

Progressive Bridges, INC.

# Impact of Cloud9World SEL Program

A Multi-School Study

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## **Impact of Cloud9World SEL Program**

### **Introduction**

Today's public schools are exceedingly focused on the academic achievement of students, as seen by an ongoing emphasis on standardized testing and initiatives such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top. However, schools have an equally important role in guiding healthy, well-rounded students, which not only includes students' academic abilities, but their social and emotional development as well (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Jacobson, 2010; Payton, Weissberg, Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, & Pachan, 2008; Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013). Students who lack the knowledge and ability to deal with social, emotional, and mental health issues, often turn to risk-taking behaviors leading to lack of successes in school (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlak et al, 2011; Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2013). For that reason, many experts have recommended that schools implement a social-emotional learning program, with as great an emphasis that placed on academic success (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlak et al, 2011; Payton et al, 2008; Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013). Social-emotional learning in schools has been documented to improve classroom behavior, academic achievement, and school connectedness (Durlak, et al, 2011; Payton, et al, 2008).

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is more than a skill, program, or character trait. Rather, SEL is a process in which students develop and apply knowledge to best understand and manage their emotions; make responsible and ethical decisions based on positive goal setting; form positive relationships that include empathy for one another; and become interpersonal problem solvers (Beland, 2007; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013;

Durlak et al, 2011; Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2013; Payton, et al, 2008; Yoder 2014). The Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), whose mission is to help make evidence-based SEL an integral part of education, identifies five Core Competencies for SEL. They are (1) Self-awareness, (2) Self-management, (3) Social awareness, (4) Relationship skills, and (5) Responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

### **Positive Impacts of Social-emotional Learning**

One of the greatest impacts of SEL is its positive influence on students' behavior and attitudes. Children who have strong SEL skills are able to maintain more positive relationships with peers and adults due to increased awareness of pro-social behavior, which leads to a reduction in aggressive behaviors towards others (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013, Jones & Bouffard, 2012). In addition, the mental health of students is strengthened as they are able to make emotionally strong decisions through effective problem solving. Students who have strong social-emotional skills are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse and school truancy (Blum, 2005; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlak, et al, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013).

When SEL is addressed at a school-level, the positive student behavior and relationships influence the school climate and increases school connectedness (Blum, 2005; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak et al, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012, Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013). School climate and culture can be defined by the consistent patterns in the interactions, relationships, behavior, and thinking of the teachers, administrators, staff, and students. (Blum, 2005; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Jones & Bouffard,

2012). There are several benefits to a positive school climate and overall connectedness. Relationships between students and staff are stronger, leaving students feeling safe and comfortable in their learning environment. There are fewer behavioral issues, such as bullying and delinquency. Lastly, there is a reduction in emotional stress which leads to depression and social withdrawal (Blum, 2005; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak et al, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012, Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013).

Because social and emotional deficiencies can hinder a student's academic success, the greatest impact of social emotional learning is on academic achievement. Academic and SEL skills are thought to develop and operate together, because SEL skills increase students' capability to learn (Durlak, et al, 2011; Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2013; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissboard, 2013; Yoder, 2014). Students with effective SEL skills set high academic goals and have the self-discipline, self-confidence, motivation, and organization to obtain them. They are able to utilize problem solving skills, higher order thinking skills, and critical thinking skills to address obstacles and become better decision makers when it comes to their school work (Durlak, et al, 2011; Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2013; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissboard, 2013; Yoder, 2014). These same skills follow students into adulthood and careers. Effective SEL skills will provide these future adults with the work habits, values, and abilities necessary for postsecondary education, careers, and becoming responsible citizens (Payton, et al, 2008; Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2013; Yoder, 2014).

### **Best Practices of Social-emotional Learning**

Experts in SEL agree that simply implementing strategies and lessons on social-emotional learning is insufficient for success. SEL needs to be well-executed, with several key factors in place. They include explicit teaching of the skills, integration of skills with in the

curriculum, time for application of skills, and a home-school connection (Albright, Weissberg, & Dunsenbury, 2011; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak et al, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Payton, et al, 2008) .

Just as students need to be taught math and reading strategies, students need explicit instruction regarding SEL. For this systematic learning process to occur there needs to be established policies and guidelines, involved school leaders, and ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). With a natural partnership between SEL and academic success, SEL skills are often incorporated within the curriculum. For example, children’s literature, social studies lessons, and current events are all means to teach SEL skills. (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak, et al, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Teaching SEL skills is only the first necessary step; secondly, students need to be given the time and opportunity to apply and practice. This includes daily interactions within the classroom as well as in the halls, lunchroom, playground, and special areas. The goal is for students to use SEL skills “as part of their daily repertoire of behaviors” (Durlak, et al, 2011, p 408). School staff and faculty should recognize students who use SEL skills as a way to reinforce and promote learning. Incorporation of skills is most efficiently done in safe and nurturing learning environments (Albright, Weissberg, & Dunsenbury, 2011; Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013)

The third element in SEL is a home-school connection with parent involvement. SEL is not a school skill, but rather a life skill and thus needs to be reinforced and practiced outside of the school setting. “When educators and parents work together as partners, they create important

opportunities for children to develop social, emotional, and academic competencies” (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury 2011, p 2). Informing and educating parents on SEL equips them with the knowledge to model and guide their children to apply these skills in academic, social, and family situations. Home application of SEL skills positively impacts self-esteem, behavior, and attitudes (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).

### **Social-Emotional Learning Programs**

With increased research and positive results on SEL, there are many programs available for school use. In fact, one mission of CASEL is to endorse quality SEL learning programs. Quality programs are research-based and include the best practices mentioned above: adequate training, reinforcement of the skills, integration with the curriculum, and a home-school connection (Albright, Weissberg, & Dusenbury, 2011; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Payton, et al, 2008; Yoder, 2014). In fact, in a summary of three large scale reviews on SEL, Payton et al (2008) conclude that SEL programs are the most successful interventions offered in “promoting students’ positive behaviors and attitudes toward school, mastery of academic skills, positive mental health, and preparation to become responsible adults” (p 11).

### **High Poverty Schools**

All children can benefit from the impact of SEL, but there is a specific need in high poverty schools. High poverty schools are known to have higher rates in the same areas that SEL impacts. For example, according to a report by the U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Educational Statistics entitled *The Condition of Education* (2010), students from high-poverty schools scored lower than students from low poverty schools in both reading and math

on the fourth and eighth grade assessments. In addition, dropout rates are even higher at high poverty schools and districts. A study conducted on teachers' attitudes and perceptions of SEL by Bridgeland, Bruce, and Hariharan (2013) showed that teachers in high-poverty schools reported higher improvement in student-teacher relationship and academic performance. Other findings showed that, due to their behavioral and emotional growth, high school students attending high poverty schools implementing SEL had improved social skills and higher grade point averages than students in similar schools not participating in SEL (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). These skills will follow them into adulthood, with the possibility of continued and lasting impact on poverty levels.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of a SEL program on elementary school students. Because of the research on SEL learning in high poverty schools, the elementary schools in the study have a greater than 70% free and reduced lunch rate, with some schools as high as 93% and all are Title 1.

The program chosen for this study was Cloud9World. Cloud9World is an evidenced based program whose mission is to instill in students a deep concern for themselves and others.

The full program includes 30 engaging children's books, each with a focus on a specific life value or character strength, so that instruction is integrated within the curriculum. All literature is aligned with Common Core State Standards as well as the American School Counselors Association standards. The program provides lessons and interventions for character development, application, and assessment. It also provides take-home books and lessons for application outside of the school.

Past research on SEL learning using the Cloud9World intervention program was conducted to explore the impact of SEL on student achievement, behavior, and attendance at one school site (Bruening & Robbins, 2014). Consequently, researchers wanted to observe the impact when expanding the setting to multiple schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the Cloud9World SEL program on student achievement, character trait knowledge, behavior, and attendance in multiple high poverty schools within the same school district.

***Research Questions.*** The research questions for this study were:

1. Does multi-school implementation of Cloud9World program impact knowledge of character strengths?
2. How does multi-school implementation of the Cloud9World program impact discipline?
3. How does multi-school implementation of the Cloud9World program impact students' academic success?
4. How does multi-school implementation of the Cloud9World program impact attendance?

## **Methodology**

Quantitative measures were utilized in this quasi-experimental study. To measure impact on student behavior, attendance, and academic success, data was collected for the year of implementation and the year prior. Comparisons and growth is documented in the results. In order to measure the impact on knowledge of character strength and social skills, pre- and posttest data was collected. Procedures for school selection and data collection are outlined below.



### *Setting and Participants*

This study took place in a large metropolitan school district in the northeast section of the country. The district includes approximately 1,800 schools with a total student population of 1.1 million. Demographics for the district can be found in Table 1. The district is broken up into five geographic regions. Four schools from two different regions were a part of the study. The demographics of the two regions are provided in Table 2.

Table 1

#### *School District Demographics*

Demographic	2013-2014
Asian	15%
Black	28%
Hispanic	28%
White	15%
Other	1%
Students with Disabilities	18%
English Language Learners	13%
Free and Reduced Lunch	79%

Table 2

#### *Geographic Region Demographics*

Demographic	Region One	Region Two
Asian	18%	15%
Black	20%	40%
Hispanic	37%	28%
White	13%	16%
Other	2%	1%
Students with Disabilities	15%	17%
English Language Learners	14%	12%
Free and Reduced Lunch	77%	81%

Because implementation of Cloud9World is school-wide, all teachers, staff and students at each of the eight schools are considered participants. However, any de-identified student or

class with incomplete data was eliminated from study. For example, if a class reported scores for 20 students on the pretest but 25 students on the posttest, they were eliminated from the study because direct comparison of gains made could not accurately be made. Procedures for school selection are outlined below. Individual school demographics can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

*Participant School Demographics*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Enrollment	511	361	479	1035	974	494	203	891
Asian	1%	5%	15%	4%	4%	1%	1%	6%
Black	39%	58%	62%	2%	68%	88%	18%	18%
Hispanic	57%	32%	69%	30%	93%	28%	8%	73%
White	2%	4%	6%	3%	1%	3%	1%	1%
Students with Disabilities	20%	21%	18%	23%	16%	17%	22%	24%
ELL	25%	8%	14%	10%	30%	11%	1%	13%
Free and Reduced Lunch	90%	80%	74%	86%	93%	91%	73%	88%

*Procedures*

Cloud9World contacted the district officials regarding the study as well as independent researchers for implementation. With New York City Schools IRB approval, district officials identified and contacted schools that were considered in high need for an established social-emotional learning program. In total, 15 schools volunteered to participate in the study. However, only eight schools fully implemented the Cloud9World program, and therefore are considered participants. All of the participating schools are considered Title 1.

Once schools were selected, Cloud9World trainers went to individual schools and provided a three hour training for school staff, faculty, and leaders. In addition, training videos on Cloud9World implementation were made available for school-wide, grade level, or individual use via the Cloud9World website. At the conclusion of the training, all Cloud9World materials

were given to each school. It included the monthly children's book, lesson plans, home-school materials, and items for school-wide reinforcement, such as stickers and awards.

Each of the eight schools focused on one character strength per month. With expectations set by Cloud9World staff and the school's administration, teachers in all classrooms supported the program by reading the character books in the classrooms, discussing its content, and implementing at least one interactive activity suggested in the Beyond the Book curriculum. Teachers encouraged students to apply their understanding of the character strengths by wearing t-shirts and buttons, and provided stickers as reminders to students. Teachers recognized appropriate behavior matching positive character strengths. Teachers further reinforced character strengths through various writing assignments and projects. In addition, character strengths were reinforced through monthly student awards for exhibiting the character trait being learned for each month. Cloud9World books were sent home with students to read with their parents and families, along with the home connection assignments provided in the curriculum. Implementation of Cloud9World continued in this manner monthly in January, February, March, April, May and June of 2013.

### ***Data Collection***

There were several data collection pieces used and analyzed in this study. First, in order to determine the impact of Cloud9World on academic achievement, student scores on the literacy portion of the New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) were used. Scores for the 2012-2013 school year were determined for the purpose of baseline data. Then, comparison scores for 2013-2014 were retrieved. The scores were analyzed to show growth after use of the Cloud9World program. Similarly, attendance rates were collected and analyzed in the same manner. Data collection on behavior was based on in-school and out-of-school suspension rates. Because this

information is not available through public data systems, a data request was made to the district. Lastly, to measure knowledge of the target character strengths, pretests and posttests that are a part of the program were administered to the students and data collected.

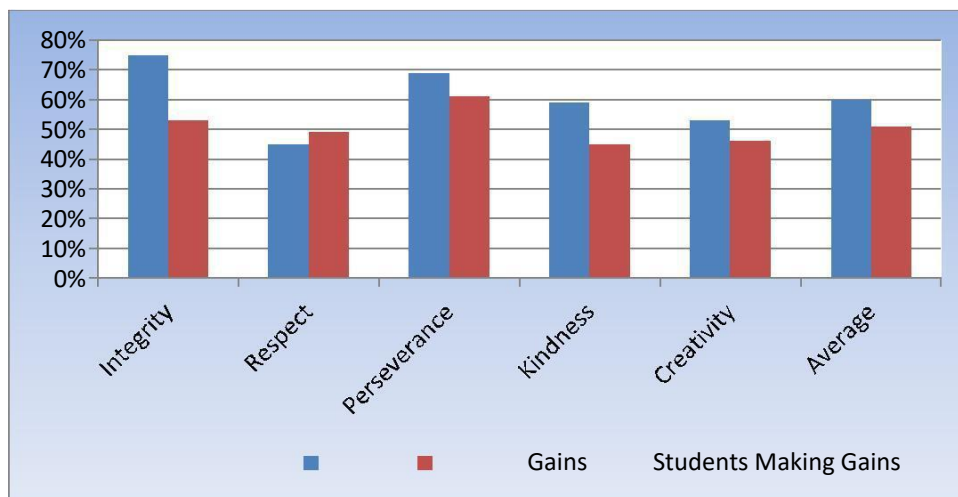
## Results

### *Knowledge of Character Strengths*

The first area of analysis was the knowledge students gained on the specific character traits of the Cloud9World program. It is a logical first step in the data analysis process because students' understanding and development with the characters strengths are vital for impacting other areas of growth, such as academics, attendance, and behavior.

For each character strength, a pre-test and posttest were given. Each included three basic questions regarding the character strength. Two out of the three questions were application questions. School-wide results were sent to the researcher for analysis. The percentage of gains made by participating students was determined as well as percentage of students making gains in that area. These results can be seen in Figure 1. Figure 1

### *Pre- and Posttest Results*

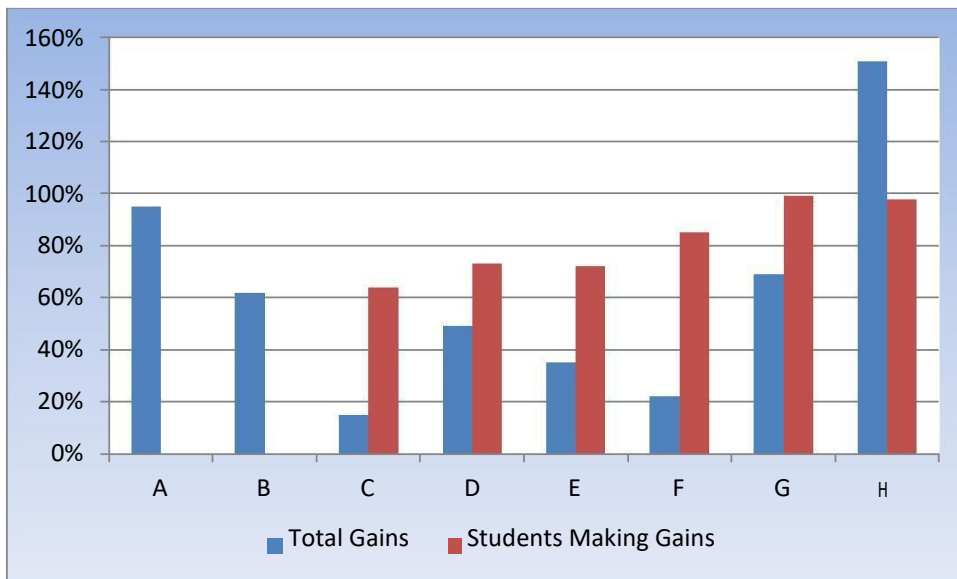


From this data, it can be concluded that the implementation of this SEL intervention had a positive impact on students' knowledge level of the character strengths. While there was variation on the gains made with each character strength, there was a significant 60% overall gain in scores between the pre- and posttest. In addition, over half of all students made gains. The greatest gains made were in the area of integrity and perseverance, and the lowest gains made in respect and kindness.

When looking at the eight schools individually, the range in total gains and percentage of student gain was quite significant. Because of that, the researcher deemed it necessary to report individual school gains. These results can be seen in Figure 2. It is noted that "students making gains" includes a gain in any of the five character strengths.

Figure 2

*School Pre- and Posttest*



The researcher was unable to analyze the percent of students making gains for school A and B because percentage of students was not reported. While a variation in gains can be seen,

all schools did make gains in the area of knowledge of character strengths. Even in school C and F, where gains were the lowest, the percent of students making gains is still high at 64% and 85% respectively.

***Impact on Behavior***

The second area of analysis was the impact of the SEL intervention on behavior. For this analysis, a data request was sent to and granted by the data team at the participating school district. This data request included the number of office referrals, in-school suspensions (ISS), and out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for each school. This data was requested for the year of implementation of the SEL intervention as well as the year prior in order to make comparisons. The data can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

*Behavior Analysis*

	Difference between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
Office Referrals	DNV
In-School Suspension	DNV
Out-of-School Suspensions	Decrease 23%

While great gains were not expected to be seen in behavior with such a short period of implementation, using the data above, the implementation of the SEL program, along with the knowledge gained by students of the character strengths, did impact student behavior. This can be seen above in the area of out-of-school suspension with a significant 23% decrease. This is important because when schools are faced with the decision of out-of-school suspension, students are away from academic learning opportunities, thus impacting academic achievement.

When analyzing the behavior data by school, additional positive impact can be seen in the other areas. Two of the schools decreased in the area of office referrals, three schools

decreased in the area of in-school suspensions, and three schools decreased in the area of out-of-school suspensions. In addition, two schools decreased in two areas, and three schools decreased in one area. Only two out of the eight schools did not show any gains in the area of behavior.

***Academic Impact***

The SEL intervention utilized in this study uses children’s books, and instruction is integrated within the curriculum. All literature and accompanying lessons are aligned with Common Core State Standards. This, coupled with the literature on the positive impact of SEL on academic achievement, signified that data analysis on student achievement should be completed. Using publicly published school-wide student achievement scores, the literacy scores for each school were obtained for the year of the SEL intervention and the year prior for comparison. This information can be seen in Table 5. These scores are from the standardized tests given by the state in which the participating school district is located. Students score on the English portion can range from 0-4.5.

Table 5

*English Scores*

	2012-2013	2013-2014
Average Student Score	2.38	2.39
Percent Proficient	20%	21%

These results do not show that this intervention had a strong impact on academic achievement. However, it is worth noting that the program was not implemented for the full 2013-2014 school year, but rather for just four months before state testing. In addition, the state does caution researchers on using comparison testing data between these two years because the test itself underwent changes due to the states adoption of new standards. Despite these factors, the researcher still felt it valuable information to include. Figure 3 shows the number of schools

that increased, maintained, or decreased in the average student scores; while Figure 4 shows the number of schools that increased, maintained, or decreased in percent of students' proficient on the assessment.

Figure 3

*Schools Average Student Scores*

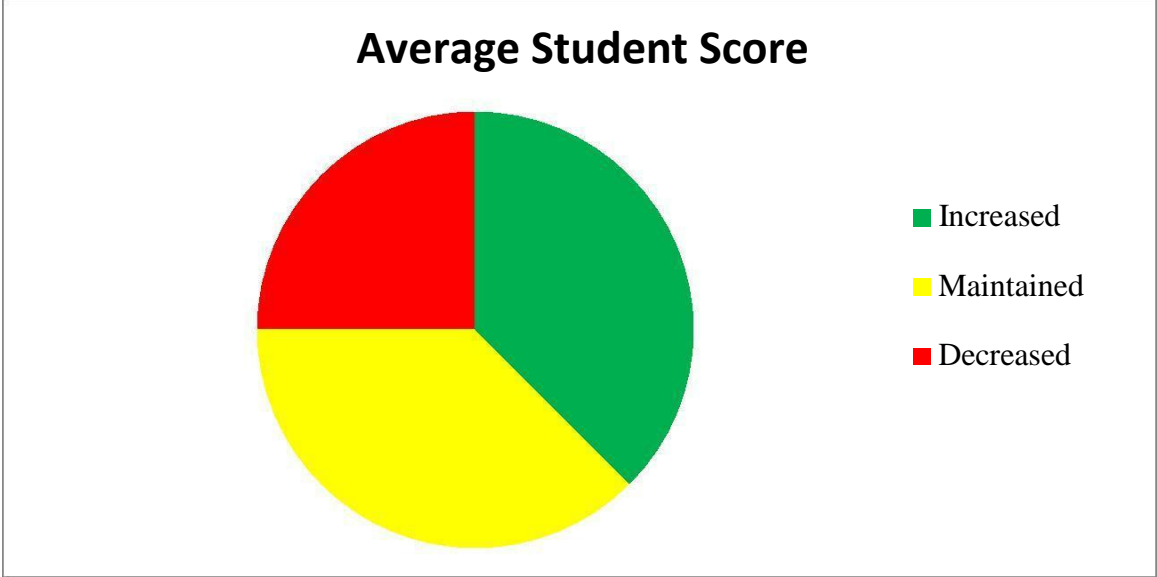
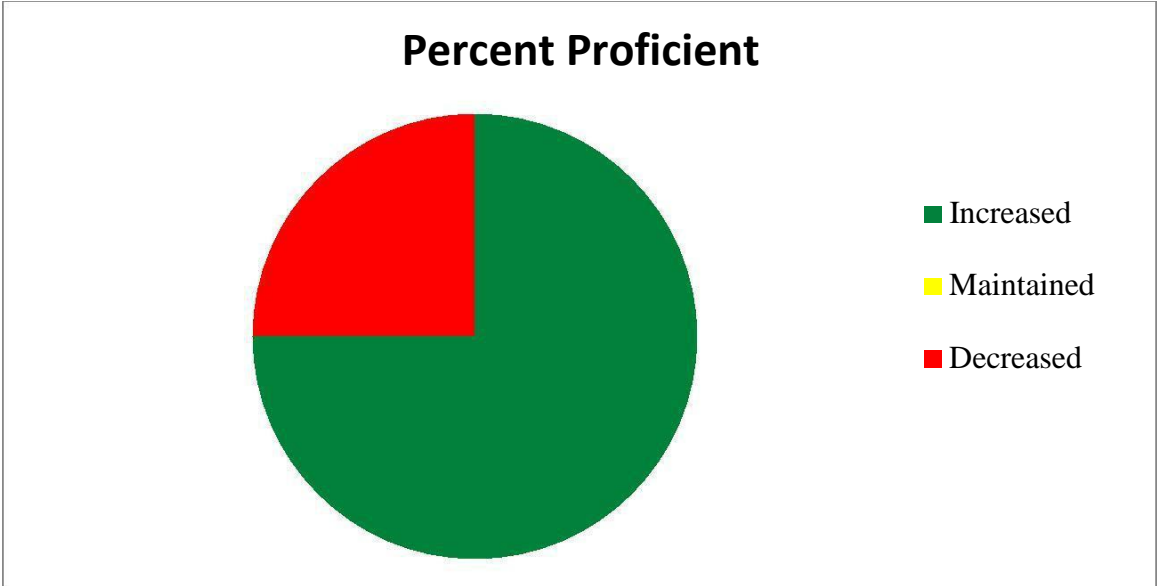


Figure 4

*Schools Percent Proficient in English*





### *Attendance*

The last area of data analysis was on attendance rates. The average attendance rates for the school remained the same for both the year of the intervention as well as the year prior. For both years, it was 93%, which happens to be the overall district attendance average for elementary schools. Table 6 shows the analysis by school, with no schools having a significant impact on attendance rates.

Table 6

#### *School Attendance Rates*

School	2012-2013	2013-2014
A	92%	93%
B	91%	91%
C	95%	94%
D	91%	91%
E	97%	97%
F	90%	89%
G	94%	94%
H	92%	92%

### *Correlation to PBS Implementation*

The last area of analysis was on the correlation of impact of the SEL intervention and schools that implement Positive Behavior Support (PBS). PBS provides schools with a basic structure with which they can build a more positive and cohesive school climate and culture.

Schools utilizing this school-wide approach agree on three to five school-wide expectations and build their practices and systems on these expectations. While PBS offers a framework, it does not provide a tool to reach goals. The Cloud9World SEL intervention is a tool to enhance PBS schools. Table 7 shows each school, the number of years of PBS implementation, gains made on the pre- and posttest assessment, and behavior impact.

Table 7

*PBS Schools*

School	Years Implementing PBS	Total Gains Knowledge	Behavior Areas Decrease
A	1	95%	0
B	1	62%	2
C	4	15%	2
D	4	49%	1
E	4	35%	0
F	0	22%	0
G	4	69%	2
H	1	151%	1

With the expectation of school E, all the schools that have implemented PBS for four years (the most in the study) decreased behavior incidents in at least one area. Schools C and G both decreased behavior incidents in two areas. For both these schools, this was in the areas of suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, which results in more instructional time for students. School F, who had no experience with PBS implementation, only saw a 22% gain in knowledge, and zero areas of decreased behavior. While schools A and H had the greatest growth in knowledge with 95% and 151% increases on the pre- and posttest, these schools did not see as big of transference to in-school behavior. Both of these schools have only implemented PBS for one year.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of a SEL program on elementary school students in high-poverty Title I schools. The SEL program utilized for this study was Cloud9World. The areas of impact included knowledge of character strengths, behavior, academics, and attendance. The SEL program was implemented for five months in eight different high poverty, Title 1 elementary schools in an urban area.

The results showed that implementation of the Cloud9World SEL program did have a significant impact on knowledge of character strengths. This finding is crucial because knowledge and understanding of the character strengths is the foundation for the application of the skill. The pre- and posttests were designed to not only gauge students' basic knowledge of the character strength, but also application of it. An example of the pre and posttest questions utilized for this study can be seen in Appendix A.

The wide range in scores between the total gains made within each school is a concern to the researcher. While variation was expected, the large range does signify that fidelity measures need to be put in place for implementation. It would be assumed that the intervention was not being implemented with the same fidelity within each school, thus impacting students' knowledge of the character strengths. The program does utilize surveys for teachers, parents, and students as a basic part of implementation. These are often used as an informal measure of implementation fidelity. However, survey results were not available for use in this study.

The character strength with the highest gains made was integrity. This was also the first character strength addressed by schools at the start of implementation. The gains made with each character strength decreased with each month of implementation. This could be because the enthusiasm for the program began to fade, either by the students, the teachers, or the schools as a whole. Maintaining excitement and focus on SEL learning should be addressed. The exception to this trend was the character strength respect. Respect was the second character strength addressed and yielded the lowest gains. However, when analyzing total scores, respect had the highest pretest score of all the character strengths, in turn making it more difficult for students to make gains. It can be assumed that students already had a strong knowledge base of the term respect as it is used often by schools, teachers and parents.

Student behavior was also analyzed in this study. It was not expected that an impact on behavior would have been documented because of the short implementation period. The transference of knowledge gained and impact on behavior is one that takes place over time with teaching, reteaching, modeling, and practice of skills. This intervention took place for only the later half the school year; however, a positive impact was still present in five of the eight schools.

The results did not show a significant impact of the SEL intervention on academic achievement; however, six of the eight schools did have an increase in percent of students proficient suggesting the possibility that the intervention contributed to an increase in English scores as noted on the state assessment. There was not an impact on attendance. These results were not surprising due to the short implementation period of five months. These areas would be expected to be impacted over time through extended implementation of the program. This would allow students time to internalize and apply the knowledge being gained and slowly begin to impact other areas, such as academics.

In this study, four of the schools have implemented PBS for four years. Three of the schools are in their first year of implementation. One school had not yet implemented PBS. Schools that have not implemented PBS often do not value the teaching of behavior or character. They tend to view these "soft skills" of less importance in their use of instructional time. Schools implementing PBS for the first year often experience some inconsistencies due to the transition into a school-wide effort such as this. In the first year of implementation, there is often some resistance to the idea of teaching behavior as part of instruction. By the 3rd or 4th year of successful PBS implementation, school cultures have shifted quite a bit toward positive climates that embrace the teaching of behavior as a valued part of instructional practice. While

schools A and H had the greatest knowledge gains on the character strengths, this did not transfer over to student behavior incidents. Both these school have only implemented PBS for one year before this SEL intervention. However, the schools that implemented PBS for four years had less knowledge gain increases, but a more significant decrease in behavior incidents. This could be due to a stronger prior knowledge base of character strengths and a faster transference of character strengths to measureable student behavior.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study, most of which include fidelity measures. Training was provided at the start of implementation. While online resources were available for use, Cloud9World developers were not at each school site throughout the implementation. This makes it difficult to gauge fidelity of implementation. While survey tools are a component of the program and often used to measure fidelity, they were not available for use in this study. In addition, because of the large scope of the study regarding the number of students and teachers participating, there was a very large amount of data collected. This can lead to fidelity issues with data collection and also increase the possibility of human error. A short implementation period can also be considered a limitation. The study only took place over a five month period of time, allowing for decreased time to have significant impact. Lastly, schools continuously implement a variety of strategies that could impact results on academic achievement and attendance.

### **Recommendations**

The SEL intervention program used in this study does have a Home Connection piece. Students take the books home to read and reinforce learning. The impact this intervention has on the home should be explored, including student behaviors at home, not just in school. It is also

recommended that the impact of this program be analyzed over an extended period of time, such as a full school year or multiple school years. Finally, it is recommended that a follow-up study of these same schools take place to measure impact over multiple years of implementation.

Additionally, a control group consisting of schools with similar demographics should be included if possible.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of an SEL program, Cloud9World, on elementary school students in high poverty schools. The areas of impact addressed included knowledge of character strengths, behavior, student achievement, and attendance. The data points collected took place for only five months of initial program implementation, which began the second semester of the school year. For that reason, the greatest increases were expected to be seen in the area of knowledge of character strengths, and little to no impact was expected to be seen in the remaining areas. Strong impact was seen in the area of knowledge of character strengths. Positive impact on behavior was also noted, especially in the area of suspensions. The greatest gains in positive behavior were in three of the four schools that implemented PBS the longest. Little impact was found on academic achievement and no impact was found on attendance. In conclusion, the SEL program utilized in this study does make a positive impact even in a short period of time. As with most interventions, gains and behavior transference are seen more frequently with schools owning a positive culture and in which fidelity of implementation is measured continuously.

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## Appendix A

### Pre- and Posttest

#### Example

#### **Integrity**

1. Integrity is....
  - a. When you usually tell the truth.
  - b. Doing what most people would want you to do.
  - c. Telling a white lie when it is the easiest thing to do.
  - d. When your actions match your words.
2. You show integrity when you...
  - a. Tell the truth when you know someone is watching.
  - b. Tell the truth all of the time, even when it is not the easiest thing to do.
  - c. Tell the truth if there are no negative consequences.
  - d. All of these answers.
3. You show integrity when you...
  - a. Live by your values when it is convenient.
  - b. Bully others.
  - c. Consistently do the right thing.
  - d. All of these answers.