

Reading ^{with} Relevance

Embedding Social and Emotional Skill Development in Common Core-Aligned English Language Arts Instruction A Study of Program Efficacy



INTRODUCTION.

In CASEL’s 2013 Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Programs, the authors highlight **the field’s increasing need for academically-integrated SEL programs**, stating, “Given the current emphasis on accountability for academic performance and the priorities of federal funding agencies, researchers are more likely to include assessments of academic outcomes in the future when evaluating SEL programs. CASEL looks forward to including more SEL programs that document these outcomes in future versions of the Guide.” **This study evaluates the efficacy of a resource designed for exactly this purpose.**



ABOUT THE PROGRAM.

Reading with Relevance is a socially and emotionally rich literacy curriculum that focuses on students’ emotional well-being as a critical strategy for improving their academic achievement. The curriculum is centered around a core belief--that how students feel about themselves and their lives directly impacts their ability to engage with school and succeed academically. **Reading with Relevance draws together the strengths of academic literacy instruction and social/emotional learning** to inspire youth to engage with reading, accelerate their academic achievement, and develop life-changing social and emotional skills.

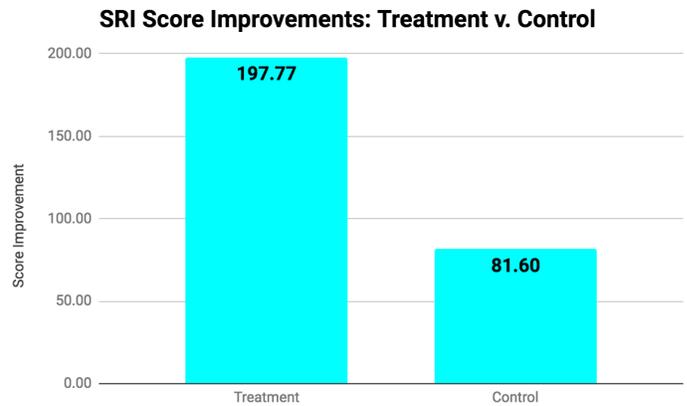
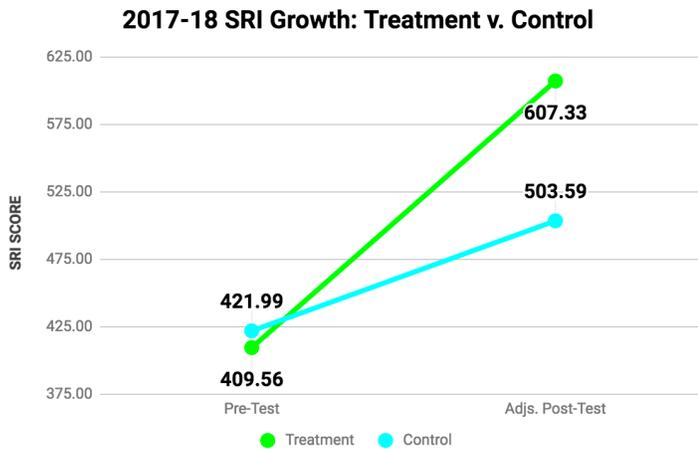
METHODS.

In order to further evaluate the quality of Reading with Relevance’s classroom-based SEL program, a study was designed to analyze the **academic and behavioral effects of school-wide program implementation in Oakland, CA** during the 2017-18 school year. This evaluation utilized a pre-post quasi-experimental design, including a comparison school that did not participate in the program. At the treatment school site, the program was implemented at the universal level, during the regular school day, with students in grades 3-5. The control school site, selected based on demographic similarity in terms of students’ race/ethnicity, English learner population, Special Education designation, and pre-test outcomes, did not utilize the curriculum.

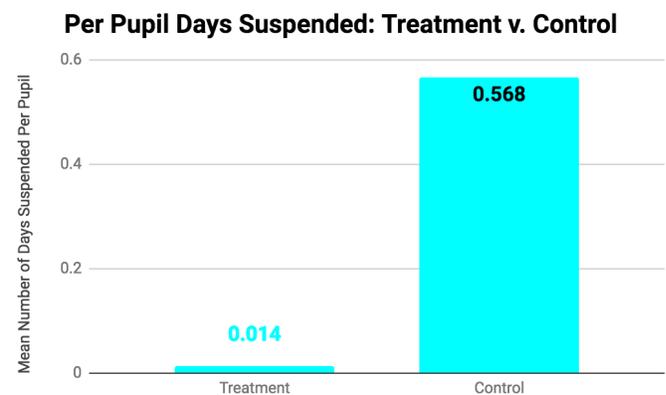
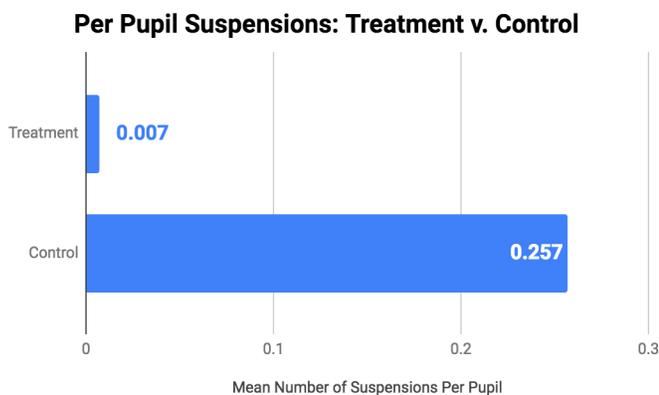
This study analyzes behavioral student outcomes over time, specifically **tracking students’ improved academic performance**, as measured by the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) assessment of reading ability. Data analyzed include student SRI scores from Fall 2017, prior to the program’s implementation (the “pre-test”), and Spring 2018, after utilizing the curriculum (the “post-test”). Additionally, **student suspension data** is presented as a marker of improved positive social behavior and reduced problem behavior.

RESULTS.

Academic. The treatment group outperformed the control group in adjusted post-test mean, score growth between pre- and post-test, and percentage improvement between pre- and post-test. While the treated group initially tested 12.43 points behind their peers in the control group, **treated students outperformed control students, improving their scores by an adjusted average of 197.77 points** compared to the control group's 81.6 point growth.



Behavioral. Collected data also included indicators of positive social behavior and reduced problem behaviors, as measured by student suspension rates. **Students in the treatment group were significantly less likely to experience school suspension for problem behaviors.** While the treatment site issued just a single, two-day suspension during the entire school year, the control site issued nineteen suspensions totaling forty-two days during this same period.



DISCUSSION.

The data presented highlight significant positive effects on student academic performance, favoring the treatment group. **The treated group's growth in reading ability outpaced the control group's growth by nearly two and a half times.** These results align with the growing body of evidence demonstrating that social and emotional learning is integral to students' academic performance, and that SEL skills are key drivers of success--in school and in life.

"Reading with Relevance unites cultural responsiveness, academic instruction, and SEL. The collection itself is based around culturally relevant and diverse texts, creating 'windows and mirrors' where students have ample opportunities to learn about and reflect on their own lives and the lives of others. This promotes deep awareness of and respect for diversity along with opportunities to build self-awareness."

~The Center for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Evaluation Team