

Digital Tools for Social and Emotional Learning Instruction

Healthy Relationships is a digital course that uses evidence-based strategies and scenarios to educate young adolescents (ages 12-15) on important social and emotional topics. The course has been designed to serve as a scalable and easily accessible resource that can support educators in their efforts to incorporate SEL into their classrooms, as social and emotional learning (SEL) becomes more widely recognized for its positive impact on academic and non-academic outcomes. Throughout the course's six modules, students learn how to analyze influences, communicate effectively with and without digital tools, manage conflicts, understand and label their emotions, and more.

The course launched in spring 2015-2016. Over the past year, early survey and assessment data – data that are used to measure the course's impact and efficacy – have been analyzed. This report describes the research that has been done and the effects of the course seen in fall 2016. Specifically, the data show that the course most benefits students who started the course responding to questions with less healthy answers.

Course Assessments, Surveys, and Learning Constructs

While completing each of the six modules, students complete a pre- and post-assessment in order to benchmark and effectively measure knowledge gains. Additionally, students complete an optional pre- and post-course survey in order

to measure attitudinal and behavioral shifts that resulted from the course. Assessment questions relate directly to the concepts in the module, while the 19 questions in the survey are more attitudinal in nature, as can be seen below:

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|--|---|
| 1 I am good at identifying and labeling my emotions | 11 I'm interested in helping others with their problems |
| 2 I feel prepared to get support for an unhealthy or abusive relationship | 12 It's important to treat all people with respect |
| 3 I am good at identifying and labeling my emotions | 13 I would step in if I witnessed abusive behavior in a relationship |
| 4 I always think about my words before posting or sending messages on social media | 14 I stop to think about why I am feeling a certain emotion before I act |
| 5 I often notice tone and body language in communication | 15 My school community values me |
| 6 I feel prepared to deal with conflicts and communication in a healthy way | 16 I feel comfortable being the person I want to be |
| 7 I can identify my personal qualities and strengths | 17 People who work at my school handle conflicts in a fair and responsible manner |
| 8 I feel prepared to step in when someone is treating another person disrespectfully | 18 My friends value what I have to say |
| 9 I feel prepared to identify an unhealthy or abusive relationship | 19 I say negative things about others on social media |
| 10 I rarely understand what influences my decisions and behavior | |

These questions are all likert-scale questions, and students rank their agreement or likeliness to engage in a behavior on a scale from 1 to 7. Based on the leading SEL research of Roger Weissberg, Mark Greenberg, Joseph Durlak, Maurice Elias,

and others, six course learning constructs have been formulated to form the foundation for measuring the course's impact, and each survey questions maps to one of them.¹ These constructs include:

1 Self-Management

2 School Climate

3 Relationship Skills

4 Compassion

5 Social Awareness

6 Self-Awareness

Exploratory Research on Course Data

Preliminary analysis of Healthy Relationships is based on 10,938 students' responses to pre- and post-course surveys from the spring of the 2015-

2016 school year and the fall of the 2016-2017 school year. EverFi's research methodology was as follows:

1 Conducted an analysis of pre-course survey respondents' data from the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years to understand how students cluster together based on their responses to pre-course surveys

2 Analyzed the shifts in students' responses to post-course surveys,

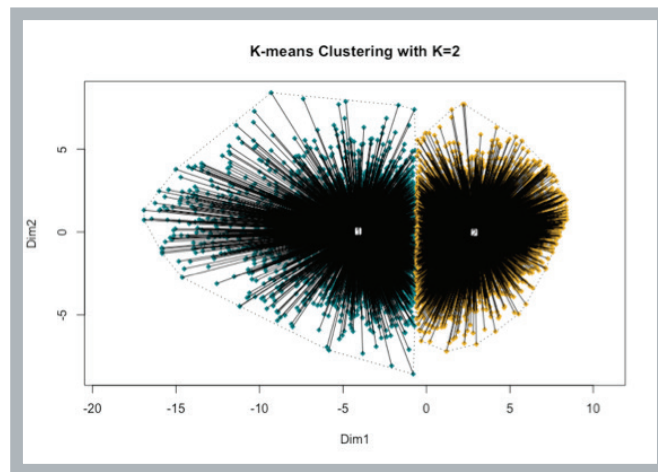
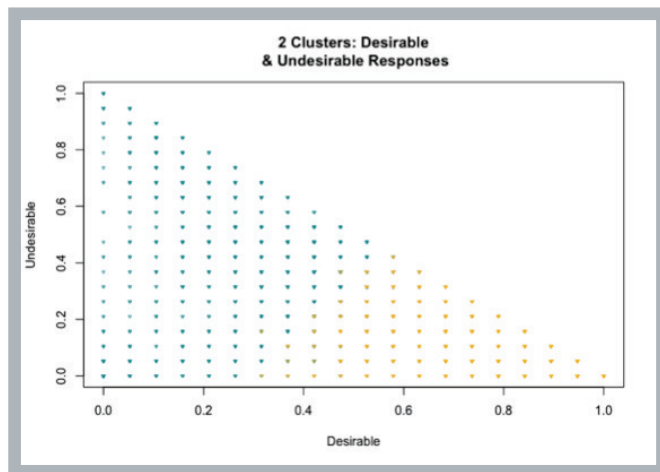
3 Visualized students' responses to pre- and post-course assessments

4 Tested the current learning constructs statistically.

From students' responses to pre-course attitudinal and behavioral questions, two clusters emerged. These clusters are defined in reference to and based on the differences between each other. Based on students' responses to survey questions, we labeled one, larger group (59%) as "healthy" because the students in the cluster, on average, responded to survey questions in ways indicative of their having socially desirable attitudes towards topics, and the other, smaller group (41%) as "unhealthy" because the students in the cluster provided less socially desirable answers on average. To illustrate the differences

in the two clusters' responses, in the pre-course survey, 22% of the unhealthy cluster's students responded with positive answers to the question, "I always think about my words before posting or sending messages on social media" and 32% of those students responded with healthy answers to the question, "I feel prepared to deal with conflicts and communication in a healthy way"; meanwhile, 82% and 87% of the healthy cluster's students responded socially desirable answers to the two questions respectively, and on average, 46% more students in the healthy cluster responded to survey questions positively.

Two Clusters of Students

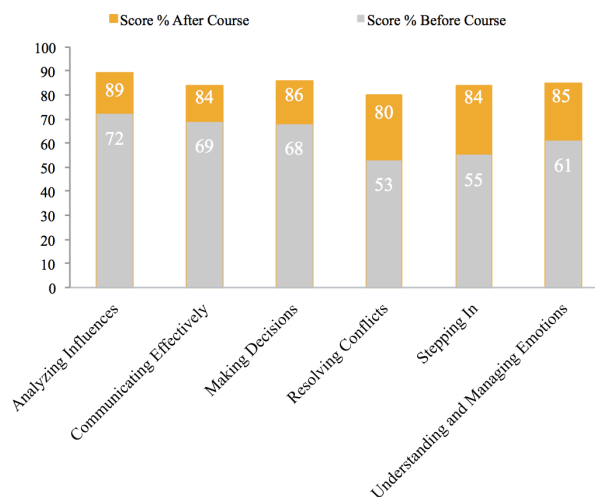
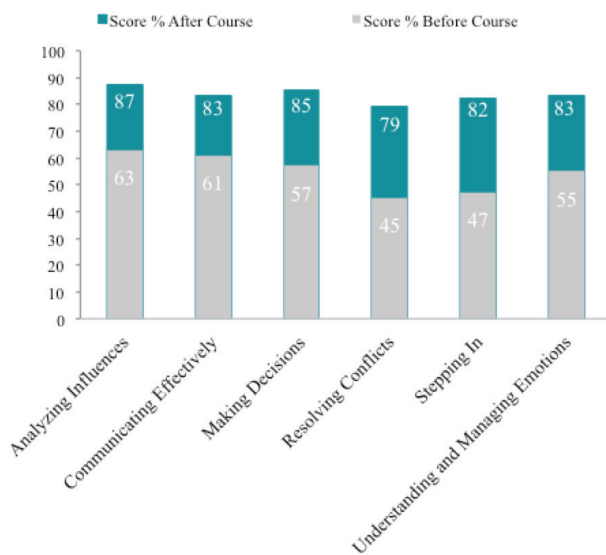


Students in the smaller, “unhealthy” cluster respond with more varied survey answers on the positive end of the spectrum; students in the larger, “healthy” cluster respond with less varied survey answers on the positive end of the spectrum.

When comparing both pre- and post-course measures and pre- and post-module measures of impact on the two groups, students in the unhealthy group were found to show more improvement in their attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge more than did the students in the healthy group, who had less room to grow. Students in the unhealthy group shifted in the positive direction for eleven of the nineteen questions whereas students in the healthy group shifted positively for two of the nineteen questions.

Similarly, while all students gained knowledge after each of the modules, students in the unhealthy group gained more than the students in the healthy group did, since the students in the healthy group started with more. In other words, students who entered the course with less healthy attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge toward those social and emotional constructs appear to have learned more from the course than did students who already approached relationships in relatively health ways when starting the course.

Assessment Responses





Impact of Healthy Relationships

Based on the results of the exploratory data analysis, it is clear that the course helps to improve the attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge of students who start the course responding to questions with less healthy answers. This course also reinforces material to students who already positively approached digital communication, relationship conflicts, the identification and management of emotions before taking the course.

As educators increasingly recognize the importance of social and emotional learning programs, a population-wide approach to teaching students will ensure that more students gain the baseline knowledge that they need to succeed in life. To reach students in the population further, more research will be done to understand the course's impact on students from different demographic groups and other subpopulations.

Sources:

1 Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82, 405-432.