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Impact of the Mind Sync Program on Students' Social and Emotional Competencies at Academic High & Jr. College: Mid 2 Assessment Report

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A B S T R A C T

The Mid 2 Assessment focuses on assessing the effectiveness of Mind Sync Mental Health Program for the students of Academic High & Jr. College in terms of their social and emotional development. This is a second formative assessment that follows up on the Mid-1 Assessment that was conducted in December, 2023. The initial assessment showed significant gains in students' social-emotional development (SED) outcomes subsequent to the implementation of the Self Awareness competency training for the students. The percentage of students in the 'Need for Instruction' category showed a sharp drop from 20% at pre-assessment stage to 9% at Mid-1 Assessment. Similarly, the percentage of students in the "Strength" range has risen from 17% to 30%, suggesting that the students have made some good improvements in several aspects of social-emotional learning. These results from the Mid-1 assessment served as preliminary indicators of the program's success, and justified its continuation.

The Mid 2 Assessment was carried out between December 2023 and January 2024 and focused on the Self Management competency, which is another component of the Mind Sync Mental Health Program. This competency is intended to strengthen students' capacity to control emotions, build goals, and cope effectively with stress. It uses the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), which is a psychometric evaluation instrument that measures the social-emotional well-being of children. The current report presents a comparative analysis of data from two assessment periods: Mid 1: (December 2023) and Mid 2: (January 2024).

The significance of the present research is based on the potential of its findings to be used for the development of educational interventions that would target the enhancement of student well-being. With regards to SEL competencies, it is crucial to identify the effectiveness of different aspects that schools promote such as Self Management. This work not only provides information for the quantitative improvement of the student population, but also provides details about the changes observed across grade levels and student abilities. Combing the scores of DESSA across the four domains including; Strength, Typical, and Need for Instruction, the report gives a relative comparison of how the Mind Sync program impacts student development. The information is particularly useful for teachers and other stakeholders that wish to develop inclusive and supportive environments that foster healthy emotional development of learners.

1. Problem Statement and Purpose Statement

Although there has been increasing acknowledgment of social emotional learning (SEL's) value in promoting positive development in educational contexts, translating SEL theories into research-based practice and assessing SEL initiatives continue to be challenging endeavors. SEL interventions in schools are not always accompanied by well-developed approaches for assessing

the effectiveness of these interventions in enhancing student's outcomes. To this end, this study is devoted to evaluating the effectiveness of the Mind Sync Mental Health Program, with a focus on the Self Management competency, in the development of the students' social and emotional competencies. The main objective of this investigation is to assess the outcome of the Mind Sync program on the social and emotional learning of the students as indicated by DESSA. It aims to establish whether students who are enrolled in the program show improvements in the way they handle emotions, goal setting and attainment, and interpersonal relationship. Hoping to gather more evidence of the program's efficacy, as well as pinpointing challenges and opportunities for further development, the study includes a quantitative analysis of assessment data collected from the Aperture Portal. This study adds to the body of knowledge on how SEL can help in improving student's achievements and well-being when a specific and measurable approach is implemented.

3. Literature Review

Scientific assessment of SEL programs like the Mind Sync Mental Health Program that are offered in educational contexts has received a lot of attention in recent years because these interventions hold a promise to positively impact the overall success rate of learning among students. Social and emotional learning contains a set of competencies, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making, which are essential for student's academic and personal success in and outside the classroom[1].

4. Social-Emotional Learning and Student Outcomes

There is some evidence on the ubiquitous importance of SEL in students' learning achievements, behavior, and well-being. According to[2], students who participated in SEL programs showed an increased in positive social behavior, self and others' perceptions and enhanced academic performance compared with students who had no access to the programs which made them gain an 11 percentile point more than non-participants in academic performance. These programs also led to decreased conduct problems, emotional distress and discipline records of the students confirming a range of the benefits of early childhood programs for student success[2].

SEL competencies are also related to long-term attributes such as academic performance, employability standards, and mental health[3]. This is the unique focus of the Mid 2 Assessment of the Mind Sync program that identifies development of self-management skills in students, which is prominent in the occurrence of positive academic and life pursuits. A good self-management perspective enables the student to self-moderate emotions, self-organize goals and pursue them, and to self-manage stress so that they can improve their ways of handling academic tasks and peer relationships[4].

5. Implementation and Effectiveness of SEL Programs

Successful SEL implementation involves embedding the requisite competencies into the learning institution's curriculum, ethos, and in the teaching and learning processes. The implementation of CASEL framework that focuses on integrating the model into school systems to promote positive student outcomes is one such method[1]. Such a systemic approach makes sure that SEL is not only delivered but is also integrated, making it an important component of education, a determinant of the school climate, teacher-student dynamics, and conflicts resolution strategies in classrooms.

Nonetheless, systematic improvements in schools have proven to be a challenge due to variation in SEL programs for several reasons ranging from variable program design to implementation fidelity and the differences in students' needs. A study carried out by Mahoney et al. in 2018 established found that SEL programs that are culturally specific, developmentally appropriate, targeted, and grounded in evidence demonstrate the highest impact. SEL interventions are usually characterized by the explicit teaching of SEL skills combined with the integration of the SEL activities within other subjects, as well as practicing in multiple settings and with different partners[5].

6. Challenges and Considerations in Evaluating SEL Programs

There are several difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of SEL interventions, including the Mind Sync's Self Management component. Tools such as the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) are one way through which researchers can access dependable and bona fide quantifications of students' social and emotional indicators[6]. By using DESSA, educators are able to group learners according to their developmental levels and classify students into categories like strength, typical, and need for further instruction.

Nevertheless, the assessment of progress should not be seen as a simple identification of improved skills but should also consider cultural sensitivity, students' activity, and progress dynamics. For example,[7] note that culturally appropriate SEL assessments should be used to ensure that all students' experiences are fairly captured rather than having their potentials limited by biases ingrained in the assessments. Moreover,[8] clarifies that ongoing evaluation and modification of SEL interventions is important in order to remain relevant at present as well as in the future to cater for the needs of students and bring about constant enhancement.

7. Context and Contributions

The current study builds upon these findings with an aim to understand the effectiveness of Self Management component of the Mind Sync programme at enhancing students' social and emotional learning skills in the context of Academic High and Junior College. Self-management is a critical aspect of the Mid-2 Assessment, which also reflects other frameworks of SEL. Through two-timed, cross-sectional experimental pretest-posttest analyses of students' competencies with DESSA, the study provides a more detailed understanding of how structured SEL programs can help students improve self-regulation of emotion, build goals, and manage stress. The expectation is that the conclusions derived from this study will be helpful in designing educational interventions for the promotion of SEL within school communities, and for other instructors and policymakers searching for ways to improve the mental well-being and academic success of students. Such evidence-based evaluations make it easier for schools to decide on the best practice of implementing SEL and how to carry out the SEL programs in the best way as more schools realize the benefits of adopting meaningful SEL.

8. Research Method

The study employed the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to assess social and emotional learning skills of the participating students. DESSA is a formal, research-validated instrument that is designed to evaluate critical facets of social-emotional development. The current phase of the

study focuses on the Mid-2 Assessment that was undertaken on 23 January 2024. During this period, the Self Management competency was assessed by scoring systems that were put in place following the implementation of the Mind Sync Mental Health Program.

DESSA scores are categorized into three ranges: Strength, Typical, and Need for Instruction (S, T, NI). A score of 60 or above correlates to the "Strength" category, which marks effective social and emotional development. The score that ranges from 41 to 59 indicates the student is operating at a "Typical" level of competency, thus meaning the individual is average. Results under the level of 40 are range of "Need for Instruction" to pinpoint those students who are at risk in social-emotional development and may require additional support. Information was gathered from the Aperture Portal, which offered information on how the students manage emotions, and how skilled they are in goal setting and stress management. The current study examines the changes in DESSA scores obtained during the assessment period to determine the positive changes in the social and emotional competencies as a resultant of the Self Management competency of the Mind Sync program.

9. Findings

The Mid-2 Assessment held on 23rd of January 2024 shows marked improvements in the students' Social-Emotional Development after the roll-out of the Self Management element of the Mind Sync Mental Health Program. When comparing the results achieved in the Mid-1 Assessment taken on December 13, 2023 with the previous assessment, positive changes have been recorded in multiple categories.

The decline of the percentage score of the students under "Need for Instruction" showed a notable improvement; it started in 9% in Mid-1 Assessment and reached 2% in Mid-2 Assessment. This indicates that the program provided the requisite support for students with evidenced based social/ emotional risk factors and assisted them in transitioning to the better functioning levels. Furthermore, there was an increase in strength range student enrolment from 30-39% from the previous year. This suggests a positive advancement in students' learning ability to regulate their feelings, and behavior that is expected of good self-regulation. Another aspect indicating overall positive effects of the intervention was the transition of students from the "Typical" level range (which has dropped from 61% to 59%) into the "Strength" range. In particular, 23% of the learners, who were in the 'Typical' group at the beginning progressed to the 'Strength' group hence a clear improvement in social emotional competencies.

9.1. Grade-Level comparisons

Breaking them down by individual grades, all grades showed improvement in the decrease of 'Need for Instruction' percentages and the increase of 'Strength' percentages. For instance, through transition from Grade 1 to 2, the Figure dropped from 9% to 2% in the Need for Instruction and elevated from 34% to 44% in Strength. Comparable trends were observed at other grade levels to suggest a consistent effectiveness of the program at different student levels.

9.2. Competency-Specific observations

The Self Management competency, the focus of the Mid-2 Assessment, showed remarkable improvements. Students in the "Need for Instruction" range for this competency reduced from 8% to 1%, while those in the "Strength" range increased from 34% to 44%. This highlights the efficacy of the program in enhancing students' ability to regulate their emotions, set goals, and effectively manage tasks and interactions.

9.3. Neutral or Negative observations

Despite the overall positive trends, some areas warrant attention. The slight decrease in the "Typical" range, from 61% to 59%, suggests that while many students improved, a small number may have regressed or not advanced as significantly as others. Specifically, 2% of students from the "Typical" range moved back to the "Need for Instruction" category. Additionally, while 17% of students in the "Strength" range reverted to the "Typical" range, none fell into the "Need for Instruction" category, indicating that while some fluctuation occurred, severe regressions were minimal.

10. Discussion

From the Mid-2 Assessment, it can be concluded that the Self Management component of the Mind Sync Mental Health Program positively impacted students' social and emotional skills. Most of these enhancements are consistent with anticipations, and therefore point to correct operationalization of the program, as well as students' favorable feedback. Nevertheless, some non-positive global trends may point to areas in need of fine-tuning.

The changes that have been observed are all in line with the program aims and objectives. The fact that the numbers of at-risk students reduced significantly further shows that Self Management intervention works in important domains like self control and management, setting achievable goals and exercise stress management. This is well supported by the SEL research like[9], which suggests that self regulation skills contribute towards enhancing students wellbeing and academic achievement.

The emphasis on easy-to-implement and fun activities may have supported these advancements. Mindfulness activities, purposeful tasks, and problem-solving tasks that directly target self-regulation as a part of personal-emotional regulation can be considered empirically validated according to SEL research and should be used for improving self-regulation skills among students[10]. The frequency and structure adopted by Mind Sync, which has definite slots for practice and feedback, most probably helped such competencies get well developed and used consistently in this program.

It is therefore as a result of these following features of the intervention that there has been a dramatic improvement in the marked percentage increase of students within the strength range. First, the role of practicing and rehearsing daily life self-management skills and executing them in a consistent manner seems to be of great importance. It is also important to note that, SEL interventions implemented in class for an average of 30 minutes a day enhances students' ability to cope with their own emotions and behaviors[11]. The Mind Sync program self-management activities that were conducted on a daily basis likely exposed the students to the requisite repeated practice to master these skills.

10.1. Positive changes and contributing elements

Second, the integration of self-reflection and self-assessment tools likely played a role. Encouraging students to reflect on

their emotional responses and behavioral patterns helps them develop a deeper understanding of their own self-management capabilities. This reflective practice is supported by research indicating that self-assessment can enhance self-awareness and promote more effective self-regulation[12].

Finally, the supportive school environment, facilitated by the Mind Sync program, might have contributed to these positive changes. Creating a positive climate where students feel safe and supported is essential for effective SEL implementation. This aligns with findings by[13], who emphasize the role of a nurturing environment in enhancing SEL outcomes.

10.2. Neutral or Negative observations and future directions

Despite the overall positive trends, some neutral or negative observations indicate areas for improvement. The slight decrease in the "Typical" range from 61% to 59%, with 2% of students regressing from "Typical" to "Need for Instruction," suggests that a subset of students did not benefit as fully from the intervention as others. Additionally, 17% of students in the "Strength" range reverted to the "Typical" range. These findings suggest variability in how students respond to the intervention. To address these issues, future iterations of the program should consider differentiated instruction to cater to diverse student needs. Customizing interventions based on individual student profiles and providing more targeted support can help address the varied responses observed. Research supports the effectiveness of personalized SEL interventions, which can be more responsive to individual students' unique challenges and strengths.

Additionally, incorporating more comprehensive monitoring and support systems for students who show signs of regression could be beneficial. Regular check-ins, individualized feedback, and supplementary resources for these students could help sustain their progress. This approach aligns with recommendations from meta-analyses on SEL programs, which highlight the importance of ongoing support and adaptation to maintain gains in social and emotional competencies[14].

Furthermore, involving parents and caregivers more actively in the SEL process could reinforce students' learning at home. Engaging families in SEL activities and providing them with tools to support their children's self-management skills can create a more holistic support system, as suggested by research on family involvement in SEL[15].

The findings from the Mid-2 Assessment reveal substantial improvements in students' social and emotional competencies, particularly in self-management skills. These positive changes are consistent with the goals of the Mind Sync program and are supported by current SEL research. However, some neutral or negative trends indicate the need for more tailored interventions and continuous support. By incorporating differentiated instruction, ongoing monitoring, and family engagement, future iterations of the program can address these challenges and further enhance its effectiveness.

11. Conclusion

The Mid-2 Assessment of the Mind Sync Mental Health Program at Academic High & Jr. College provides compelling evidence of the program's positive impact on students' social and emotional competencies, specifically through its Self Management component. This evaluation highlights significant progress made by the students in various social-emotional domains, demonstrating the program's overall effectiveness and offering insights for future enhancements.

The assessment findings reveal a clear trend of improvement across the student body, reflecting the program's efficacy. A notable reduction was observed in the percentage of students in the "Need for Instruction" range, which decreased from 9% at the Mid-1 Assessment to 2% at the Mid-2 Assessment. This substantial decline indicates that the Self Management component successfully mitigated risk factors and equipped at-risk students with better self-regulation skills. Concurrently, there was a significant rise in students classified within the "Strength" range, increasing from 30% to 39%. This shift suggests that a larger proportion of students developed advanced competencies in managing their emotions and behaviors, setting goals, and handling stress effectively.

These positive changes underscore the program's ability to enhance self-management skills, essential for students' overall well-being and academic success. The improvements in students' social and emotional competencies are aligned with expectations based on prior research indicating the benefits of structured SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2015). The program's structured activities, reflective practices, and supportive environment likely contributed to these outcomes, as they are consistent with effective strategies identified in the broader SEL literature[10,11].

The Self Management component of the Mind Sync program appears to be highly effective in fostering students' ability to regulate their emotions, set goals, and navigate social interactions. The program's structured approach, which includes daily self-management exercises, self-reflection, and goal-setting activities, likely played a critical role in achieving these outcomes. These activities are designed to promote repeated practice and internalization of self-regulation skills, which is supported by research as a key factor in developing strong SEL competencies[12]. Additionally, the program's emphasis on creating a positive school environment that supports SEL likely contributed to the observed improvements, as a nurturing climate is essential for the success of SEL interventions[13].

12. Recommendations

To further enhance the program's impact and address areas where improvement is needed, several recommendations are proposed. First, a continued focus on targeted interventions for the remaining 2% of students in the "Need for Instruction" range is essential. These students may require more personalized support, including individualized feedback, additional practice opportunities, and specific strategies tailored to their unique challenges. Implementing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions for these students, as suggested by the program's evaluators, could provide the necessary support to help them achieve better outcomes[14].

Second, for future assessments, it is recommended to incorporate a more detailed analysis of individual student profiles to identify specific areas where each student may need additional support or enhancement. This can include a more granular breakdown of competencies within the Self Management domain and tracking progress over time. Such an approach would enable educators to design more effective, personalized interventions and ensure that all students benefit from the program's offerings.

Furthermore, expanding the program to include more comprehensive family and caregiver involvement could enhance its effectiveness. Engaging families in the SEL process and providing them with tools to reinforce self-management skills at home can create a more holistic support system for students[15]. This can be achieved through workshops, informational materials, and regular communication between the school and families about students' progress and strategies for supporting SEL at home.

Finally, considering the successful outcomes of the Self Management component, future program enhancements could explore integrating similar structured interventions for other SEL competencies. Expanding the program to address areas such as social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making could provide a more comprehensive approach to fostering students' overall social and emotional development.

13. References

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