with a new institutional funder, the Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation, and the many generous individual donors, this funding community makes this work—and these results—possible.

Additional Voices:

“Trinity is an important piece to our school puzzle!”

-McCormack Instructional Coach

“To truly address learning loss, we must create communities of healing that allow students to transcend isolation and learn together.”

-Sophia Brion-Meisels, LICSW || Director,
Trinity@McCormack

“Trinity has been a huge support to our school.”

- McCormack Inclusion Teacher

“Trinity is one of our most treasured assets at McCormack.”

-McCormack Inclusion Teacher

“Trinity provides personalized tutorial services for students. Trinity staff is also both encouraging and helpful when they visit my classroom.”

- McCormack Inclusion Teacher

“I would love to see a lot more workshops that students get to be a part of where they get to learn about their social emotional health.”

- McCormack Teacher

“Before, I wouldn’t respond to people in the best way. Now, I am more respectful. When I saw I wasn’t progressing, I took advice from Trinity and began responding to people differently and changing my attitude.”

- 9th grade participant, 3rd years with Trinity

