

**The Impact of an Equity Centered Social-Emotional Learning Program on Social
Awareness in Children Ages 5 through 11**

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to examine the impact of integrating equity-centered social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons into the existing curriculum at the Positive Activities Lead to Success (PALS) Children's Program. The program serves children ages 5–11, many of whom come from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). While traditional SEL programs promote positive behavior and social-emotional growth, they often lack an explicit focus on equity. This study addressed that gap by embedding equity-focused lessons on diversity, empathy, and inclusion and evaluating their influence on children's social awareness.

A mixed-methods design was applied over four weeks, incorporating pre- and post-intervention Devereux Student Strengths Assessments (DESSA), student self-perception surveys, and weekly behavioral observations. Findings revealed modest but meaningful growth in children's social awareness competencies, particularly in empathy, inclusion, and emotional regulation.

Quantitative data demonstrated increases in DESSA scores and survey ratings, while qualitative observations confirmed improved peer support and inclusive behaviors. However, fairness and equity concepts remained more abstract and challenging for some participants. Overall, results suggest that embedding equity-centered SEL strengthens children's ability to build positive relationships and apply prosocial skills in authentic social contexts.

Keywords: Social-emotional learning (SEL), social awareness, equity, diversity, empathy, perspective taking, Devereux Student Strengths Assessments (DESSA), positivity, elementary.

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Program Background

The Positive Activities Lead to Success (PALS) Children's Program (La Puente, n.d.) focuses on the social-emotional growth of children ages 5-11. This program provides children with structured support to foster social-emotional growth. Many of these children are from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACES). Children from diverse backgrounds may experience difficulties in navigating social awareness and complex social situations due to a variety of cultural, socioeconomic, and emotional factors (Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, & Vesely, 2014).

Research suggests that social-emotional learning (SEL) can play an important role in assisting children in developing the skills that they need to understand social norms, manage emotions, and have healthy social interactions with others (Xu et al., 2025). To recognize the importance of equity to these children the program seeks to create a safe and inclusive environment prioritizing not only empathy but also diversity and inclusion. Social-emotional learning plays a particularly important role in equipping the children at PALS with the skills that are necessary to understand other people, regulate themselves, and build healthy relationships. PALS strives to achieve this through the use of methods such as Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). Research also shows that through SEL interventions, specifically those that include creative play-based methods, can significantly enhance social-emotional intelligence in children (Frydman & Mayor, 2024).

Problem Statement

The absence of an equity-centered focus in SEL curricula limits children's opportunities to build vital skills such as empathy, inclusivity, and a critical understanding of equity. Research shows that SEL interventions can effectively promote these competencies (Durlak et al., 2011), yet many traditional curricula do not adequately address equity as the central focus that children could benefit from (McCall et al., 2023). Without this intentional focus, many children may experience lower social awareness scores on assessments such as the DESSA and may also demonstrate lesser understandings of equity within their daily interactions. This problem highlights the need to integrate equity-centered SEL to improve both measurable outcomes in social awareness and the development of equitable perspectives among children.

Theory of Action

The PALS Children's Program has implemented a general SEL curriculum, but it lacks a specific focus on the topic of equity. Research shows that without social-emotional lessons that address equity, diverse social-emotional needs of all children may not be met. This gap could hinder the program's ability to create an inclusive equitable environment where children feel a sense of belonging, potentially impacting their social awareness development as measured by the DESSA (Alsalamah, 2023).

The goal of this action research project was to further enhance the SEL growth of children enrolled in the program. This was achieved on a small scale by implementing equity focused SEL into the existing program curriculum to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Despite the growing body of social-emotional learning research, there appears to be a lack of research that focuses directly on social-emotional lesson interventions on equity.

The integration of equity focused SEL lessons into the existing SEL that occurs at the PALS Program can lead to small but measurable improvements in social awareness DESSA scores for most of the children involved, as well as leading to a better understanding of equity for the children involved. These lessons helped to create a more inclusive environment that promotes cultural awareness, empathy, inclusion, diversity, and emotional regulation. The improved understanding of equity and a more inclusive environment will in turn support the diverse social-emotional needs of students.

The effectiveness of the program was assessed using DESSA scores pre and post implementation; specifically, we were looking at the social awareness competency. Surveys were developed to gauge the children's understanding of equity and other related concepts at the beginning of the four-week project, and towards the end. The data collection targets were pre and posttest comparisons of DESSA social awareness competencies, as well as student surveys to gather data of their pre and post levels of understanding.

This action research project was conducted over a four-week period. Each week consisted of two meetings and covered seven lessons in total with the last lesson in the fourth week being a lesson to wrap up the meetings. In the first week, a survey of their understanding of equity was provided to them before the first lesson. The most recent DESSA data for each of these children was also gathered and assessed. In the fourth week, the eighth lesson also consisted of the same survey provided to the children again to gather an updated understanding of their knowledge of equity. At the end of the fourth week, new DESSA assessments were completed for each child that participated to analyze their social awareness competencies.

There are multiple targets for this action research project. The first performance target is improvement in DESSA scores in the social awareness competencies by the end of the four-week

period. The second is a process target that involves the successful implementation of interactive equity-centered social-emotional lessons that engage students in a meaningful way. The third target, the program target, is enhancing the SEL curriculum at PALS with equity-centered SEL as a core component for programming in the future.

Theoretical Framework

First paragraph rewritten: This action research project (ARP) is grounded in social learning theory (SLT), a framework that is closely associated with Albert Bandura. SLT bridges behaviorist and cognitive perspectives by emphasizing how individuals acquire new behaviors through the observation of others (Kretchmar, 2024). Core processes within SLT include attention, retention, reproduction, motivation, and self-regulation, which together can explain how observational learning influences behavior (Kretchmar, 2024; Wulfert, 2025). This theory is especially relevant in various types of educational settings, as children often model the behaviors and attitudes that are demonstrated by both peers and adults. In the context of SEL, SLT provides a foundation to understanding how positive role modeling, role playing, and intentional social interactions can foster the development of empathy and social awareness in children.

In the context of this action research project (ARP), SLT provides the framework for understanding how equity based SEL lessons can influence the students involved in the project's social awareness (Raimundo et al., 2024). By not only implementing discussions about equity, diversity, and inclusion but also modeling and roleplaying inclusive behaviors, these lessons can create an environment in which students can both observe and practice elements of equity in a safe environment of learning and nurture. Through these lessons children will be able to both witness equitable interactions and have opportunities to reflect on and imitate the behavior themselves.

This framework directly supports my action research project which includes improving students' social awareness as measured by DESSA and enhancing their understanding of equity as addressed by pre and post program surveys. Social Learning Theory's emphasis on the use of observation highlights the importance of creating an interactive learning environment where children can witness, practice, and reflect on the concepts of equity involving empathy, emotional regulation, and inclusivity. By using SLT this project will be supported by evidence-based practices that make active participation and observation priorities as methods of learning.

Research Questions

- 1) How does the integration of equity-centered social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons focused on diversity, empathy, and inclusivity into the PALS Children's Program impact the social awareness competencies of children ages 5–11, as measured by the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), surveys, and behavioral observations?
- 2) What growth, if any, is evident in children's self-perceptions of social awareness, inclusion, and equity between pre- and post-intervention surveys?

Review of Literature

Introduction

SEL has become a critical component of education as it helps to cultivate vital skills such as empathy, social awareness, and inclusivity which are all vital to an equitable diverse world. With an increase in recognition of SEL practices, research suggests that SEL impacts measurable outcomes like social awareness, empathy, and relationship skills (Saleme et al., 2020). A 2023 meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions found significant improvements in students' social-emotional competencies while emphasizing that effective implementation requires attention to be paid to both culturally responsive and equitable practices (Cipriano et al.,

2023). This literature review seeks to explore key elements of the research questions “How does the integration of equity-centered social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons focused on diversity, empathy, and inclusivity into the PALS Children’s Program impact the social awareness competencies of children ages 5–11, as measured by the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), surveys, and behavioral observations? What growth, if any, is evident in children’s self-perceptions of social awareness, inclusion, and equity between pre- and post-intervention surveys?” This review examines the importance of SEL, the role of equity in SEL, and the use of DESSA as a tool for measuring social awareness. This literature review will also cover social awareness as a critical SEL competency and identify gaps in research. These topics highlight the importance of this research in advancing an understanding of equity in SEL as it relates to children.

What is the PALS Children’s Program?

Created by the La Puente non-profit organization, the Positive Activities Lead to Success (PALS) Children’s Program, “values exploration, growth, healthy relationships, education, self-regulation, and fun” (La Puente, n.d., para. 16). The program strives to provide a safe environment in which each child has the opportunity to thrive. It is specifically designed to support children from backgrounds that may include trauma by offering a structured setting in which staff members are able to support children in their social-emotional learning journey through Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) to build healthy, supportive relationships. PALS places emphasis on the fostering of social, emotional, and behavioral growth through evidence-based practices in a safe, nurturing, and exploratory environment. The program aims to empower children by strengthening their sense of self, helping them build resilience, and encouraging positive developmental outcomes (La Puente, n.d.)

The Importance of SEL

SEL is essential for fostering students' abilities not only to manage their emotions, but also to create positive relationships and navigate complex social situations. Research indicates that SEL not only enhances academic performance but also promotes more positive social behaviors and reduces negative outcomes. For example, in a study by Hawkins et al. (2023) found that school-based interventions that incorporated social-emotional components contributed to improved student engagement, emotional regulation, and even peer relationships. Students also demonstrated more positive attitudes toward school as well as increased empathy towards their peers and reduced stress levels (Hawkins et al., 2023). Other research also shows how vital SEL is in developing mental health and career readiness through empathy, self-awareness, and social awareness; all which are vital in navigating not only diverse social settings but also their future professional environments (Marsay et al., 2021, p.3). A large-scale meta-analysis found that students who participated in school-based SEL programs showed improvement in various areas including social-emotional skills, behaviors, and academic performance, months, and years after the intervention (Taylor et al., 2017). These long-term benefits show that SEL is not only effective in the short term, but vital for sustainable positive youth development. These findings highlight how important it is to integrate SEL into educational environments to support positive student development.

Social Awareness as a Core SEL Competency

Social awareness is a fundamental core competency within the world of SEL. Social awareness refers to the ability to not only understand diverse perspectives and recognize social cues -both verbal and nonverbal- but to also be able to effectively empathize with others. Social awareness is an essential skill for creating meaningful interpersonal relationships as well as for

navigating complex and diverse social situations in a variety of diverse settings (Thierry et al., 2022 p.731). Social-emotional interventions have been shown to help improve social awareness by utilizing activities (such as role playing and open discussions) that promote not only emotion recognition but also perspective taking (Thierry et al., 2022 p.732). Building on the work of Thierry et al. (2022) Holochwost et al. (2022) shows that structured and creative interventions can assist in helping children with developing the essential social awareness skills that will help them thrive (Holochwost et al., 2022, p.666-668). The findings from these research articles are directly related to this study which seeks to examine the impact of equity centered social-emotional learning on students' social awareness competencies because they show that creative and perspective-taking interventions can help build social awareness skills; this research study seeks to use these types of interventions through SEL lessons with role play activities.

Equity in SEL

Equity is a building block of effective social-emotional learning (SEL). Research in SEL suggests that social-emotional programs need to go beyond the basics of social-emotional skills to become not only culturally responsive but also equity-based to address the diverse needs of all learners (Hurd et al., 2021). Traditional SEL approaches may not fully address the lived experiences of students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. By ensuring that SEL is equity based, we can help to ensure a sense of not only belonging but also validation for all students including those that are particularly marginalized; making sure that SEL is equity based connects social-emotional competencies to the lived experiences of students (Hurd et al., 2021). One of the primary goals of social-emotional learning that is equity-centered is to connect various SEL competencies to real world experiences that are relatable to the students in order to make social-emotional learning more applicable to individual students who see their own

identities embedded in social-emotional learning are more likely to engage with the content and develop more SEL skills. Equity-centered social-emotional learning programs have the potential to acknowledge that students experience the world differently from one another.

To support equity centered SEL, Lee et al. (2023) found that universal SEL programs can provide greater benefits for racially marginalized groups and, when implemented effectively, could help prevent the widening of disparities. These findings highlight the need to move beyond a universal approach to SEL and toward specific equity focused interventions that have more impact on all learners.

Culturally Relevant SEL

One important dimension of equity-centered SEL is the integration of culturally relevant practices. Research by Hayashi et al. (2022) emphasizes the value of embedding SEL into early childhood settings through culturally responsive methods. Their study highlights that when SEL is embodied through movement, expression, and social connection, it can create inclusive environments that affirm students' identities and lived experiences. By grounding SEL in culturally relevant interactions and teaching strategies, educators can better support the development of empathy and social awareness in a way that is relevant to a child's cultural background.

Empathy and Perspective-Taking in SEL

Empathy and perspective-taking are both foundational components of social-emotional learning that allow children to comprehend the experiences of others, regulate their responses, and create meaningful relationships in the face of differences. In a recent study, a program was created to promote empathy and prosocial behavior in students called activating social empathy (ASE) (Silke et al., 2024). In this study, the program was found to increase students' empathy

which results in greater prosocial behaviors and emotional efficacy and social responsibility (Silke et al., 2024). These findings show the importance of explicitly teaching empathy as a skill and explicit focus within SEL programming, rather than treating it as a secondary skill embedded with other skills (Silke et al., 2024). Meland and Brion-Meisels (2024) emphasized that SEL, that is culturally sustainable, must be co-constructed with students and rooted in equity, identity, and community, rather than relying on one size that fits all models. Through the integration of culturally sustaining pedagogy into SEL, educators have the power to shift away from classroom power dynamics and honor students' diverse ways of expressing themselves and developing social-emotional skills (Meland & Brion-Meisels, 2024). Together, these findings highlight that SEL must teach empathy explicitly while being responsive to the cultural identities of students to be effective and equitable and foster an environment in which all students can develop empathy and thrive socially and emotionally.

Diversity and Inclusivity in SEL

The integration of diversity and inclusivity into social-emotional learning practices is essential to make sure that all children feel seen, supported, and valued. Mahfouz et al. (2023) place emphasis on culturally responsive SEL in early childhood settings requiring more than simply implementing a universal curriculum; it requires explicit attention to cultural contexts and lived experiences of the students being served. Through their study on pre-kindergarten through second grade, educators in Colorado, Mahfouz, Steed, & Shapland (2023), discovered that while some educators recognized the need for culturally responsive SEL, some teachers were not sure if their programs addressed cultural relevance or were reluctant to cater to a specific student population. These findings highlight how necessary it is to equip educators with the tools to meaningfully integrate cultural relevance into SEL programming as well as the training to

understand its significance. These concerns are echoed by Stevenson and Markowitz (2019) while exploring how teacher educator programs can better embed culturally responsive teaching alongside SEL. Their work calls for preparation for educators to treat cultural responsiveness as an essential element of all SEL efforts. Together, these perspectives emphasize that equity-centered SEL needs to be aligned with students' identities in a way that allows them to engage with it and in a way that empowers their voices and affirms their backgrounds.

Racial Justice

Research highlights how vital it is to embed equity and anti-racist pedagogy in social-emotional learning within elementary schools. Durm and Roper-Roach (2023) argue that many elementary programs fail to address the social-emotional needs of children as it relates to their lived experiences with racial injustice and inequities. Durm and Roper-Roach (2023), citing Ford (2020), note that many SEL programs tend to adopt a "culture-blind philosophy and framework" which can risk marginalizing children of color and lead to the perpetuation of inequities within learning environments (p.52). The combination of anti-racist teaching with SEL can provide children with opportunities to build empathy, practice inclusion, and understand fairness and equity in a way that is culturally responsive. This perspective can reinforce the goals of this research project that implemented equity-centered lessons in an elementary setting to enhance the social awareness competencies of children ages 5-11.

Positivity

Optimistic thinking, or positivity, is a critical element in the social-emotional development of children as it can impact their ability to both overcome challenges and develop confidence for their future. Research has shown that optimism and positive mindsets can support social-emotional development. Despite the benefits of positivity, there are few evidence-based

programs that have focused on this topic as a core competency. Jacquez et al. (2020) emphasizes that in mainstream education optimism is not prioritized in a consistent manner even though “instilling hope and optimism in young people to create their own goals and dreams for the future is crucial for social-emotional growth and development” (p.878). This is the gap that highlights the importance of embedding optimism within broader frameworks as it can reinforce children’s willingness to engage in topics related to inclusion, fairness, and it can increase their willingness to engage in perspective-taking activities that are necessary in my action research project on equity-centered SEL.

In a recent study about positivity a program called *Dream It! Playbook* an educational workbook was designed for children that encourages goal setting, hope, and optimism. This framework was implemented across several weeks in a diverse elementary school and compared to a control group, children who participated showed significant improvements in optimistic thinking (Jacquez et al., 2020). These findings suggest that activities centered around optimism can enhance the SEL outcomes for children (Jacquez et al., 2020). In the context of my action research project, the link between optimism and SEL validates the emphasis that the project places on equity-centered lessons that foster hope and belonging and can create confidence in a child’s ability to create environments that are inclusive for all.

Devereux Student Strengths Assessment

This Action Research study applied the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) applying a pre and post assessment to measure and evaluate social-emotional competencies in the children. The DESSA identifies SEL strengths and is aligned with SEL frameworks, allowing for the assessment of not only areas of growth but also of student strengths (Nelson & Raines, 2025). The strengths-based direction shifts the focus from deficits to

capabilities that enable educators to recognize and build upon the skills that students already have (LeBuffe et al., 2018). *See Appendices: A DESSA Instrument, Appendix B for Observational Checklist, and Appendix C for the list of questions captured from the assessment screen.*

The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced, strength-based behavior rating scale that is designed for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. It yields an overall social-emotional composite (SEC) score and provides scores across various domains of social-emotional competence (LeBuffe et al., 2018). This action research project looked at the social awareness domain that is present within the overall SEC score. Ratings are completed by teachers, caregivers, and out-of-school staff. Ratings are based on the frequency of observed behaviors over a period of time using a 5-point Likert scale. The results of the assessment are converted into T-scores that categories the results into ranges that are labeled as strengths, typical, and need for instruction which helps to identify children's strengths to use those to build up their need areas (LeBuffe et al., 2018). Overall, DESSA's structured design provides a clear framework for identifying strengths and needs which makes it a practical tool for guiding SEL instruction and evaluating children's progress over time.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are events that occur during childhood that are traumatic in nature. These experiences can include traumas that are physical, emotional, sexual as well as neglect that are physical or emotional (Kennedy, 2025). Additional ACES often include exposure to violence in the home, parental incarceration, mental illness within the household and substance abuse (Kennedy, 2025). Researchers have consistently found a strong connection between ACEs and negative health and behavioral outcomes that occur in adulthood

that include, but are not limited to depression, substance abuse, and chronic illness (Kennedy, 2025). According to Kennedy (2025), ACEs occur across all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups although children living in poverty are more likely to experience one or more ACEs during childhood.

In recent research, the widespread and lasting impacts of ACEs on health, development, and wellbeing have been underscored. According to Kennedy (2025), around 22.4% of adults reported having experienced at least one ACE, with around 16% reporting that they had experienced four or more during childhood. The higher a number of ACEs that an individual has, the more likely they are to develop problems later in life, for example, a score of four or more can lead to a double increase for heart disease or cancer. These individuals are also 700% more likely to become alcoholics. These findings highlight how important my action research is, specifically for the PALS population who often have four or more ACEs, since strengthening social-emotional skills can reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes later in life.

Trust Based Relational Intervention

Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) is a trauma-informed approach that was originally developed to help families that are fostering or adopting address the impact of early-life adversity on the children that they are caring for (Stipp & Kilpatrick, 2021). Overtime, TBRI expanded into schools and residential treatment centers where it is used to provide teachers with tools that are practical for building connections with their students and addressing their needs (Stipp & Kilpatrick, 2021). The TBRI model is structured around three core principles which are connecting, empowering, and correcting that are designed to strengthen relationships and promote regulation (Stipp & Kilpatrick, 2021). Connecting strategies include engagement tools such as healthy touch, eye contact, playful interactions, and collaborative dialogue that can

enhance trust between adults and children (Stipp & Kilpatrick, 2021). Because many PALS participants have experienced trauma and adversity, implementing TBRI principles within SEL lessons aligns with my action research goal of fostering resilience, building trust, and supporting social-emotional growth within the PALS population.

Gaps in Research

Regardless of the growing body of evidence that exists to support SEL as a key element of child development there are still gaps in our understanding of how equity centered content in social-emotional learning interventions can impact specific competencies such as social awareness in younger children. Domitrovich et al. (2019) demonstrated that social-emotional learning programs have shown a significant level of improvement in academic performance, emotional regulation, as well as students' overall social behavior. However, this study also strongly demonstrates that many of the SEL interventions have failed to adequately address content such as that centered around equity (Domitrovich et al., 2019). Similarly, McCall et al. (2023) showed the need for social-emotional learning programs to integrate equity to address the varied and diverse social situations and environments that children must learn to navigate. However, there appear to be limited findings that measure the impact of specific outcomes such as social awareness competencies versus more studies on broader SEL (McCall et al., 2023). Although the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment provides the framework for measuring social-emotional outcomes (LeBuffe et al., 2018) limited studies exist to assess its application in evaluating social-emotional interventions that contain equity-centered content specifically. Further, Marsay et al. (2021) highlights the importance of SEL skills in preparing children for diverse environments. However, the focus of Marsay et al. (2021) focuses primarily on older children who will be transitioning into professional settings, leaving yet another gap in the

understanding of the impact of social-emotional learning on younger children. Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2019) argue that most of the existing SEL research has not adequately incorporated a transformative equity lens in early education contexts. Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2019) emphasize the need for studies that center identity, agency, and equity in SEL design and evaluation- especially to address systemic disparities affecting marginalized youth.

Review of Literature Summary

The integration of equity centered social-emotional learning into educational programs is a vital element in making sure that we are fostering inclusive, empathetic, and socially aware learning environments for all students. This literature review shows not only the importance of SEL and the necessity of equity within social-emotional learning and its implementation but also the importance of the benefits of utilizing DESSA as a way of measuring social-emotional competencies in children. While existing research shows the benefits of SEL there are still gaps that remain in our understanding of the specific impact of equity focused SEL on young learners in diverse educational settings. This research study aims to address the lack of equity centered social-emotional research focused on early childhood. By implementing social-emotional lessons on diversity, empathy, and inclusion and measuring outcomes utilizing the widely accepted DESSA tool, this research study will contribute to the growing body of SEL research with specific emphasis on equity and what it's impact on social awareness in children looks like.

Methods and Procedures

The study applied a mixed-method approach to analyze the impact of equity-centered SEL on the social awareness competencies of children aged 5-11 that were enrolled in the PALS Children's Program. The research included pre/post surveys, behavioral observations, and the DESSA to analyze changes in social awareness in the children who participated. This

triangulated approach allowed for a more holistic understanding of both internal perceptions and externally observable behaviors that occurred in the children while participating.

This study was conducted within the PALS Children's Program Building in rural Colorado, where participants already engaged in structured SEL-based activities. The target population was children aged 5-11 who met the following criteria:

1. Currently enrolled in the PALS program.
2. Be between the ages of 5-11.
3. Have parental/guardian consent to participate.
4. Must be able to participate in group activities involving SEL.

Recruitment occurred through direct outreach within the PALS community of families. This recruitment consisted of verbal and written communication with guardians/parents. Parents received a detailed study informational page and provided their consent before their child was approached for assent and participation.

The assent process ensured that children understood the study that they were participating in, in a developmentally appropriate way and that their participation was completely voluntary. Simple language was utilized during the assent process to ensure children grasped what participating entailed.

They were explicitly informed that:

1. They may decline participation without consequence.
2. They may withdraw at any time without penalty.

To protect confidentiality participants were assigned anonymous identifiers for all data collection instruments, and results were stored securely in password protected files/or locked cabinets.

During week one participants completed a pre-program survey to assess their social awareness and understanding of inclusion and empathy. DESSA assessments were acquired on each child to further understand their level of social awareness. Observational checklists were also completed on each child to document their interactions in group settings.

During weeks one through four of the study, participants engaged in two 30-minute SEL lessons per week over a course of four weeks for a total of eight lessons. Each session focused on a variety of SEL themes including identity, diversity, empathy, inclusion, bias, and advocacy. The lessons involved structured discussions, role-playing activities, and self-regulation exercises. During weeks 1-4 observations took place for each child weekly.

During week four, post program surveys were completed, final DESSA assessments on each child were completed, and final behavioral observations were completed. Data analysis began at the end of week four upon collection of all data. Survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparison of pre-and post-test responses. DESSA scores were examined for changes in social awareness competencies. Observational data was analyzed to identify patterns in social behaviors.

Measures were taken to ensure participant privacy and ethical compliance. Additionally, the research remained neutral during all observational periods to minimize bias in behavior interpretation. Surveys and observational data were collected anonymously; no personally identifiable information was linked to responses. Data was securely stored; it is password protected for digital data, and physical data was stored in a locked cabinet in a locked room. Two participants chose to withdraw, and their data was not used in the analysis.

Data Analysis

This study applied a mixed methods approach by analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data collected during the four-week intervention. The primary goal of data analysis is to evaluate the impact of equity centered SEL lessons on participants' social awareness competencies and understanding of inclusion and empathy.

Quantitative Analysis

Pre-and-post intervention data from the DESSA assessments and student surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This allowed for straightforward interpretation of group-level changes and highlight patterns in students' social-emotional growth over time. This included calculating the mean scores and percentages of the social awareness competency for both pre and post data, allowing for a direct comparison between pre and post intervention results. Changes in social awareness competencies as measured by the DESSA were examined to determine measurable growth across the group. Survey items were also compared to identify shifts in students' self-reports on their understanding of empathy, inclusion, and fairness. <See Appendix C for survey items; see Appendix D for aggregated results.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from weekly behavioral observations was analyzed to identify patterns in student behaviors that are related to social awareness concepts. Observational notes were reviewed and organized to analyze equity-centered behaviors. Analysis reliability was enhanced by reviewing data across multiple time points and identifying behavioral markers aligned with social awareness. A comparison method was used to examine changes in behavior over time. Trends that emerged were triangulated with quantitative data to strengthen findings and deepen understanding of how students engaged with equity-centered SEL content.

Both methods allow for a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable outcomes (DESSA/surveys) and the observable behavioral shifts (coded observational data) associated with the implementation of equity-centered SEL lessons. This mixed-methods approach helped ensure validity by comparing self-reported growth with documented behavioral evidence. See Appendix B for the observation checklist and Appendix E for selected disaggregated observation results.

Findings

This section presents the results of the mixed-method data collection that was conducted to examine the impact of equity-centered SEL on the social awareness competencies of children ages 5-11 within the PALS Children's Program. The intervention was implemented as planned and included eight participants. Data sources include both a pre- and post-assessment of the (DESSA) on each child, pre- and post-self-perception surveys completed by the children that participated, and weekly behavioral observations completed by me, project creator and implementor. The data revealed a modest but meaningful improvement in students' social awareness competency, with all participants showing growth in at least one data category.

Quantitative

DESSA Results

The DESSA data revealed that out of eight participants, five showed an increase in social awareness scores, two remained the same, and one declined. The average score change was +1.5 points on the DESSA, with a median change of +2 and a standard deviation of 4.5 which reflects a variability in the degree of change. The largest individual gain was +6 points, while the largest decrease was -8 points. The results suggest that while most participants benefitted from the

intervention, individual experiences varied depending on the participant's baseline functioning and engagement.

Self-Perception Surveys

The pre-and-post surveys measured children's self-assessed social awareness. The average pre-survey score was 4.33 out of 5, while the post-survey average increased to 4.64 which creates an average individual growth of +0.31 points.

- Question 1, which focused on inclusion, had the lowest pre-survey average (2.0) but became the highest-rated question in the post-survey (5.0).
- This shift suggests a significant increase in children's awareness and prioritization of inclusive behavior.
- The lowest-rated post-survey question was question 12, with an average of 4.12, dealt with fairness and equity, which may suggest this concept remained more abstract or complex for some children.

Despite a few outliers, the upward trend across responses suggest that the participants had improved understanding on self-awareness, empathy, and inclusion which are all components of social awareness.

Qualitative Findings

Behavioral Observations

Weekly observations were completed weekly for the four-week intervention. These observations showed consistent behavioral improvement for all the participants with an average change of +0.39 points from weeks one through four. Several key themes were discovered during these observations. One prominent pattern was the growth in emotional regulation. Participants who initially struggled with dysregulation or conflict resolution skills were able to utilize the

strategies modeled during the SEL lessons by week four, demonstrating greater self-control and problem-solving skills. Another theme was an increased level of peer inclusion. Children more frequently invited others into group activities and they demonstrated inclusive behaviors as the weeks progressed. A third emerging theme was the development of leadership related behaviors. Multiple participants showed a growing willingness to support their peers and model prosocial behaviors for others.

Students who had lower initial scores demonstrated the most visible growth in areas such as trust, emotional expression, and self-regulation. In contrast, students who already had a strong SEL foundation in social awareness either sustained or slightly enhanced their social awareness competency which highlights the differentiation in student responses based on baseline competencies.

Emerging Themes Across All Data Sources

Analysis across surveys, DESSA assessments, and behavioral observations revealed several emerging themes. The most significant theme was an improvement in inclusion and belonging. The greatest growth that was observed in the participants was in their understanding and practice of inclusion within the group; this was reflected both in survey results and in observation data. Self-perception scores on questions related to inclusion showed increases as well as children were observed offering peer support and extending invitations for others to join in on group activities. These findings suggest that students were learning about inclusion but also actively applying it in daily interactions.

Another theme that was highlighted across the data sources was that awareness of equity and fairness remained a challenge. While students demonstrated progress in their ability to talk about and practice inclusion, survey items connected to fairness and equity, on average, scored lower.

This suggests that concepts related to fairness and equity may seem more abstract and may require ongoing, targeted support to deepen the participants' level of understanding.

The data also suggested a theme of individual growth reflecting a differentiated impact. The variability in data points suggests that SEL implementation must consider participants' individual starting points. Children who began with more challenges showed the most improvement, while those with strong skills showed continued consistency with small growth in depth of understanding. Finally, observations showed that students were engaging in the application of SEL concepts in real world scenarios. For example, one of the participants actively included a peer who the other children did not have a positive perception of, and another initiated a friendship/mentorship with a younger child based on shared lived experiences. These examples show that the lessons extended beyond the structured sessions, as children transferred their learning to authentic social situations.

Summary

In response to the research questions *“How does the integration of equity-centered social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons focused on diversity, empathy, and inclusivity into the PALS Children’s Program impact the social awareness competencies of children ages 5–11, as measured by the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), surveys, and behavioral observations?”* and *“What growth, if any, is evident in children’s self-perceptions of social awareness, inclusion, and equity between pre- and post-intervention surveys?”* the findings suggest that the intervention had a positive impact overall. The changes in the quantitative scores were moderate and the consistency of improvement across all three data sources provided strong evidence of the intervention’s effectiveness.

The implementation of equity-centered content into SEL supported meaningful improvements in emotional regulation, inclusivity, and empathy for most of the participants. These outcomes affirm the value of equity and social justice themes being embedded into SEL programming when working with children in an out of school time setting.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study was the short time frame. The intervention lasted four weeks which restricted the depth of instruction and time to reinforce concepts. While students demonstrated growth in social awareness, longer study may have allowed for a more sustained practice with deeper reflection and stronger overall outcomes. The short time frame also limited opportunities to assess whether improvements could be maintained long term.

Another limitation was the sample size as only eight children participated. The data provides insight into trends within the sample selection of the PALS population; however, a larger and more diverse sample could strengthen the reliability of the findings and offer clearer understanding of how equity-centered SEL impacts children across different backgrounds.

This intervention was layered onto an existing SEL framework that is already in place at PALS. While this provided a supportive foundation for the intervention, it also created a possibility that the ongoing SEL instruction influenced the outcomes in ways that cannot be separated from the intervention itself. This overlap may amplify or diminish the effects of equity-centered lessons. In addition, the project being implemented in an environment in which I am already familiar with the children may have created researcher bias or altered behaviors due to existing relationships. These factors should be considered when interpreting the findings as they have the potential to shape both student responses and observed growth.

Conclusion

This action research study sought to explore how the integration of equity-centered SEL lessons into the existing curriculum in the PALS Children's Program influenced the social awareness of children ages 5-11. The findings indicated that the intervention produced a modest but meaningful improvement across multiple measures. DESSA results reflected growth for most of the participants, self-perception surveys showed increased awareness of inclusion and empathy, and behavioral observations highlighted positive shifts in emotional regulation, leadership, and peer inclusion. Together, these data sources have provided evidence that embedding the equity-centered lessons strengthened children's social awareness in measurable ways.

The outcomes of this action research project emphasize the importance of making equity a specific focus within SEL programming. Traditional approaches to SEL may foster many important skills, however, they need to intentionally address fairness, inclusivity, and cultural awareness as well to avoid risking children missing opportunities to develop a more comprehensive understanding of social dynamics. By embedding equity-centered lessons into a program already rooted in SEL, this study demonstrated how even small-scale interventions can contribute to creating environments that are more inclusive for all children.

Overall, the results of this action research intervention support the idea that equity-centered SEL is a promising strategy for promoting social awareness in out-of-school-time settings. While this project was limited by time, sample size, and contextual factors, the positive trends still suggest that further development and refinement of equity-based SEL interventions is warranted as continued exploration could help to clarify how these approaches can be adapted to best serve children who come from diverse backgrounds with unique experiences.

Future Research

Future research should continue to investigate the principles of transformative social-emotional learning (tSEL), which emphasize equity, identity, and agency in student development. Soutter and Timmerman (2022) describe tSEL not as an extension of traditional SEL, but as a “reimagining” that explicitly addresses social justice and the lived experiences of students (p. 46). Further studies are needed to examine how equity-centered SEL initiatives can be systematically embedded into out-of-school time (OST) programs, such as the PALS Children’s Program, where children from diverse and often marginalized backgrounds may benefit most from opportunities that affirm identity and foster belonging.

In addition, future research should explore the role of educators’ own social-emotional growth as a foundation for implementing tSEL effectively. Soutter and Timmerman’s (2022) findings suggest that educators who personally engage in transformative SEL are better equipped to guide students in developing these competencies. For OST contexts, professional development aimed at strengthening staff confidence and skills in equity-centered SEL may be critical for sustaining long-term success.

Finally, research must address how to measure and sustain tSEL principles across diverse settings. Soutter and Timmerman (2022) note a gap in available assessment tools and long-term evaluation strategies for transformative SEL. Future studies should therefore design and test measures that capture not only individual student growth but also the relational and systemic impacts of equity-centered SEL. Such tools could ensure that programs like PALS foster both immediate developmental outcomes and broader systemic change by equipping children with the skills and perspectives necessary to navigate and challenge inequities within their communities.

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Appendix A

Instruments

Pre- and post-survey: Equity-Centered SEL for ages 5-11 enrolled in the PALS Children's Program

Questions for Ages 5-7

Introduction:

Today I have some questions about how you feel and treat others. There are no right or wrong answers, and your answers are private which means no one will know that you are the one who answered these questions. This will help us decide how to make social-emotional learning better for everyone in the future so please answer as honestly as you can. If you do not want to answer a question, you can skip it.

This will only take us about five minutes to complete, thank you for helping me!

Date:

Circle One: Week One/Week Four

Anonymous Identifier:

Instructions:

Circle the face that shows how much you agree or disagree with each sentence.

1= Strongly Disagree 😞

2= Disagree 😞

3= Neutral 😐

4= Agree 😊

5= Strongly Agree 😄

Questions for ages 5-7

1. I understand what fairness means. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄

2. I try to make sure everyone feels included. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
3. I notice when someone is feeling left out. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
4. I can name ways to help someone feel included. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
5. I listen when someone shares their feelings. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
6. I try to understand how my friends feel. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
7. I know that people may have different experiences in life than me. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
8. I feel comfortable talking about differences in people. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
9. I stand up for someone if I see that they are being treated unfairly. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
10. I use kind words when talking to others. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
11. I can share with others even if we are different. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
12. I feel safe to be myself around my friends and at PALS. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
13. I understand that sometimes people get extra help so that everyone has the same chance to do good. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
14. I know ways to calm myself down when I am upset. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞
15. I try to solve problems with my friends in a kind way. 😞 😞 😞 😞 😞

Pre- and post-survey: Equity-Centered SEL for ages 5-11 enrolled in the PALS Children's Program

Questions for ages 8-11

Introduction:

Hello! This survey is about fairness, empathy, and inclusion. There are no right or wrong answers. Your answers will be private, so be honest. If you do not want to answer a question, you can skip it. This will help us decide how to make social-emotional learning better for everyone in the future.

This will take us around five minutes to complete, I appreciate your help!

Date: Circle One: Week One/Week Four

Anonymous identifier:

Pick the face that best describes how you feel about the statement/question.

1= Strongly Disagree 😞

2= Disagree 😞

3= Neutral 😐

4= Agree 😊

5= Strongly Agree 😄 **Questions**

1. I understand the difference between equality (everyone gets the same) and equity (everyone gets what they need to be successful). 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
2. I try to make sure everyone feels like they belong in a group. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
3. I notice when someone is being left out and try to include them. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
4. I can explain ways to help someone feel included in a group. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
5. I listen carefully when someone shares their thoughts or feelings. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄

6. I try to understand how other people feel, even if I haven't been in their situation. 😞
😞 😐 😊 😄
7. I recognize that people come from different backgrounds and may experience life differently than I do. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
8. I feel comfortable talking about how people are different from each other (like race, culture, abilities, or beliefs). 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
9. If I see someone being treated unfairly, I try to stand up for them or get help. 😞 😞
😐 😊 😄
10. I use kind and respectful words when talking to people even if we disagree. 😞 😞
😐 😊 😄
11. I share and cooperate with others, even if we are different in some way. 😞 😞 😞
😊 😄
12. I feel safe expressing my thoughts and being myself around my classmates. 😞 😞
😐 😊 😄
13. I understand that fairness sometimes means giving extra help to those who need it, so everyone has the same opportunities. 😞 😞 😐 😊 😄
14. If I have a problem with a friend, I try to solve it in a fair and respectful way. 😞 😞
😐 😊 😄
15. I know ways to calm myself down if I feel frustrated or upset in a group. 😞 😞 😞
😊 😄

Appendix B

Observation Checklist

This is to be completed by research project creator/implementor.

Rate on a scale of 1-5 ---1 being never 5 being always.

Date:

Circle Week: Week One/ Week Two/ Week Three/ Week Four

Anonymous Identifier:

1. Student notices when a peer is being left out. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Student invites others to join in activities. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Student listens attentively when peers share feelings or experiences. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Student responds with empathy. 1 2 3 4 5
5. Student demonstrates fairness in group activities. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Student stands up for peers experiencing unfair treatment. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Student uses inclusive language. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Student recognizes differences in peers and shows respect. 1 2 3 4 5
9. Student adjusts behavior when a peer expresses discomfort. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Student participates in discussions about fairness and inclusion. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Student supports others who may need more help to succeed. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Student expresses appreciation for different perspectives in group discussions. 1 2 3

13. Student shares materials or space equitably with others. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Student encourages others to express their thoughts and ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Student shows patience when communicating with peers who have different needs. 1
2 3 4 5
16. Student attempts to resolve conflicts in a fair and kind manner. 1 2 3 4 5
17. Student displays confidence in expressing personal experiences and emotions. 1 2 3 4
5
18. Student engages in role-play or problem-solving scenarios related to inclusion. 1 2 3 4
5
19. Student respects personal boundaries and physical space of others. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Student demonstrates an understanding of fairness by explaining their reasoning when
sharing or taking turns. 1 2 3 4 5
21. Required Behavioral Notes:

Appendix C

DESSA Pre-Survey and Post Question Items

The following questions should be answered with always, almost always, sometimes, rarely, and never.

View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity?

Seek out challenging tasks?

Speak positively about their future potential?

Express high expectations for themselves?

Believe they can achieve their goals?

Accept that making mistakes is part of learning?

Focus on the positive aspects of a situation?

Interact positively with classmates?

Encourage others?

Stand up for a friend or classmate?

Cooperate with others to solve a problem?

Resolve conflicts positively?

Get along well with different types of people?

Listen to others?

Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events?

Show a willingness to update their thinking?

Do the right thing in a difficult situation?

Accept responsibility for their actions?

Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people?

Gather information before making an important decision?

Show an awareness of their personal strengths?

Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them?

Describe the emotion they were feeling?

Work to develop their personal strengths?

Ask questions when they did not understand something?

Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions?

Explain what caused their emotions?

Work carefully on projects or schoolwork?

Stay focused despite a distraction?

Keep trying when unsuccessful?

Think before they acted?

Persist to achieve a goal?

Stay calm when faced with a challenge?

Contribute to group or team goals?

Show appreciate of others?

Respond to others feelings in kind and safe ways?

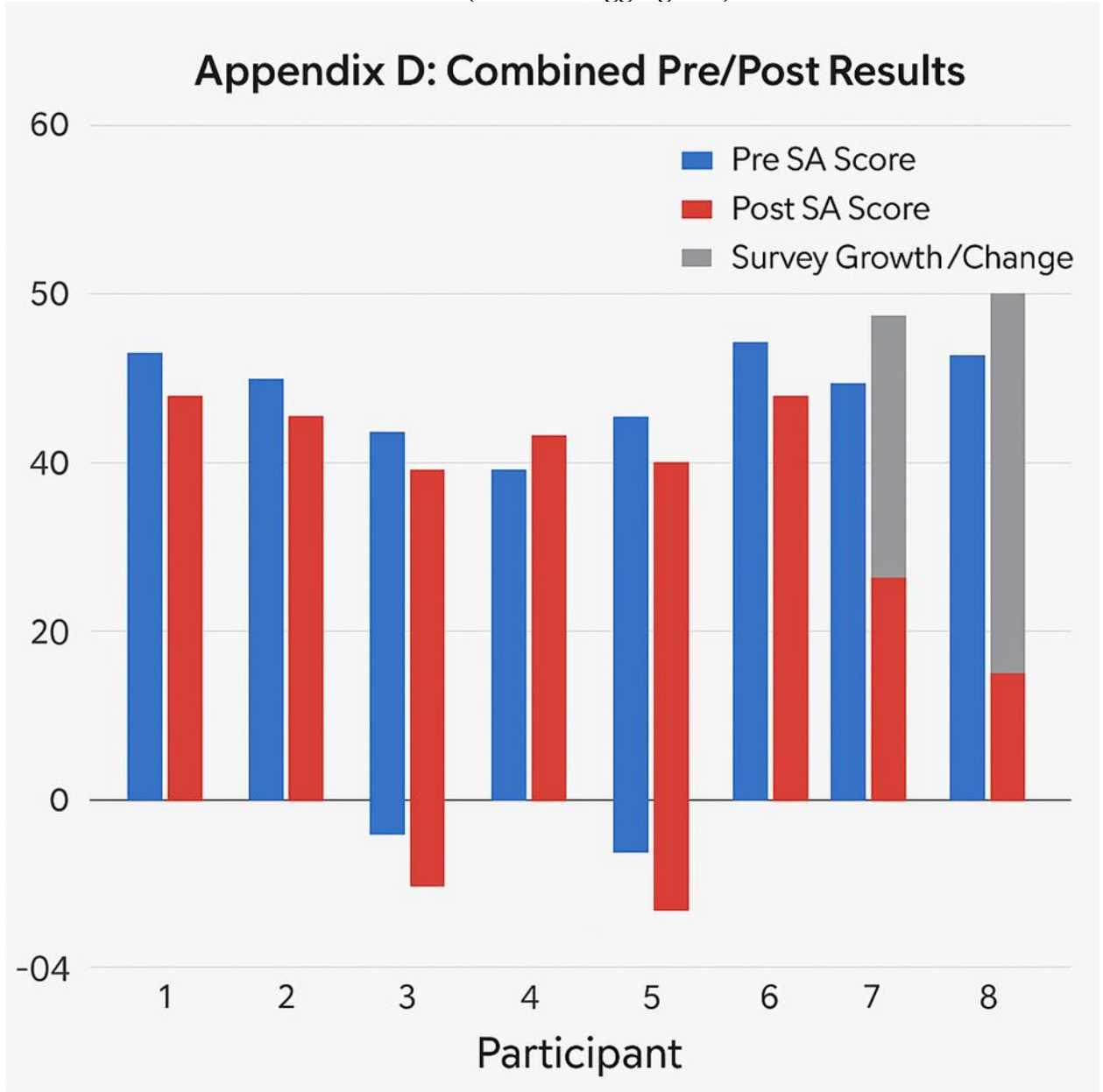
Contribute to creating a positive learning environment?

Make others feel welcome or included?

Respect a person's right to have a different perspective?

Recognize others' emotions?

**Appendix D
Results (Pre-Post Aggregated)**



Combined Pre and Post Aggregated Results for DESSA and Student Surveys

Participant Number	Pre SA Score	Post SA Score	Change	Survey Growth/Change

1	57	49	-8	+0.53
2	47	53	6	-0.33
3	45	47	2	+0.60
4	51	51	0	-0.13
5	45	47	2	-0.27
6	55	61	6	+0.53
7	43	43	0	+0.60
8	55	59	4	+0.93

DESSA (Social Awareness)

- Average Change: +1.5.
- Largest Gain: +6.
- Largest drop: -8.
- Median Change: +2
- Improvement Distribution: 5 improved, 2 unchanged, 1 decreased

Participant Survey

- The average group growth was +0.31.

Behavioral Observation Pre and Post Aggregated Data

Participant	Week 1 Average	Week 4 Average	Overall Change
1	2.7	2.95	+0.25
2	3.05	3.5	+0.45
3	2.15	2.8	-0.65

4	2.8	3.1	+0.3
5	1.65	2.4	+0.75
6	3.6	4.0	+0.4
7	3.4	3.5	+0.1
8	4.2	4.45	+0.25

The overall group average change was +0.39

Appendix E Results (Pre-Post Disaggregated)

Participant 1: Participant 1 showed initial engagement in group discussions but frequently had difficulty with emotional expression and group play. Participant 1 had the largest difference in DESSA scores with a drop of -8 points between the pre- and post-scores, which were 57 and 49. This participant showed a small amount of growth at +0.35 in the participant survey. Participant 1 also showed a small amount of growth over the weeks in behavioral observations; the overall change was +0.25.

Behavioral Observation	Week One: 2.7	Week Two: 2.95	Week Three: 2.85	Week Four: 2.95	Difference Between Week One and Week Four: +0.25
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DESSA	Pre DESSA Social Awareness Score: 57	Post DESSA Social Awareness Score: 49	Change: -8
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Participant Survey	Pre Score: 4.13	Post Score: 4.66	Change: +0.53
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Participant 6: Participant 6 showed a strong foundation in SEL competencies from the start of the four-week intervention and frequently modeled prosocial behaviors. Participant 6 attempted to assist their peers with conflicts and expressed interest in mentoring kids younger than

themselves. Participant 6 had a +6 increase on their DESSA Social-Awareness competency; their pre score was 55 and the post score was 61. This participant also showed growth in the participant survey at +0.53. This participant also showed growth in behavioral observations, and the overall change was +0.4.

Behavioral Observation	Week One: 3.6	Week Two: 3.7	Week Three: 3.85	Week Four: 4.0	Difference Between Week One and Week Four: +0.4
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DESSA	Pre DESSA Social Awareness Score: 55	Post DESSA Social Awareness Score: 61	Change: +6
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Participant Survey	Pre Score: 4.13	Post Score: 4.66	Change: +0.53
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Appendix F

Scope and Sequence of Lessons by Week

Week 1

Week one of the action research projects consisted of two lessons. Lesson One was *Understanding Equity, Identity, and Diversity*. Prior to this lesson, students completed a survey so that an understanding of their current knowledge was gathered. The focus of this lesson was to help students explore their own identities, appreciate diversity within the learning environment, and gain a broad understanding of equity. The topics discussed were the definitions of identity, diversity, and equity and learning why these are important. Visual aids were utilized to explain identity, diversity, and equity. The students participated in an activity where they created a visual representation of their own identity (family, hobbies, cultural aspects, etc.) and then they were asked to role play something represented on their visual representation and then we ended the lesson with an opportunity to go around the circle, ask questions and share to celebrate the differences among the group. Lesson Two was called *Recognizing and Challenging Bias*. The focus of this lesson was to teach students about biases and how they can challenge themselves and others. This lesson utilized visual aids to explain the topic of Bias. This lesson involved defining what bias and stereotypes are and how they influence our interactions with others. We completed a role play activity where we addressed a variety of scenarios and learned about how we should respond to them with kindness and respect. This lesson ended with the opportunity to share or ask questions followed by a regulation exercise.

Week 2

Week two contained Lessons Three and Four. Lesson Three was called *Practicing Empathy*. This lesson focused on encouraging students to empathize with others, particularly those from

backgrounds different from their own. This lesson covered what empathy looks like, how we show empathy in our interactions, and how empathy impacts our relationships. This lesson involved role-playing different scenarios and learning how to respond to them with empathy. This lesson ended with an open discussion on the times when someone showed empathy, we showed someone else empathy, and when we wish we would have been shown empathy ourselves. We concluded with a regulation exercise, mountain breathing. Lesson Four, *Let's Review*, was an opportunity to recap the topics discussed so far which are equity, diversity, inclusion, bias, and empathy as well as act out scenarios we have witnessed recently that we think could have gone better.

Week 3

In week three two lessons were covered. Lesson Five was called *Building Inclusivity and Belonging*. The focus of this lesson was to teach students how to contribute to creating environments where everyone can feel accepted and valued. We discussed what inclusivity means, and the topic of how we can make people feel like they belong. This lesson involved a circle of belonging in which each student shared the way they make others feel included and one thing that others do that makes them feel included. We then held a group discussion on ways that we think we can make PALS a more welcoming space and then related that to the world around us and demonstrated those for the group. This lesson ended with a breathing exercise. Lesson Six was called *Emotional Regulation in Diverse Contexts*. The focus of this lesson was to help students understand and manage their emotions in diverse social settings. We discussed how to recognize our emotions, how to regulate our emotions, and how cultural differences influence emotional expression and regulation. We then acted out non-verbal cues for understanding emotion and ended with a regulating activity.

Week 4

In Week four, we completed lessons Seven and Eight. Lesson Seven was *Social Responsibility and Advocacy*. The focus of this lesson was to encourage students to advocate for others. The topic of this lesson consisted of why we should stand up for others, how we become advocates for fairness and equality and what equity is. We talked about real world scenarios where we could act as advocates and how we can do that in a safe respectable manner and role played a scenario of the students choosing. This lesson concluded with a regulation exercise led by a volunteer from the group. The last lesson of week four, Lesson Eight, was called *Wrap Up*, it is a wrap up where we recapped everything that we have discussed, left room for questions and discussions, had the students complete a self-assessment about their understanding of the topics discussed, and once again had a student-led co-regulation exercise.