

# THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ACHIEVED BY TRINITY@McCORMACK

A Trinity Boston Connects Program

2018–2019



Analysis & Report by SEED Impact

**Trinity@McCormack** is an embedded school-support program delivered on-site, four days per week at the McCormack Middle School. The program supports youth identified at highest risk for not achieving a high school diploma due to absenteeism, inability to trust and express appropriate emotions, and frequent traumatic experiences in their lives. With staff support throughout the school year, students develop emotion regulation skills and ability to interact effectively with others. They also learn to set and achieve academic goals.



*"I feel like I'm managing relationships better – getting to know everyone and just having fun."  
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student*

*Youth with stronger SEL are more likely to achieve academic and career success, positive relationships, better physical and mental health, and meaningful contributions to society.<sup>1</sup>*

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

### SEED COMPETENCY LADDERS™

Trinity@McCormack and Trinity Boston Connects have worked closely with SEED Impact. Five-stage, developmental Competency Ladders™ were customized to assess and accelerate growth in **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**, a critical dimension of youth development. Program staff administered this aspect of our study, assessing 16 youth at the start and end of the year.

- **Competency Ladder analyses** point to a **15 percent gain in SEL development this school year**, as contrasted with a 16 percent gain in the 2017-2018 school year. These strong results over two years affirm that the social emotional skills taught are taking root in participants, and are consistent year-to-year.

### RETROSPECTIVE SATISFACTION SURVEY

In addition, 14 students self-assessed their personal experiences with the program. The Retrospective Satisfaction Survey included five measures of SEL competency.

- Self-ratings on SEL measures averaged 76 out of a maximum of 100, compared to an average rating of 64 in the previous academic year, a **12-percent gain** in satisfaction.

<sup>1</sup> Council of Distinguished Scientists National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development. The Aspen Institute, September 2017.



## HOW WE MEASURE SEL

Three competency ladders were used to assess changes in SEL from Pre to Post. SEL core competencies tend to be retained and carry over to new tasks and life challenges.

Sixteen youth, including 4 sixth-graders, 7 seventh-graders, and 5 eighth-graders, participated in the program during the 2018-2019 school year. Student gains in the three core competencies ranged from 14 to 18 percent.<sup>1</sup>

*"I have a different mindset. In 7th grade I'm going to show up early and do homework more often."*

- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Student

### BEING: 1

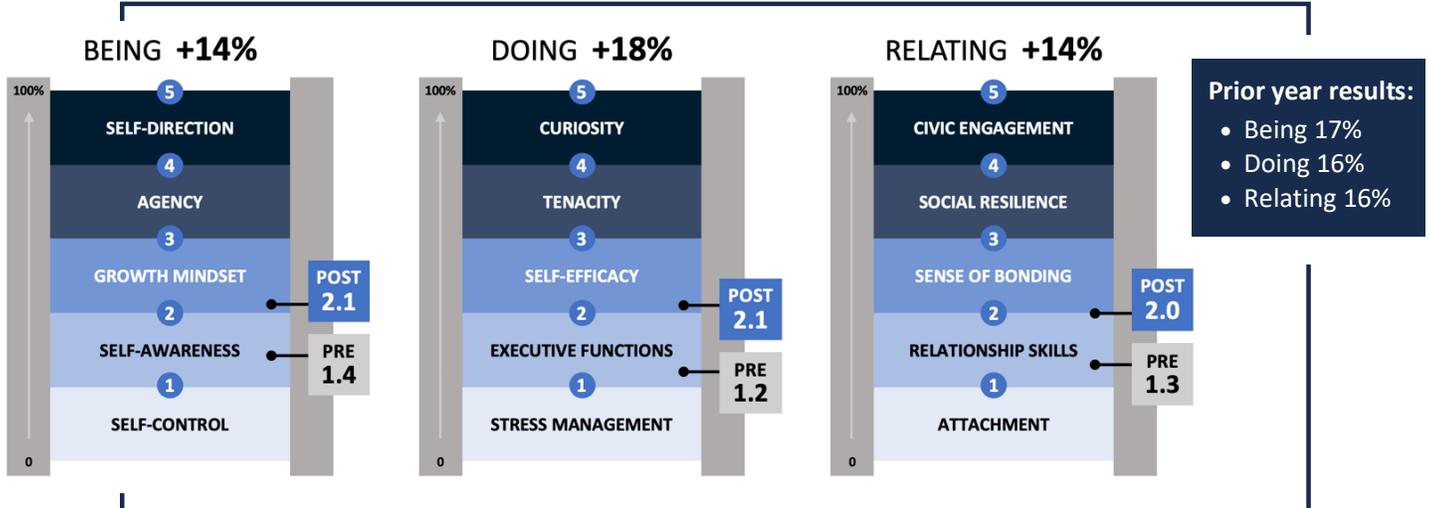
Advancement up this ladder suggests that youth are more composed, capable, confident and self-directed. There is an elevation of spirit, more optimism about self and world.

### DOING: 2

Advancement up this ladder indicates how youth make choices and take actions. There is evidence of more able decision-making and readiness to take on bigger challenges.

### RELATING: 3

Advancement up this ladder indicates that youth are more confident and comfortable interacting with others. There is evidence of peer encouragement and listening to youth and adults alike.



Trinity@McCormack students began the year, on average, well into the second stage of SEL development on all three competency ladders. This suggests a grounding in basic SEL practices. By end of the school year, they were managing their behaviors more effectively and with greater consistency, and were poised to advance to the third stage of skill-building for school and life success.

<sup>1</sup> The numbers presented are the averages, Pre and Post. Although we use five-stage ladders, the assessment tool uses 15 steps (three steps per stage). This allows us to capture upward movement both within and across stages. The percent gains indicate how much new SEL development has occurred. A 20-percent gain would indicate a full-stage jump in SEL development. For example, there was almost a full-stage jump in Doing, from executive functioning toward self-efficacy.

## SEL DETAILED FINDINGS

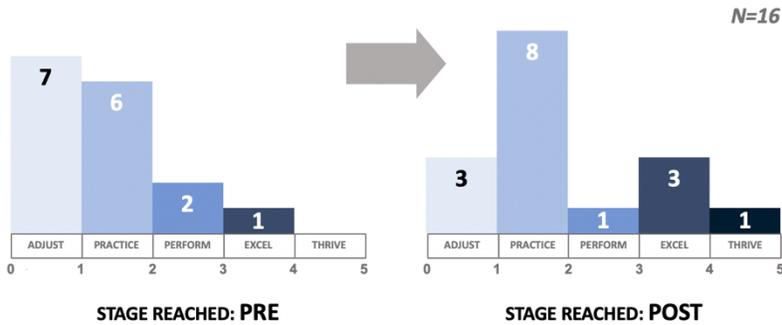
The sum of their three competency ratings yields a total SEL score for each youth. The distribution of SEL scores at Pre and Post are shown below. Scores clearly demonstrate a shift toward more consistent practice and higher-stage SEL development.

*"In math I worked in a group and helped a lot. I did an essay on earthquakes. I did really well."*  
 -7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student



### TRINITY@McCORMACK 2018-2019 | Shift in SEL Scores Pre to Post

#### Numbers of Youth by SEL Stage



#### Change in Average SEL Score

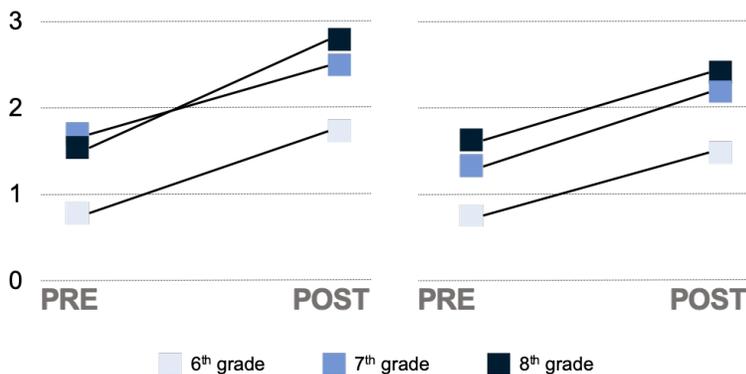
PRE: 1.3 → POST: 2.0

#### Movement of 16 Youth

- Increase in youth excelling or thriving: **1 to 4 youth**
- Jumped two or more stages: **1**
- Jumped one stage: **8**
- Held steady: **6**
- Dropped one stage: **1**

#### 2017 - 2018

#### 2018 - 2019



#### SEL gains were similar both years by grade level.

Sixth graders, as expected, began with lower SEL scores and reached the starting levels of the older students by end of year.

Seventh and eighth graders began higher than the sixth graders and developed at roughly the same pace.

## RETROSPECTIVE FINDINGS

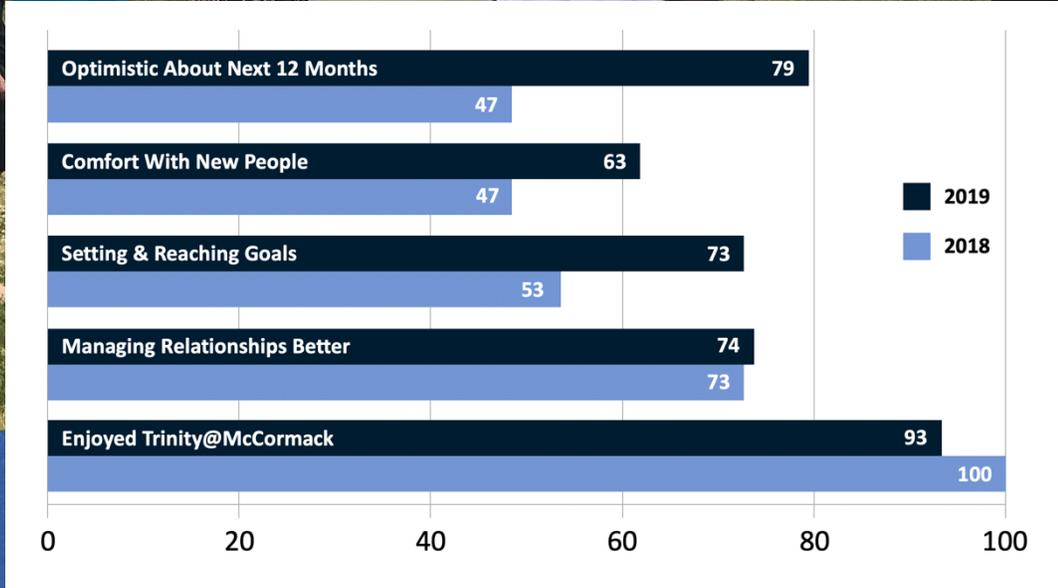
Fourteen students completed a short survey including five SEL measures.

- **BEING** (Optimistic About Next 12 Months)
- **DOING** (Setting & Reaching Goals)
- **RELATING** (Comfort with New People; and Managing Relationships Better)
- **GENERAL** (Enjoyed Trinity@McCormack)

Responses were compared with the previous year. The average self-rating for 2018-2019 was 76.4, compared with 64.0 the prior year -- a gain of 12 percent. A score of 100 would indicate maximum competence, optimism, or satisfaction.

*“Now I know the consequences of not doing my work. I feel more positive about how I can succeed in school.”*

*- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student*



Student responses to the two relationship-based survey questions correlated strongly with staff observations of students as indicated on the “Relating” competency ladder. Student self-ratings of Setting & Reaching Goals was moderately correlated with changes in “Doing” observed by staff.

## THE TRANSFORMATIONAL VALUE OF TRINITY@McCORMACK

Staff provided brief narrative descriptions, Pre and again Post. While explaining their competency ladder ratings, they also revealed insights that a number-rating alone cannot deliver. The following samples offer a glimpse of the essential and life-giving impact that Trinity@McCormack achieves.

“Jose’, a 7th grader, increased his ability to trust and express his emotions and needs. He learned to seek out support from others and was able to express his wants and needs and make independent decisions. He is not yet able to apply these skills directly to school achievement, but has been able to verbalize why school is a challenge, and why and how stress impacts him at school.”

“Ericka’, a 7th grader, faced numerous traumatic experiences spread out across the year. The majority of the year was spent in crisis, with housing, family, custody and stability all in limbo. Despite this, she stayed connected to the program. She was able to continually express both her emotional states and experiences, and why it was important to her to stay hopeful and keep working towards her goals. She gained ability to repair relationships when she caused harm. She was able to hold multiple perspectives on a situation.”

“Manuel’, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader, struggled with a lot of energy in class last year, and needed to move often. By the end of his second year in the program, he is beginning to build executive functioning skills and is able to create and execute plans to reach short-term goals with scaffolded support. He relies on assistance from trusted adults to create long-term plans at this point in time. He is continuing to develop frustration tolerance skills to support his work towards these goals.”

### OPPORTUNITIES LOOKING FORWARD

Analysis of SEL data for five students who participated in two years of the program showed steady growth through both years. We look forward to having additional longitudinal data to share as we enter the third year of SEL tracking.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that gains in SEL correlate with improved attendance, less time spent out of classroom for disruptive behavior, and successes in academics. To validate their observations with statistical evidence, in the 2019-20 school year staff will rate all students monthly on the three core SEL competencies, and track against these three target outcomes. This expanded data set will make findings more credible.

In addition, as staff reflect on SEL gains, they will develop action steps with students to accelerate their development. The SEED Competency Ladders™ are intended both for SEL measurement and to trigger goal-setting. SEED Impact is delighted to be part of continual learning with the Trinity@McCormack team and students.

