Working Together to Promote Everyday Mental Health at School

Annual Conference on Advancing School Mental Health
October 2018

Our Project Goals…

To enhance the mental health and well-being of elementary school students through the use of simple, everyday practices that educators can easily embed into daily classroom life.

To co-create, test, and share a sustainable *Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource*

Overview

❖ **Partners**

  ✓ ETFO, CAMH, SMH ASSIST, WellAhead

❖ **Rationale for the Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource**

  ✓ Evidence-based practice, to scale, with sustainability in mind

❖ **Resource Development Process**

  ✓ Co-design, co-creation, feasibility pilot, field-test

❖ **Overview of the Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource**

  ✓ On-line tool, everyday mental health practices

❖ **Feasibility Pilot and Field-Test Findings**

  ✓ Measuring changes in educator knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and perceptions of classroom climate and student skills

Partners

ETFO, SMH ASSIST, CAMH

This project was funded, in part, through The J.W. McConnell Foundation

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

❖ Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) is the union that represents 83,000 elementary teachers and education workers in the publicly funded school system.

❖ ETFO has a strong commitment to Equity and Social Justice

❖ Provide Professional Development opportunities for our members

❖ 2 staff officers from ETFO worked on the project

School Mental Health ASSIST

SYSTEM-WIDE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH
Strategic Pillars

There are many possible areas of focus when trying to enhance practice in support of student mental health and well-being. Maintaining a comprehensive strategy, with a manageable number of action-oriented pillars, can help to ensure steady forward progress, while avoiding the lure of one-off initiatives and events. Like all successful school district planning, the selection of strategic pillars should be grounded in research evidence, responsive to identified needs, aligned with like initiatives, and contextualized to build on the strengths and experiences of the jurisdiction.

In Ontario, the following strategic pillars have been fundamental for advancing school mental health and well-being.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS
Structures and processes that serve to enhance uptake, implementation, scalability and sustainability of evidence-based practices in school mental health...to enhance system coherence.
ENHANCE COHERENCE

ENHANCE CONFIDENCE
CAPACITY BUILDING
Systematic professional learning that is tailored for specific school district knowledge audiences, along a continuum from mental health awareness, to literacy, to expertise...to enhance staff confidence.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE
Sustainable implementation of mental health promotion, prevention and intervention practices that are both evidence-based and implementation-sensitive...to enhance the quality of mental health programming in schools.
ENHANCE QUALITY

ENHANCE EQUITY
EQUITY AND SPECIFIC POPULATIONS
Responsive supports and resources co-designed and co-delivered alongside specific populations with more or unique mental health needs...to enhance equity in service delivery.

SYSTEM COORDINATION
Efforts to bring alignment across sectors, disciplines and regions...to enhance collaboration that inspires a strong system of care for children, youth and families.
ENHANCE COLLABORATION

ENHANCE MOMENTUM
YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
Optimizing student and family voice, engagement and leadership...to enhance momentum in school mental health.

Strong pillars support alignment, consistency, quality, engagement, scalability and sustainability, and help us to fulfill the promise of school mental health.

Learn more at www.smh-assist.ca and @SMHASSIST.
Contact us at info@smh-assist.ca.

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH-ASSIST
ÉQUIPE D'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES

❖ A provincial implementation support team designed to help Ontario school districts to promote student mental health and well-being in systematic and sustainable ways

❖ Working alongside Ontario Ministry of Education

❖ Provides Provincial SMH Leadership, Implementation Coaching, Resources, and a Community of Practice

Provincial System Support Program

❖ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

❖ Provincial System Support Program

- Connect people and evidence

- Help communities put solutions in place

- Engage diverse voices, perspectives, and populations

- Build evaluation capacity

Building a better mental health system

Partners and Roles

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

✓ Classroom practice and implementation expertise

School Mental Health ASSIST

✓ School mental health leadership and implementation expertise

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

✓ Evidence and Synthesis

The J.W. McConnell Foundation, WellAhead

✓ Exemplar Experience and Funding

Mental Health Leaders

✓ Clinical Expertise and Board-Level Support

Rationale

Evidence-based practice, to scale, with sustainability in mind

The Promise of School Mental Health

Schools are an optimal setting in which to:

- ✓ Promote positive mental health

- ✓ Build student social-emotional learning skills

- ✓ Reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking

- ✓ Identify students in need

- ✓ Prevent mental health problems in high risk groups

- ✓ Build pathways to, from, and through services

Educators have an Important Role

❖ Educators are <u>not</u> expected to be mental health professionals!

❖ But educators DO have an important role to play in creating caring classroom environments, supporting student resiliency, and noticing when a student might be struggling with a mental health problem

**CREATING CARING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS
SUPPORTING RESILIENCY**

BEING THE EYES, EARS, HEARTS…

Educators Can Feel Ill-Equipped to Help

❖ Canadian educators report that they want to help to support student mental health, but they often feel ill-equipped to do so (e.g., CTF Survey, 2012).

❖ Many educators are concerned that they will say or do the wrong things

❖ Many do not know what to do to help effectively

The good news is…
It isn't as hard as they might think to support mental health in the classroom!

(and they are probably already doing it
… but a practical resource would help)

Social-Emotional Learning at School

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the "process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the *knowledge*, *attitudes*, and *skills* necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions"

(Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning - CASEL, 2016)

Support for SEL

❖ Evidence-based SEL programs help students to build the skills needed to thrive and to prevent future behavioural and emotional problems from emerging (Conley et al., 2013; Durlak et al., 2011; Fazel et al., 2014)

❖ There is increasing evidence to show that SEL enhances emotional well-being AND academic performance in lasting ways, when delivered universally by an educator (Durlak et al. 2011; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017)

❖ Economic models show a strong return-on-investment for this type of programming in schools (Campion, 2012)

Programs can be Difficult to Implement

- There are (many) evidence-based programs that can help with social emotional learning

- However, SEL programs can be costly, perceived as an add-on, and inconsistently aligned with local curriculum

- As a result, most are difficult to implement and sustain

- A low-cost, evidence-based, implementation-friendly alternative is needed!

Supporting Mental Health for ALL
Challenges with Scale

➢ Population roughly 13.7 million (of Canada's 35.5 million)

➢ 72 school districts

   ➢ 31 English Public (secular, open to all)

   ➢ 29 English Catholic

   ➢ 4 French Public

   ➢ 8 French Catholic

➢ Approximately 5000 schools

➢ Approximately 2 million students

➢ Approximately 117,000 teachers

➢ Approximately 7400 principals/vice principals

Ontario's school system acknowledges and celebrates its diversity. Our students come from multi-faith, multi-language, multi-economic, multi-racial backgrounds. They identify as LGBTQ, immigrant/refugee/ethnocultural, Indigenous, and have a variety of learning needs.

Innovation and Scale Up Lab

❖ Multi-Tiered System of Support

❖ Evidence-Based, Implementation-Sensitive Approaches
  - Research-Based, Practice-Ready, Scalable, Sustainable

❖ Innovation and Scale Up Lab Pilots (2017-2018)
  - **Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource (Elementary)**
  - Healthy Transitions from High School (Secondary SEL)
  - Bell Let's Talk Help-Seeking Pilot
  - Brief Intervention for School Clinicians
  - STRONG Pilot

Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource

❖ A low-cost, evidence-informed, implementation-friendly alternative!

❖ ETFO and SMH ASSIST partnered to co-create a resource that educators can use to promote student mental health in the classroom as part of everyday practice

This resource is:
- **Built by and for Ontario educators**
- **Voluntary to use**
- **Aligned with the evidence-base**
- **"Evergreen"**
- **Free to Ontario educators**

Resource Development Process

Co-design, co-creation, feasibility pilot, field-test

Common Components Analysis

❖ Review of 19 evidence-based class-wide SEL programs
❖ Inclusion criteria (K-8 students, universal, evidence-based manualized programs) – *led to exclusion of 4 programs*
❖ Conducted a deductive content analysis on 15 programs; an element was deemed "common" if it appeared in 4 or more programs
❖ Initial set of 14 common elements was identified. Further distilled into a list of six common categories in consultation with subject matter experts.

Common Elements Categories

❖ **Identifying and Managing Emotions** (recognizing emotions in self and others, body cues, relationship between emotions, thoughts and behavior)

❖ **Relationship Skills** (listening, cooperation, friendship, empathy, conflict resolution, being respectful to others, recognizing emotions in others)

❖ **Positive Motivation Skills** (optimism, positive attitude, growth mindset)

❖ **Stress Management and Coping Skills** (problem solving skills, relaxation, secret calming, mindfulness, cognitive restructuring, support seeking)

❖ **Self-Confidence and Identity Skills** (mattering, assertive communication, knowing oneself)

❖ **Executive Functioning Skills** (goal-setting, problem solving skills, time management, study skills, perseverance, decision-making, organization)

Year One Project Phases

1. **Initial Focus Group Consultation (November 2016)**
   - Identify educator preferences for resource content and format, and gather initial classroom ideas for promoting everyday mental health

2. **Initial Resource Review (January 2017)**
   - Gather impressions and suggestions related to draft resource materials from educators and mental health leaders

3. **Feasibility Testing of Resources (February – April 2017)**
   - Educators try out 6-10 activities from the resource

4. **Feedback Session (May 2017)**
   - All participants complete an on-line survey; focus group participants join a web meeting to discuss experiences with the resource

5. **Revisions to the resource (Summer 2017)**
   - Feedback is used to revise the resource, prepare for wider field test

Everyday Mental Health Practices Criteria

❖ Brief

❖ Low or no cost

❖ Easy to implement as part of the daily classroom routines

❖ Safe and inclusive for all students

❖ Designed to support social-emotional skill development

Idea Starters

❖ **What do you do everyday to:**

- **WELCOME** - Create Supportive Classroom Environments

- **INCLUDE** – Build Student Engagement

- **PROMOTE** – Teach Social-Emotional Learning

- **KNOW**– Know your Students and Build Mental Health Literacy

- **PARTNER** – Create Connections with Home and Community

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH-ASSIST
ÉQUIPE D'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ
MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES

Aligned and Integration Model (AIM) for
School Mental Health and Well-Being
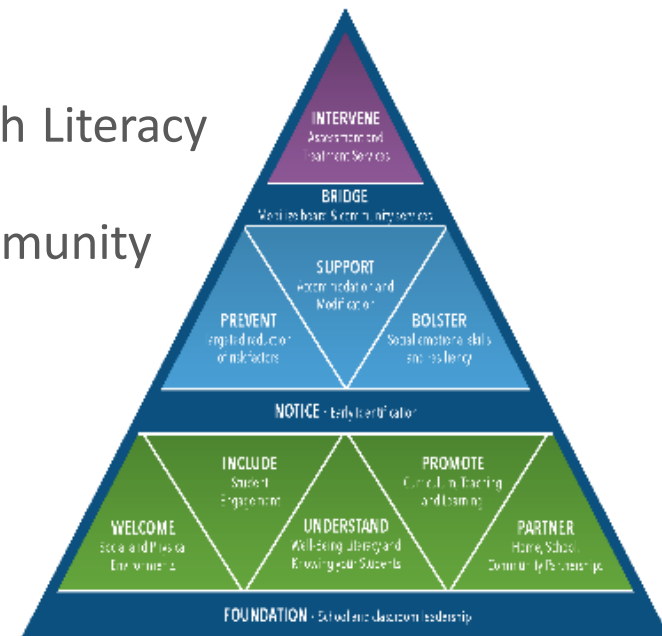
More Detailed Criteria

- ✓ **Simple activities** to promote good mental health

- ✓ **Evidence-based** or evidence-informed

- ✓ **No or low cost** to introduce and sustain

- ✓ **Easy to use** (Towards Flourishing found that strategies that are even abit more complex don't get used as often, aren't "liked", and are implemented poorly)

- ✓ **Easy to communicate** (strategies that can be described easily, that are teachable, and require minimal training)

- ✓ **Differentiated in nature** so that on balance the practices appeal to a wide variety of learners

- ✓ **Appropriate for K-8 classrooms** with suggestions for modifications by grade

From Common Elements to Daily Practice

CAMH Evidence Review

Educator Consultation

Category → Theme → Practices
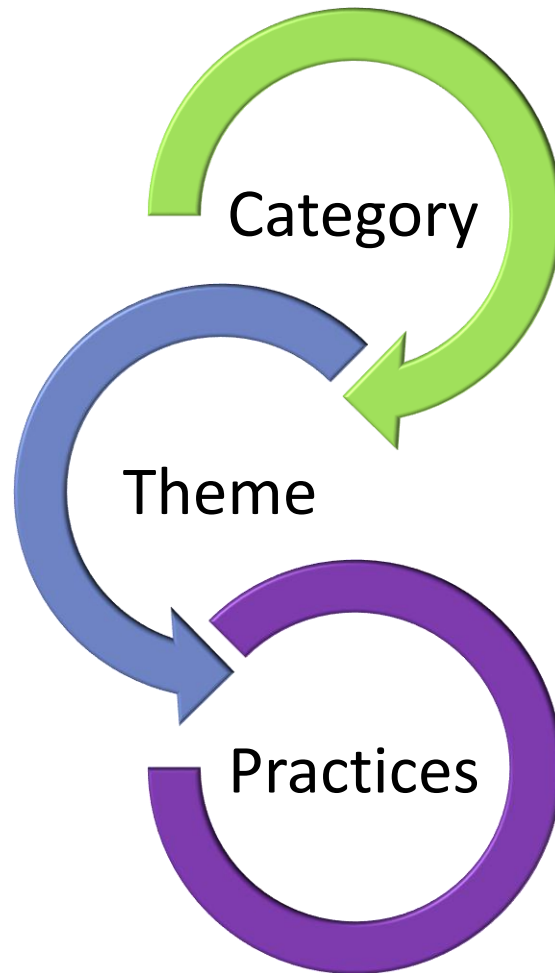
Stress Management and Coping Skills

Deep Breathing

Belly Breathing
Take Five Breathing
Breathe With the Bell

Overview of the Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource

On-line tool, everyday mental health practices

Check it Out!

https://smh-assist.ca/emhc/

Coping & Stress Management

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH-ASSIST
ÉQUIPE D'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ
MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES

TENSE AND RELAX

Purpose	To have students understand how different their body feels when relaxed versus when tense, to develop the skills to notice how their body feels in both instances and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate.	
Division	All	
Time Required	5-10 minutes	
Materials	Educator will help students notice how they feel when they tense their muscles, and when they relax them.	
Instructions	Neck/Turtle	• Push your shoulders up to your ears (as if you were hiding inside a turtle shell). • Hold this for the count of 1-2-3. • Now relax your shoulders slowly for the count of 1-2-3.
	Hands/Lemons	• Squeeze your hands together into fists (as if you were squeezing lemons). • Hold this for the count of 1-2-3. • Now relax your hands slowly for the count of 1-2-3.
	Stomach/Fence	• Squeeze your stomach in as if you were trying to squeeze through a fence. • Hold this for the count of 1-2-3. • Now relax your stomach slowly for the count of 1-2-3.
	Feet/Mud	• Push your feet down into the floor (as if you were squishing mud). • Hold this for the count of 1-2-3.

Categories and Themes

Stress Management and Coping Skills	Pause and Reflect, Calm Classroom, Deep Breathing, Stretching, Guided Imagery, Support Seeking
Identifying and Managing Emotions	Gauging, Recognizing, Understanding
Positive Motivation Skills	Reframing, Expressing Gratitude, Perseverance, Practicing Optimism
Relationship Skills	Listening, Empathy, Acts of Kindness, Being a Good Friend, Being Respectful, Conflict Resolution
Self-Confidence and Identity Skills	Assertive Communication, Knowing Oneself, Mattering
Executive Functioning Skills	Decision Making, Goal Setting, Metacognition, Organization, Problem Solving, Working Memory

Practice Card Example

Coping & Stress Management

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH-ASSIST
ÉQUIPE D'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ
MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES

DEEP BELLY BREATHING

Purpose	To help students develop a deeper mind/body connection, by practicing deep breathing to support self-regulation, awareness of emotions, and resiliency.	
Division	All	
Time Required	10-15 minutes	
Materials	Select a breathing practice that appeals to your group of students and to your comfort level.	
Instructions	Deep Belly Breath	Stand/sit with back straight and keep your shoulders and head relaxed as you gaze forward. • Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing that. Place your hands flat on your stomach. • As you breathe in deeply through your nose, send this breath all the way to your stomach. • Feel your stomach expand and your hands move out… • Breathe out…Feel your stomach contract and your hands move in…
	Hot Chocolate	Stand/sit with back straight and keep your shoulders and head relaxed as you gaze forward. • Place your hands together as if there is a cup of hot chocolate between them. • As you breathe in pretend to smell the hot chocolate. • As you breathe out pretend to blow on the steam. • Do that again…(repeat two or three times). • Next, tilt your cup and take a little sip, your body feels warm and relaxed.
	Breathing Kindness	Stand/sit with back straight and keep your shoulders and head relaxed as you gaze forward. • As you breathe in – breathe in kindness. Send this kindness to the centre of your body. • As you breathe out – breathe out negativity. Send this breath out and away from you.

Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource

Educators told us they wanted an easy access on-line resource, with printable practice summaries

Feasibility Pilot Feedback

You and Four Friends…

Trying out the Resource

❖ Ten educators from across Ontario helped to develop and test the resource; each invited four colleagues to help try out the practices

❖ Each participant was asked to try 6-10 practices in their classroom (Feb-April)

❖ Educators used a feedback form to rate and revise each of the practices that they used in their classroom and also offered overall impressions via an on-line survey

❖ Educators on the core team provided detailed feedback via web consultation at the end of the feasibility pilot re: the content of the resource, and the delivery preferences

And they told us…

Overall, participants in the feasibility pilot were very enthusiastic about the resource. They offered excellent suggestions for enhancing the content and format.

Year Two Project Phases

1. **Preparation for Larger Field Test (September - January 2018)**
   - Research ethics, measurement, website enhancements

2. **Field Testing of Resources (February – May 2018)**
   - Educators try out 6-10 activities from the resource
   - Educators complete pre and post surveys

3. **Focus Groups and Data Analysis (June - July 2017)**
   - Three focus groups are conducted with participants
   - Survey and focus group data is analyzed

4. **Revisions to the Resource (Summer 2018)**
   - Feedback is used to revise the resource, prepare for launch!

From Feasibility to Impact Assessment

Evaluation Co-Design and Measurement

- Educator satisfaction

- Educator confidence

- Educator mental health literacy

- Educator perceptions of classroom climate

- Educator perceptions of student skills

2017-2018 Field Test

❖ Nine school boards

❖ ~ 450 participants accessed the site

❖ Access to site, agreement to try at least 6 classroom practices

❖ Pre/Post surveys about knowledge, confidence, and perceived classroom climate and student skill development (n=153 completed pre and post)

❖ Focus groups to help further inform next version of the resource

Participants - Years of Teaching

"How many years have you been teaching?"
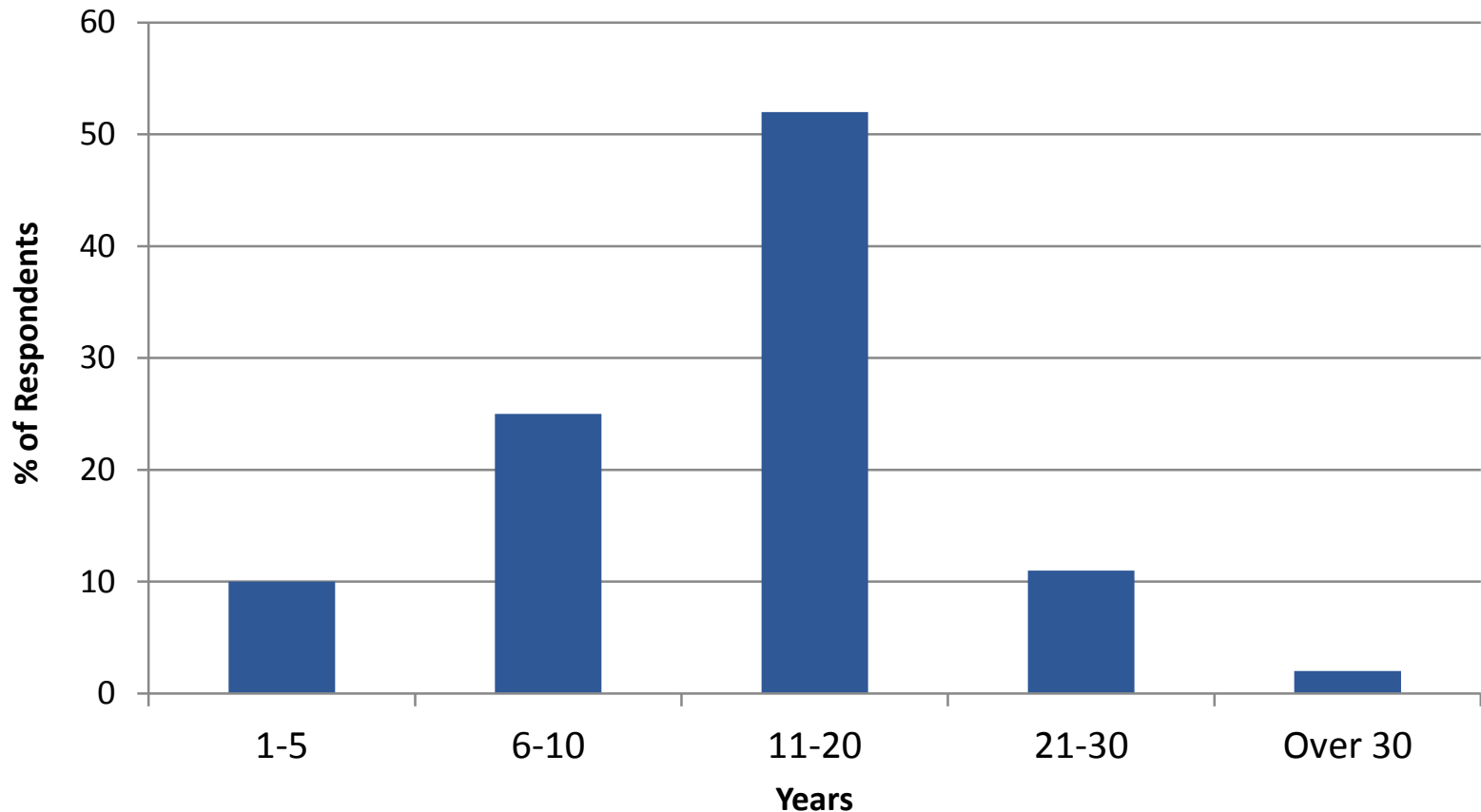
Participants - Division

"In which divisions will the EMHC practices be used in the next 3 months?"
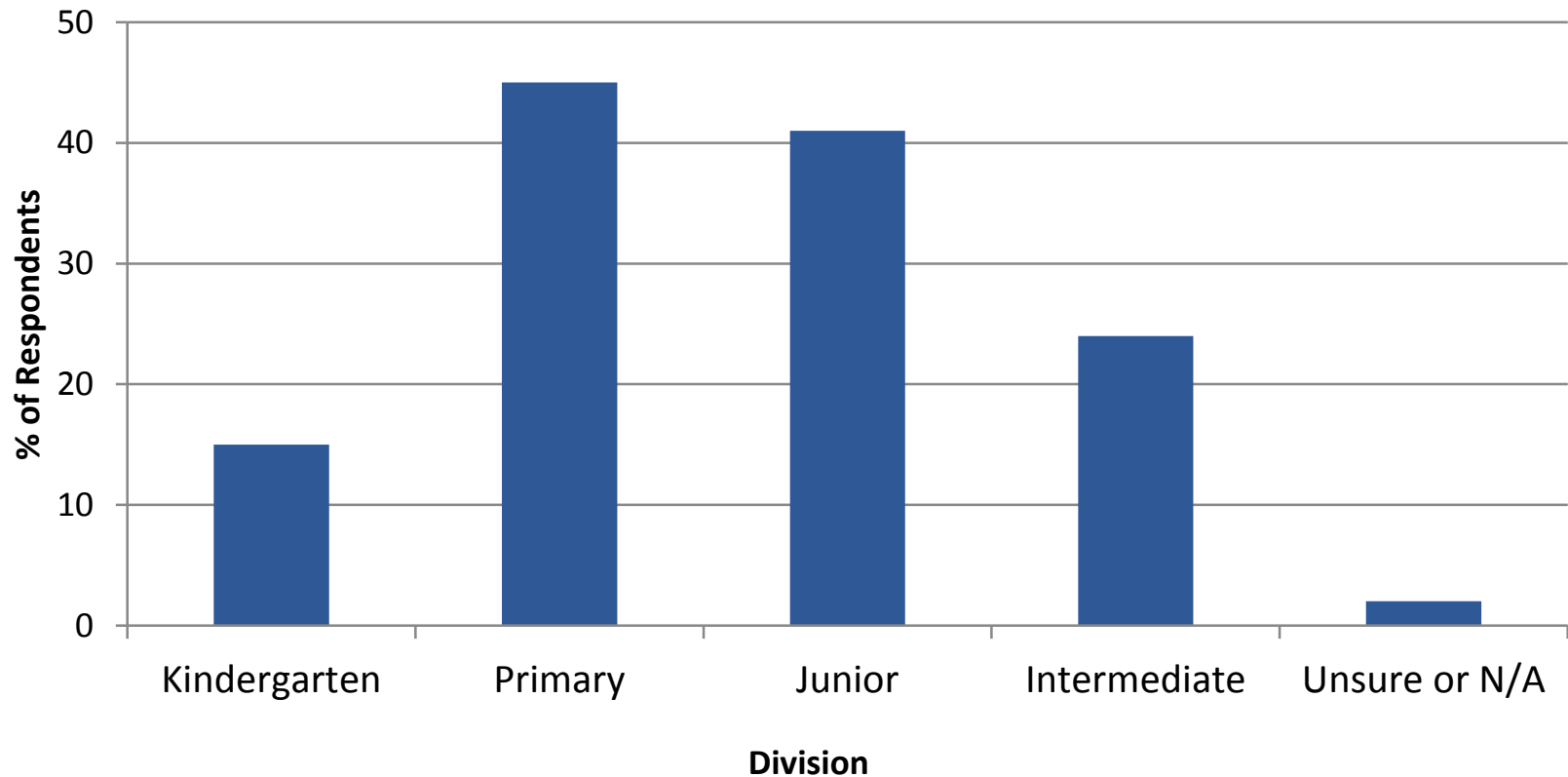
Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge T1 (N=421)	0.91
Beliefs T1 (N=421)	0.88
Confidence T1 (N=422)	0.95
Classroom Climate T1 (N=410)	0.89
Students' SEL Skills T1 (N=161)	0.86

→ High internal consistency within all subscales

Pre-Post Changes

Paired t-test comparing baseline to post intervention scores on the five outcome variables

Time 2 – Time 1	N	Difference in Means	Standard Deviations	T
Knowledge of SEL	153	0.414*	0.555	9.214
Beliefs about the benefits of SEL	153	0.006	0.367	0.198
Confidence in skills to deliver SEL	153	0.389*	0.816	5.728
Perception of classroom climate	150	0.202*	0.353	6.994
Perception of student SEL practices	116	0.328*	0.413	8.540

Note. Statistical significance: *p<0.01

Knowledge Subscale

1. Coping and stress management skills
2. Identifying emotions skills
3. Relationship skills
4. Positive motivation skills
5. Self-confidence skills
6. Executive functioning skills

5-POINT SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL		SOMEWHAT		EXTREMELY
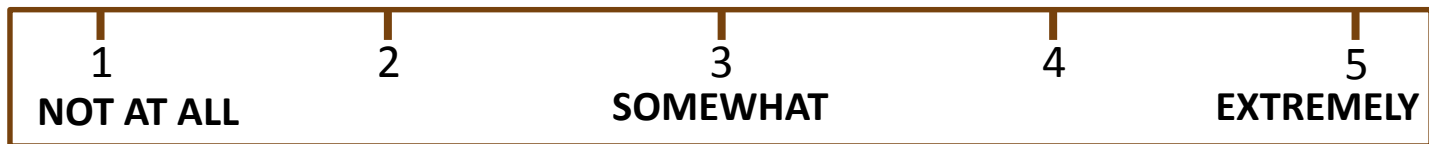
Educator Knowledge of SEL

"Current level of knowledge related to each of the SEL competencies"
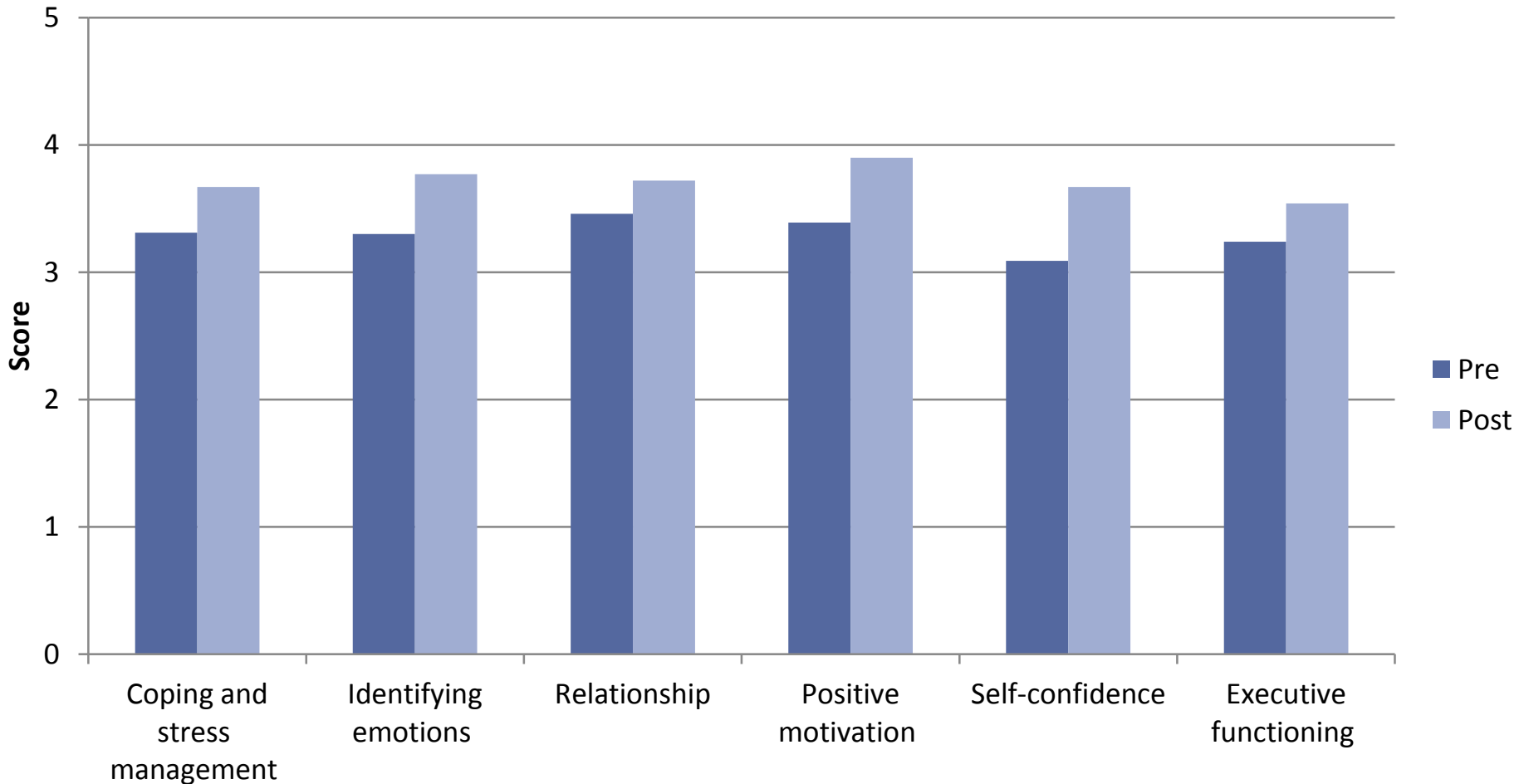
Beliefs / Attitudes related to SEL

1. SEL has an impact on academic achievement
2. Educators have a role to play in promoting positive social emotional development of students
3. All students can learn skills to manage their behaviour and emotions
4. Personal self-care is important to model for students
5. I can make a difference in students' SEL

5-POINT SCALE:

| 1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL		SOMEWHAT		EXTREMELY
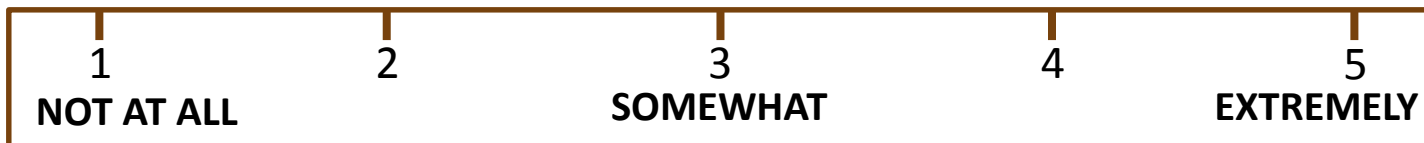
Beliefs / Attitudes related to SEL

"Level of agreement with the following beliefs"
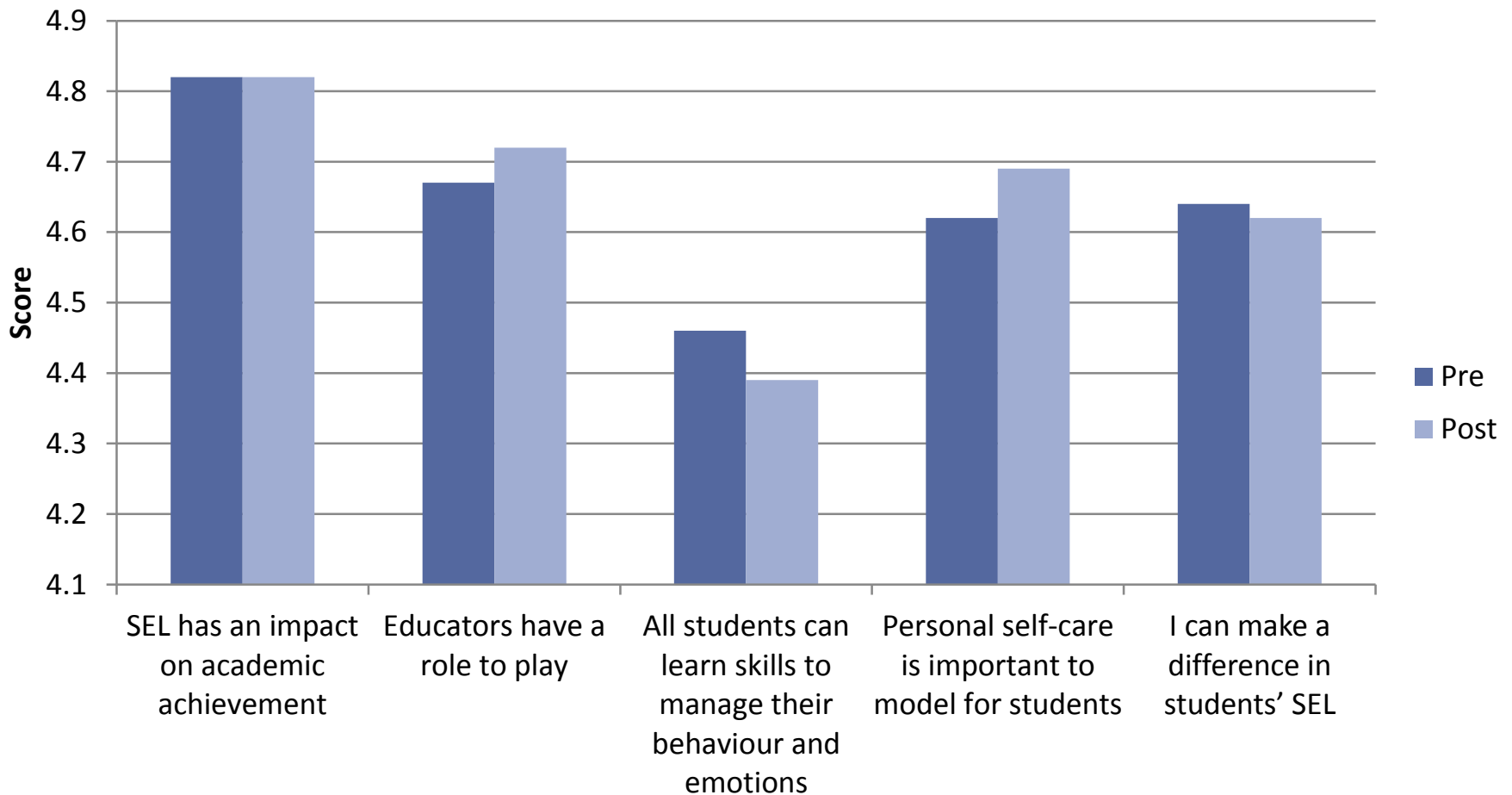
Educator Confidence re: SEL Competencies

1. Discussing SEL with students
2. Delivering materials related to SEL
3. Handling questions from students related to SEL
4. Talking to students about SEL
5. Suggesting SEL resources to students

5-POINT SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL		SOMEWHAT		EXTREMELY
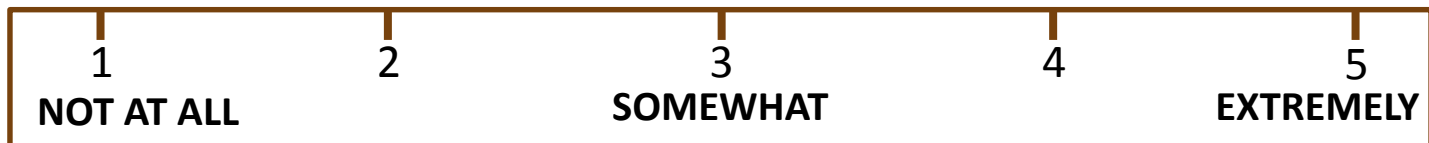
# Educator Confidence re: SEL competencies

"Current level of confidence related to each of the SEL competencies"
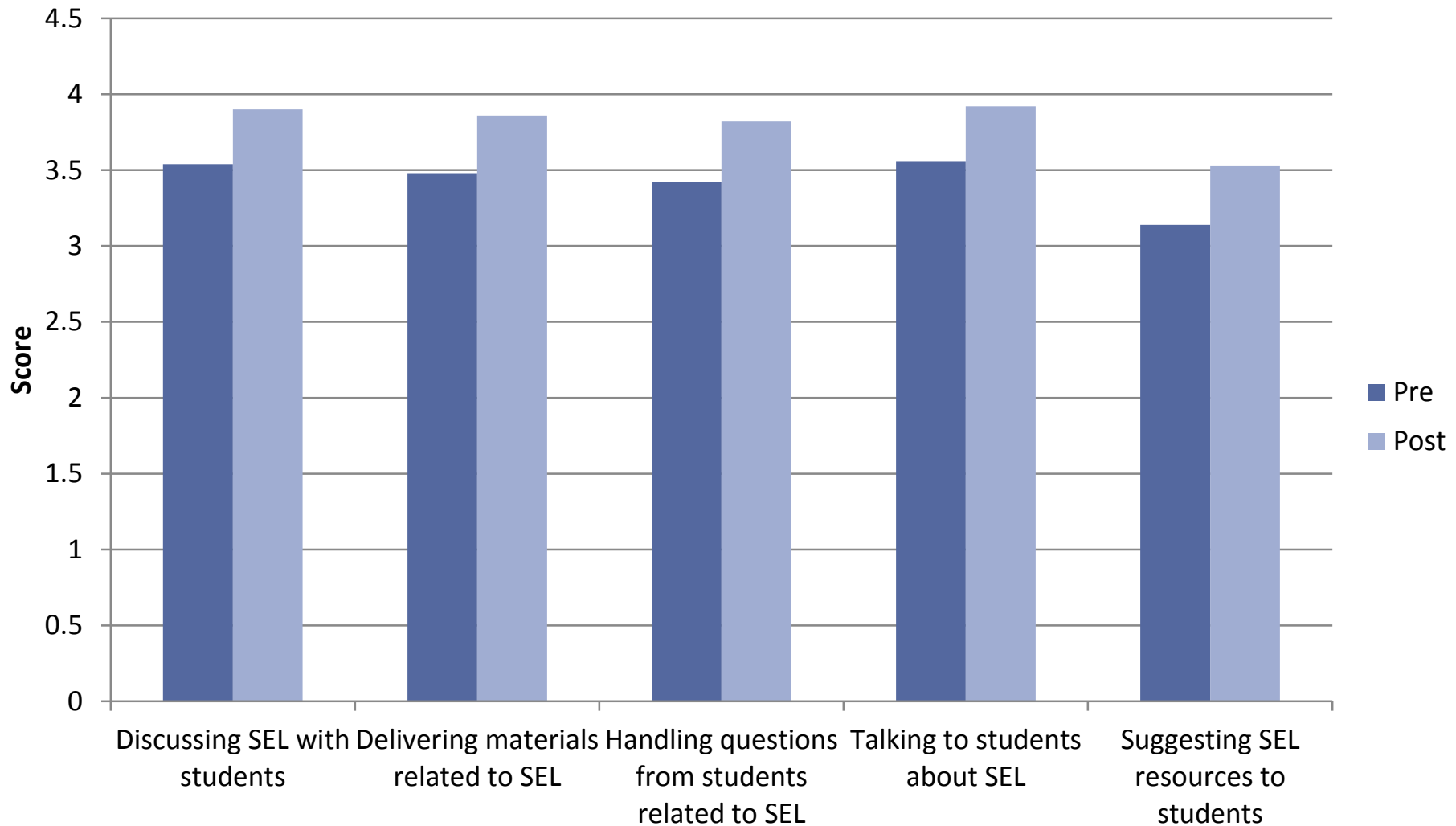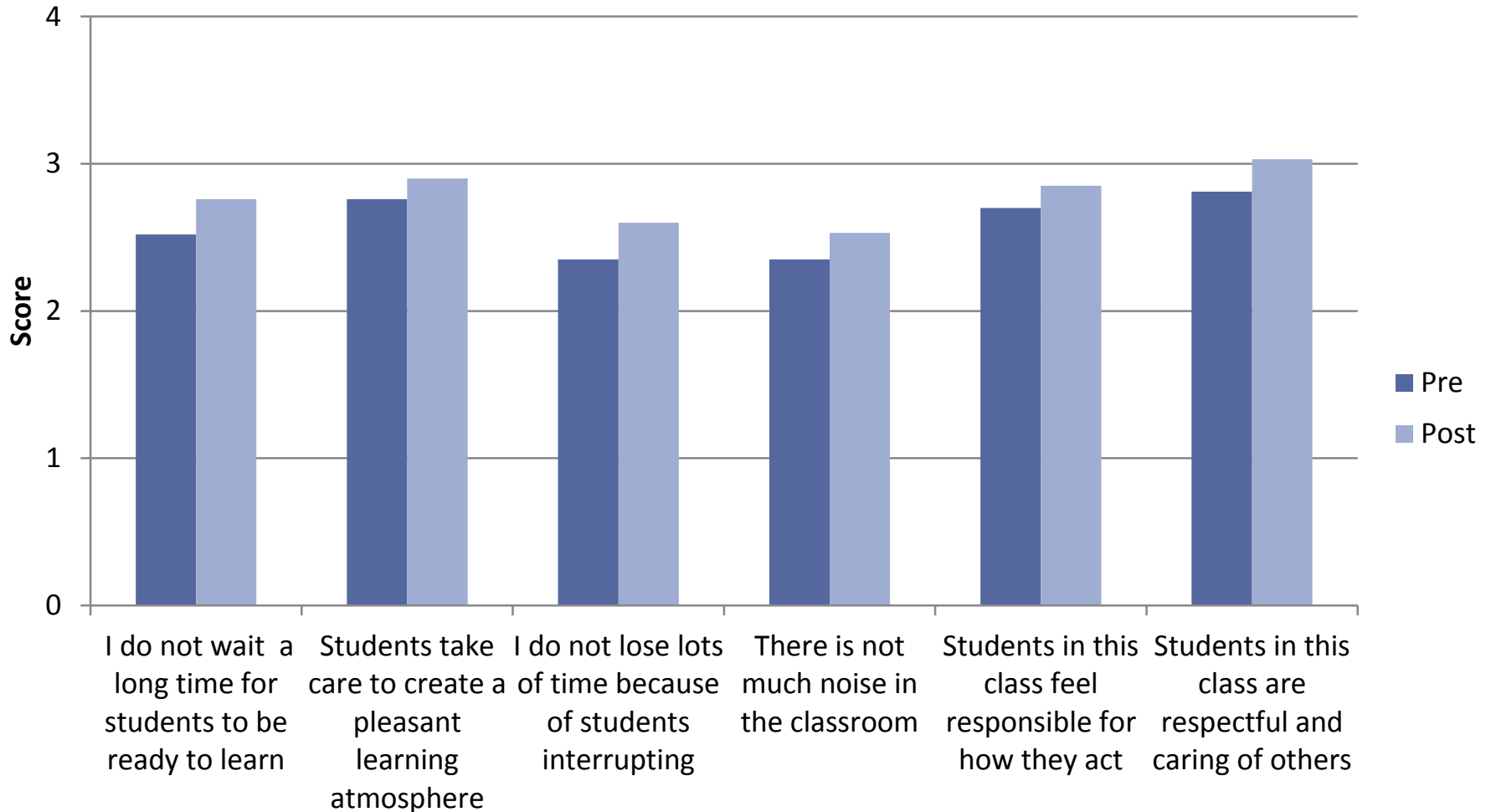
Perceptions of Classroom Climate

1. When the lesson begins, I have to wait quite a long time for students to be ready to learn
2. Students in this class take care to create a pleasant learning atmosphere
3. I lose quite a lot of time because of students interrupting the lessons
4. There is much noise in the classroom
5. Students in this class feel responsible for how they act
6. Students in this class are respectful and caring of others
7. Students can control their own behaviour
8. Students know how to solve conflicts with others
9. Students are able to transition well from one activity, lesson, or timetable change to another
10. Students are supportive of each other
11. Students demonstrate that they are ready to learn
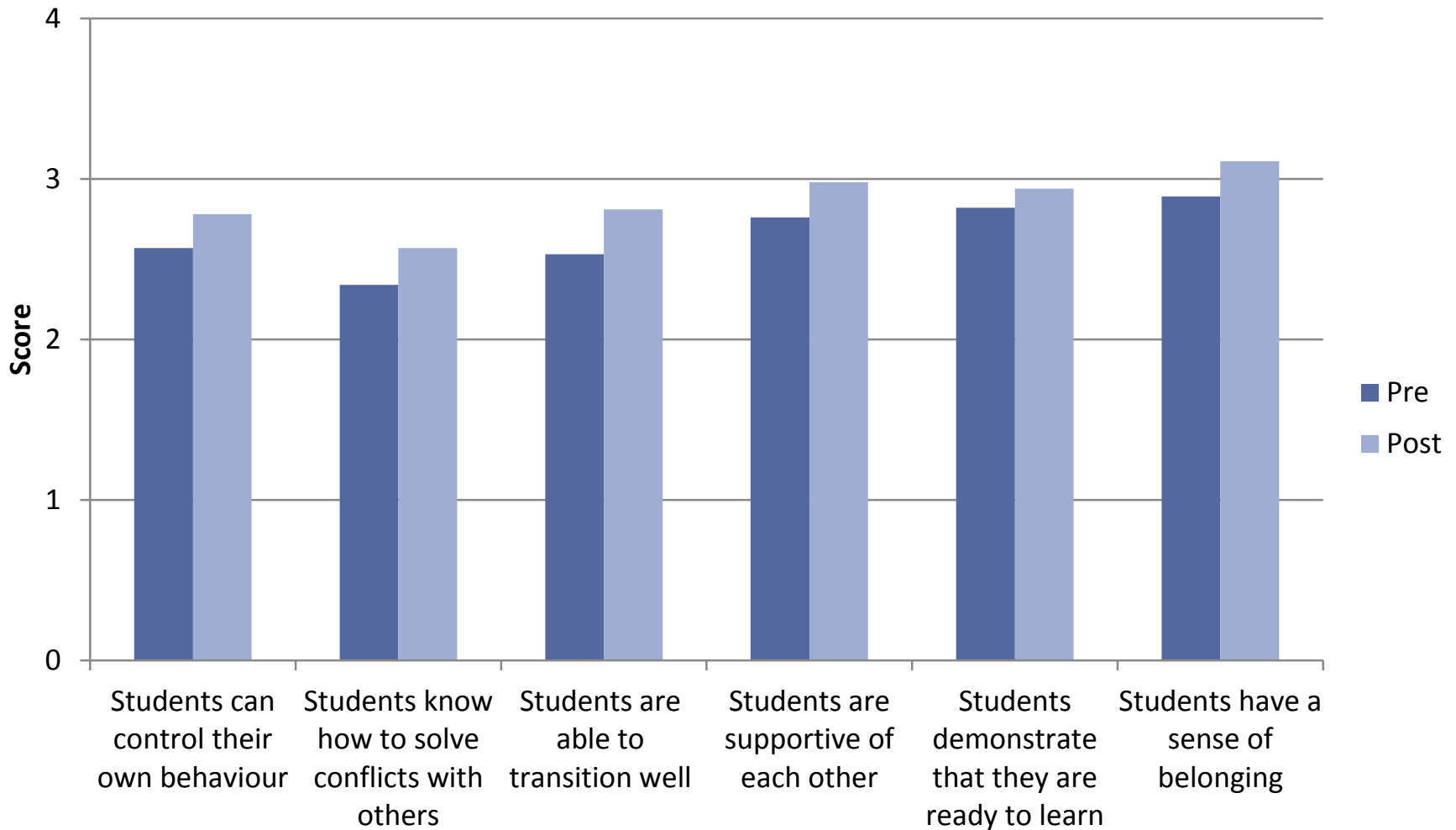12. Students have a sense of belonging

4-POINT SCALE:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| STRONGLY DISAGREE | | | STRONGLY AGREE |
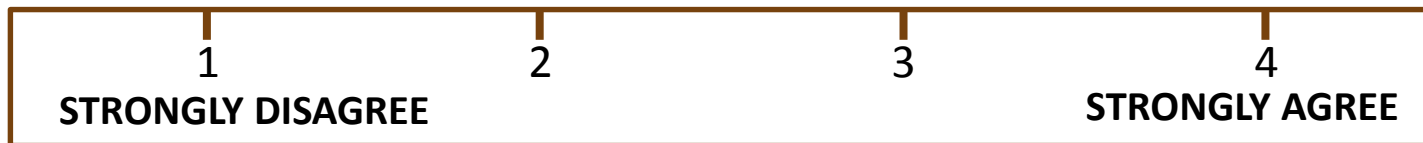
Perceptions of Classroom Climate

"Perceptions of the classroom climate"

Perceptions of Classroom Climate

"Perceptions of the classroom climate"

Perceptions of Student SEL Competence

1. Identifying Emotions Skills
2. Relationship Skills
3. Positive Motivation Skills
4. Coping and Stress Management Skills
5. Self-Confidence and Identify Skills
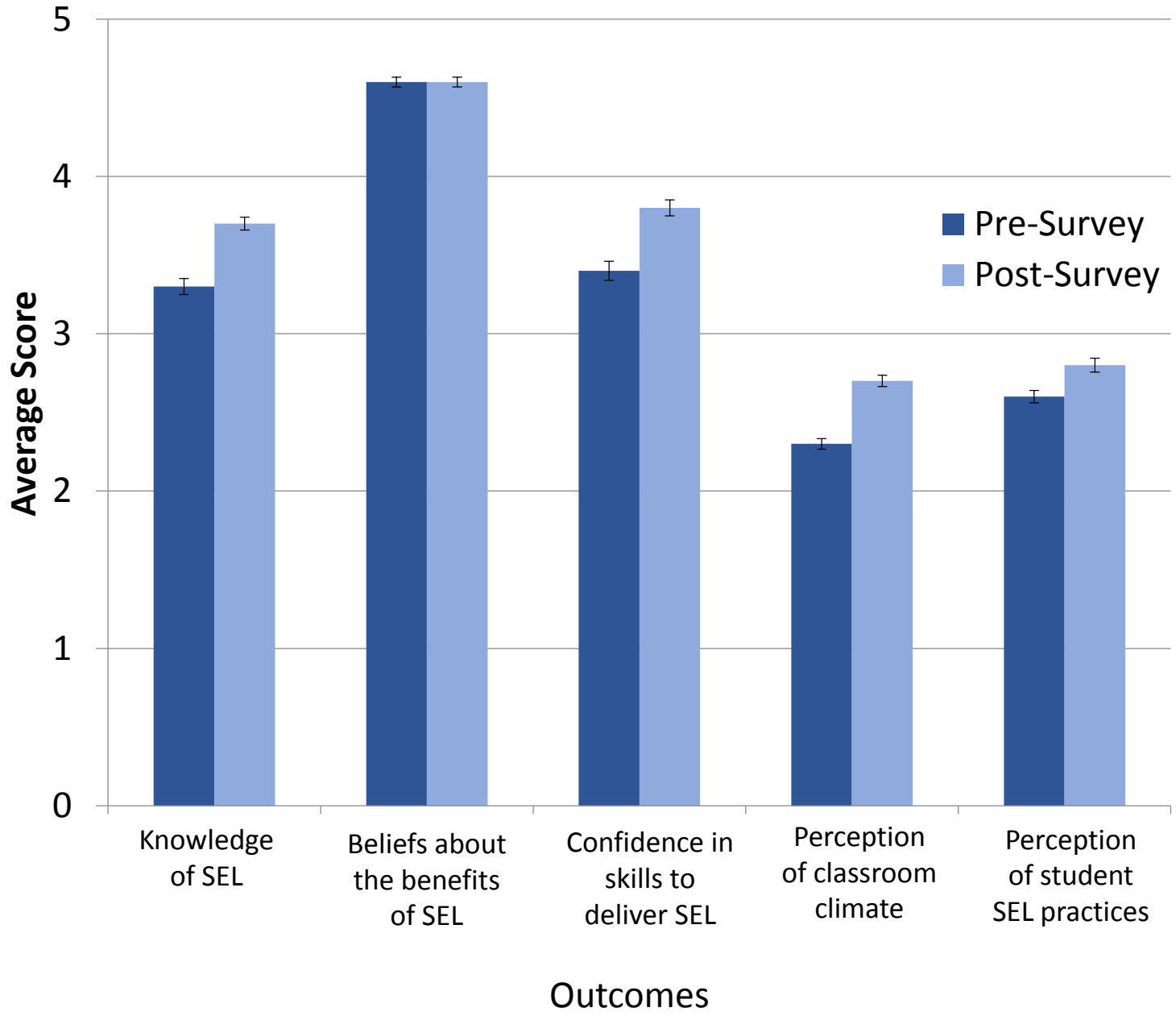6. Executive Functioning Skills

4-POINT SCALE:

1	2	3	4
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT			EXCELLENT SKILLS

Perceptions of Student SEL Competence

Perception of students' SEL competencies
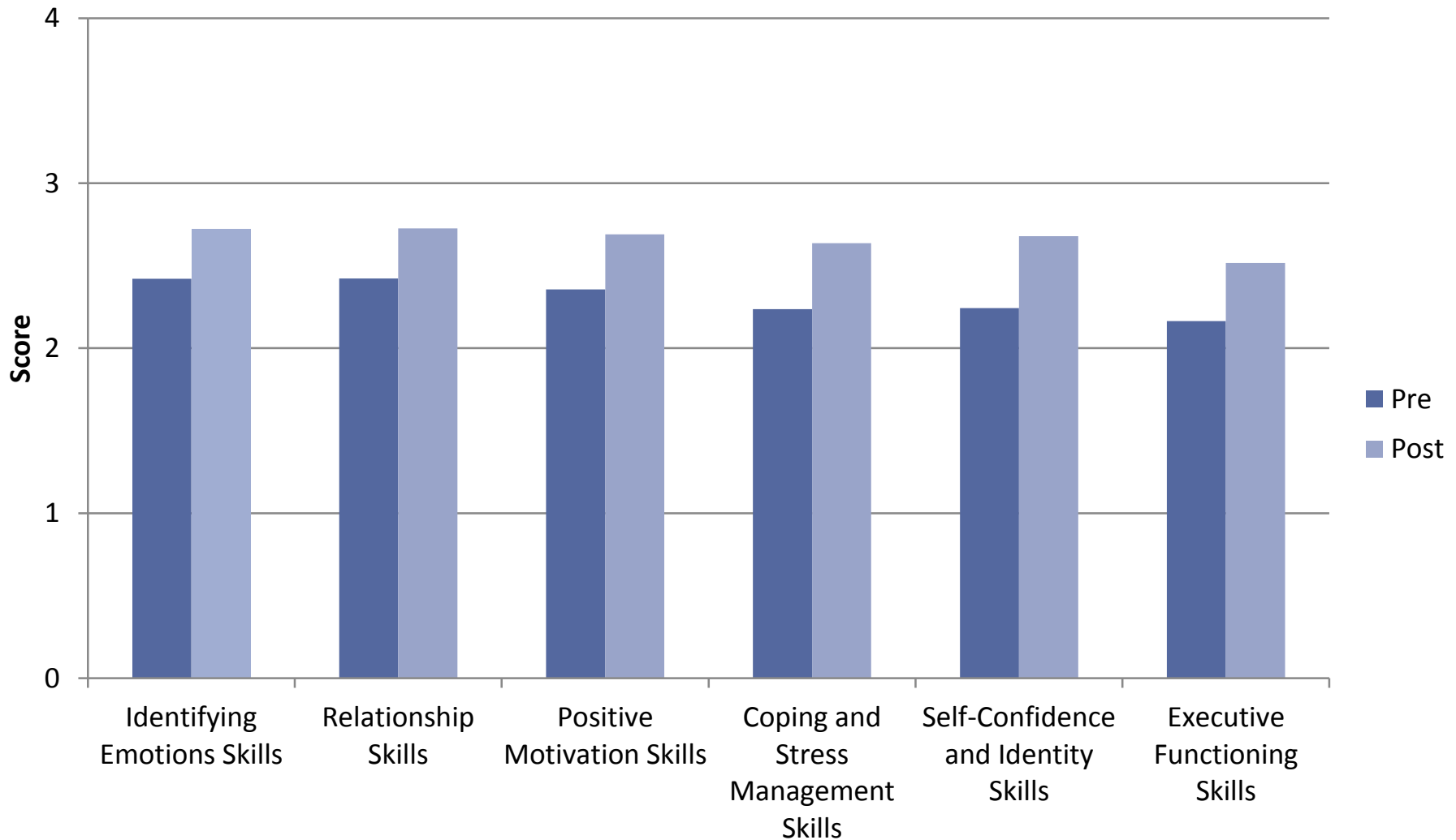
Preliminary Findings at a Glance

Average Score (y-axis, 0 to 5)

Outcomes (x-axis): Knowledge of SEL, Beliefs about the benefits of SEL, Confidence in skills to deliver SEL, Perception of classroom climate, Perception of student SEL practices

Legend: Pre-Survey, Post-Survey

Knowledge of SEL/Confidence in skills to deliver SEL:

1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = Somewhat
4 = Very
5 = Extremely

Beliefs about the benefits of SEL:

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Somewhat Agree
5 = Agree

Perception of classroom climate

1 = Disagree a lot
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Agree a lot

Perception of student SEL practices

1 = Needs improvement
2 = Satisfactory skills
3 = Good skills
4 = Excellent skills

Additional Analyses

❖ Additional analyses were conducted (Univariate Linear Regression) to allow us to control for variables such as background, dosage, and any concurrent SEL programming exposure during the study period

❖ Multi level models were analysed to determine if controlling for board or school made a difference in the predictability of the educators' outcome scores.

All analyses pointed to significant positive findings associated with the Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource, with no confounding influences on the results.

Findings related to "Dose"

Although not statistically correlated, the following trends were also noted:

❖ Moderate use was associated with improvements in perceived classroom climate (5-8 times per week)

❖ High use was associated with improvements in educators' knowledge and confidence in delivering classroom SEL practices (8 to 12 times per week)

❖ Very high use was associated with improvements in perceived student SEL skills (at least 12 times per week)

Perceived Satisfaction with the Resource

- 84% of educators found the resource extremely or very helpful

- Over 95% of educators would recommend the resource to other educators within and outside their division and roles

- The practices were perceived to be:
  - Short, accessible, and easy to deliver
  - Easily modified for students of different ages
  - Interactive and fun in nature
  - Easy to understand by students
  - Beneficial to educators' own mental health and comfort level to deliver classroom-based practices
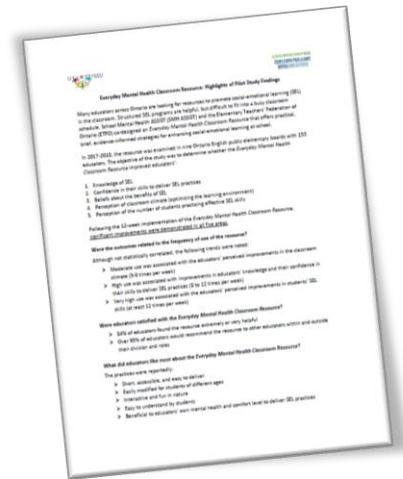
Study Limitations

❖ This study used a quasi-experimental design (pre-post) with no control group or randomization.

❖ A sample of convenience was used whereby those who chose to participate in the intervention might have represented a select group of educators, further influencing the generalizability of the results.

❖ In order to test the efficacy of this intervention, a randomized-controlled trial is warranted.

❖ Despite these limitations the intervention was associated with significant improvements in knowledge, classroom climate, and SEL practices.

Next Steps

❖ Roll-out Implementation Support Protocol within Ontario school districts with ETFO locals (communication plan, support role for Mental Health Leaders, trouble-shooting by Implementation Coaches, continuous quality improvement systems, etc.)

❖ Create versions for other Federations (Catholic District School Boards, French District School Boards, Secondary School Audiences)

❖ Extend the idea for student everyday mental health practices

❖ Seeking partnerships related to a program of research for the Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource

Take Home Messages

❖ Authentic organizational partnership is a key foundation

❖ Educator voice is essential

❖ Communication is difficult, multi-layered, and critical

❖ Practical, evidence-informed resources help make the educator role in supporting student mental health manageable –

 Mental Health Literacy ➡ *Action!*

❖ Leveraging existing structures helps with sustainability

❖ Involvement in co-designed projects is good professional learning and provides an important leadership opportunity

Questions?

Contact Us

❖ Nancy Baldree, B.A., B.Ed.

  ▪ nbaldree@etfo.org

❖ Kathy Short, Ph.D., C. Psych.

  ▪ kshort@smh-assist.ca

❖ Alexandra Fortier, MSW, RSW

  ▪ afortier@smh-assist.ca

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