



Trinity@McCormack program is an embedded, clinical, school-based program delivered on-site, four days per week at the McCormack middle school. Through a collaborative partnership with school staff, the program’s mission is to create an educational environment that understands, embraces, and supports the holistic needs of each student—specifically focused on the needs of students whose experiences with trauma and toxic stress result in school failure. Through intensive individual and community support, students increase social-emotional skills, such as self-regulation and relational skills, critical to school engagement and success.

Beginning in March, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered overwhelming uncertainty and loss of control for many people across the world. Those feelings were already the norm for youth served by our program. Whether experiencing sudden loss due to community or police violence, ongoing exposure to the cruelty of racism and poverty, or instability and danger related to a caregiver’s struggles with mental health, our students operate in a state of fight-or-flight and trauma-reactivity on a regular basis. Now, compound that with a global pandemic...

Uncertainty has been the ground on which our students have attempted to build their lives, engage with school, develop relationships, and achieve goals. Trauma and chronic stress impact their young minds, bodies, and emotional health. These negative factors have immediate impacts on their ability to trust others and navigate the world in which they live, leading to disruptive classroom behaviors.

Thanks to the resiliency of our students, and Trinity@McCormack’s supportive educational community, post-pandemic research reveals that,

in spite of all the challenges, youth are growing in their Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

“I stay in class & do more work. I don’t get in trouble as much” —*Juan, 6th grade*

SOUND OFF!

The Trinity@McCormack program serves between 16–20 young people of color each year. Students are referred because of attendance and behavior data that categorizes them as “high risk” for not completing high school by national standards. Through wrap-around supports from dedicated clinical therapists, students gain social and emotional skills necessary to:

- Set and achieve goals
- Build relationships with different groups of people
- Advocate for their needs in appropriate ways
- Persevere through challenges





“My advice to younger Trinity students: It’s okay to need improvement, on anything.”

—Karen, 8th grade



The Importance of SEL for Student Success

PANDEMIC CHALLENGES LEAD TO ASSESSMENT INNOVATION

SEL is an integral part of education and human development. It advances educational equity and excellence through authentic partnerships between schools, families and communities¹. An SEL program provides well-rounded instruction and continuous evaluation. Youth with stronger SEL are more likely to gain academic and career success, positive relationships, and better physical and mental health leading them to achieve more meaningful contributions to society.² For the past three years, Trinity@McCormack has been using SEED Competency Ladders™ to assess and accelerate SEL growth for middle-school participants resulting in actionable findings.

While in the first two years of Ladder analyses there was a similar percentage gain (15% gain achieved

in 2017–2018 and 14% gain in 2018–2019), with the challenge of transitioning to a virtual format due to the pandemic, we’ve had to leverage our innovation skills; adapting the program to meet the current needs of our youth and adjusting our methods of education and evaluation.

This academic year, an ambitious SEL study was initiated. Beginning in November 2019, our trained counselors assessed SEL gains monthly instead of bi-annually. SEL findings were compared with monthly attendance, academic performance, and teacher assessments of student emotional regulation (ER) skills. When academic life was disrupted in March, our counselors maintained weekly virtual interactions and student support.

SEL KEY

We measure SEL across three key data elements:



Being (self-awareness)



Doing (self-efficacy)



Relating (interaction with others)

SEL Findings: 2019–2020

Prior to COVID-19, we had a 4% SEL gain from November to March. Because our counselors were able to deliver virtual programming to 13 of our students, we achieved an additional gain of 6%, and we couldn’t be happier ●

13
Students

10%
Overall
SEL Gain

Student SEL Gains: 2019–2020

13 students achieved an average increase of 10 percent in SEL competencies, from November 2019–June 2020.



COMPETENCY LADDERS™ | Stages of Student Growth

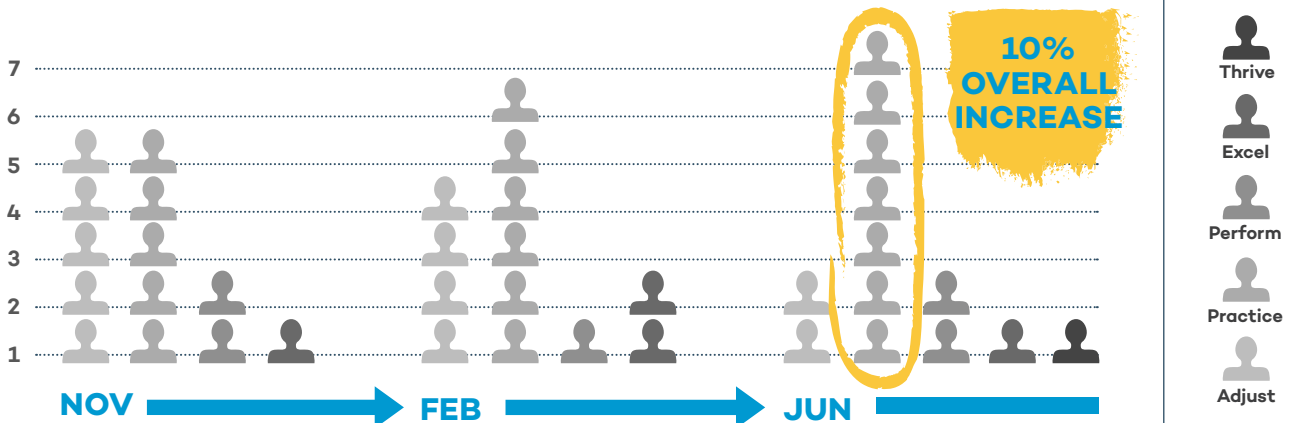
Notice the gradual shift (chart below) in distribution of SEL scores, based on counselor ratings of their Being, Doing, and Relating at three points in time.

At the start of the school year, five students (39 percent) began at the Adjust stage. Five students (39 percent) were at the Practice stage. Two students (15 percent) were at the Perform stage, and one student (7 percent) was Excelling.

By February, the last full month of in-school academics, there was a modest shift.

By June, with the consistent remote support provided by counselors, there was a clear shift away from Adjust, to Practice and the more advanced stages. Five students jumped one full stage during this period.

Number of Students Progressing Through SEL Stages | Sample Size: 13



STAGES KEY:

- Thrive
- Excel
- Perform
- Practice
- Adjust

NOV–JUN
2019–2020

MIDDLE-SCHOOL STUDENT BREAKDOWN | Overall Reflection on Competency Ladder Progress

Building Social-Emotional Competency Improves:

1 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Academic grades were averaged for 17 students (including four who did not stay engaged after COVID). Grades were compared with SEL scores for the same time frame. When studying statistics like this, a correlation of 0.7 or greater is considered to be strong. So, we were thrilled

when we saw a correlation of 0.76. This result, while preliminary due to the major disruptions during the school year, points to a significant relationship: As SEL was developed, academic performance improved.

2 EMOTIONAL REGULATION (ER)

To assess ER, up to eight classroom teachers documented student classroom behavior on a monthly basis. They considered six positive ER skills (e.g., behavior management; ability to ask for help; stayed for entire class) and four negative ER skills (e.g., withdrew or shut down in class; became exceedingly silly; I had to ask this student to leave).

The team is very pleased to report a correlation of SEL to ER (close to 0.7).

This partial year, pre-pandemic evidence makes clear that the 17 students were exhibiting better emotional regulation in class than they did prior to the intensive, thanks to the personalized support provided by our dedicated counselors.



Prior to school closure in February, these findings were compared closely with SEL data provided by Trinity@McCormack counselors.



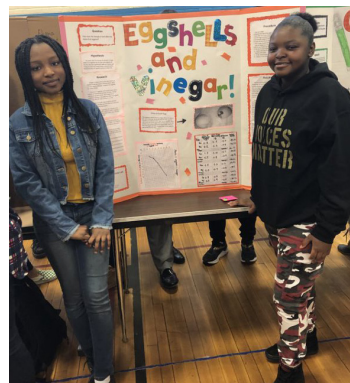
“ Our daughter has come out of her shell. She now wants to be heard as well as seen! Trinity played a huge part!”
—Trinity parent



“ My son ... has been working on not letting conflicts move from arguments to physical fights. Because of Trinity, he has someone to fall back on.”
—Trinity parent



“ Our grandson has decided to associate with other students who care about their education. The Trinity team has helped with this and keeps (us) informed about any problems in school.”
—Trinity grandparent



“ Trinity has helped my daughter be more accountable for her actions. She is better at expressing her feelings and advocacy for herself in a positive and respectful way.”
—Trinity parent

¹Casel.org. 2020. What Is SEL?. [online] Available at: <<https://casel.org/what-is-SEL/>> [Accessed 20 October 2020]. ²Council of Distinguished Scientists National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development. The Aspen Institute, September 2017.