

School-Level Learnings From The Field:

INSIGHTS INTO UNDERSTANDING SEL AS A LEVER FOR EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND INTEGRATING SEL IN MATH INSTRUCTION

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ABOUT CASEL'S LEARNING SERIES ON RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS (RPPS)

CASEL has produced a series of briefs documenting insights from our efforts to understand how educators and researchers can build relationships that support a shared action research agenda around social and emotional learning (SEL).

This five-part series shares the perspectives of researchers and practitioners on developing and sustaining collaborative inquiry in classrooms, schools, districts, and states. The goal of the series is two-fold: (1) to articulate an overview of CASEL's research-practice agenda, (2) to explore our learnings at the school, district, and state level about developing research-practice partnerships (RPPs), action research, continuous improvement, and adult SEL capacity.

This inquiry seeks to demonstrate the emerging coherence of CASEL's theories of action across the tiers of our education system and provide insights into where additional action and support are needed to foster equitable learning and development for children from diverse backgrounds. The cases in this series have been shared with all CASEL stakeholders, including state, district, and school leadership and SEL team members, educators, youth and families, community and research partners, and funders.

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As discussed in earlier briefs of this series, CASEL has continued to refine strategies and tools to better document the ways that technical assistance aids partner districts in advancing high-quality implementation of systemic SEL. We have determined that our work and the field would benefit from greater research attention to continuous improvement and that our school and district partnerships uniquely position us to help advance this work. As such, our recent efforts have been aimed at sharpening our continuous improvement approach and tools. This has prompted us to refine our theories of action, surveys, and observational tools to better guide and document our partners' work to continuously improve their efforts to achieve high-quality systemic SEL. Additionally, we have determined that a design-based RPP approach affords opportunities to collaborate closely with administrators, practitioners, families, and students to develop a local SEL vision, monitor this work, and identify on an ongoing basis barriers and facilitators for achieving specified benchmarks and annual goals.

CASEL's RPP engagement with Lowell Community School provided valuable insights into how CASEL research will approach collaboration with practitioners in the future. In addition to these insights, the engagement with Lowell Community School elevated new learnings related to systemic SEL implementation at the school level. CASEL's Theory of Action provides guidance to states, districts, and schools in their approach to systemic SEL implementation (Figure 1).

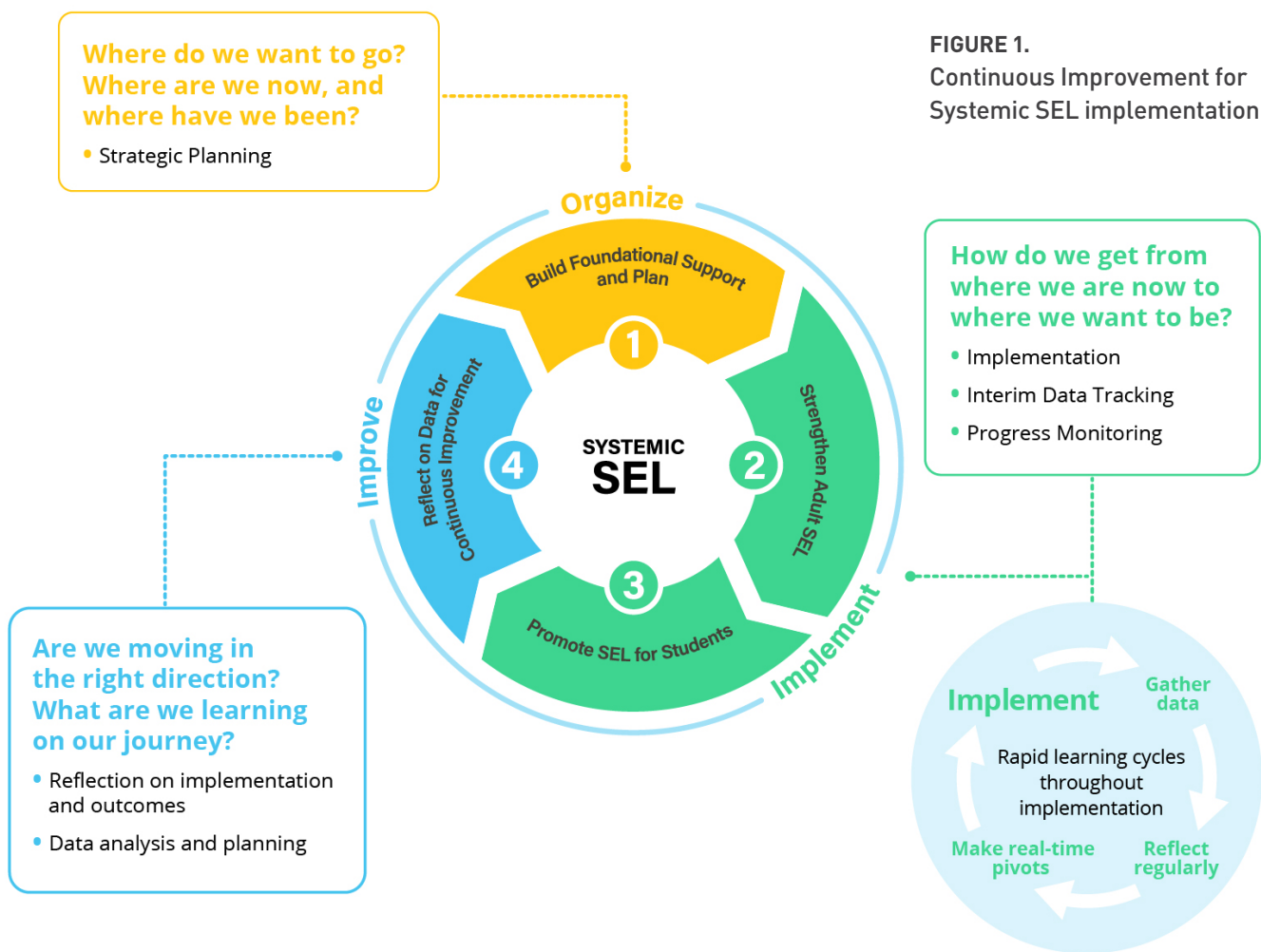


FIGURE 1.
Continuous Improvement for Systemic SEL implementation

In keeping with CASEL’s commitment to the RPP, the insights from Lowell Community School presented in this brief are organized to show their alignment to CASEL’s Theory of Action, above:

Insight 1: Strengthening adult SEL without working to understand how classroom practice connects to district priorities can make striving for educational equity seem like an indistinct and insurmountable task.

Insight 2: When promoting SEL for students during math instruction, centers (rotating educator- and peer-led small groups) provide opportunities for students to practice SEL skills, particularly exercising voice and agency.

Insight 3: When framed around the educator’s lived experience, **reflecting on data for continuous improvement** can facilitate both action-oriented thinking and reflection on educational equity.

For the purposes of this brief, Lowell educators who participated in the RPP were asked to reflect on and write about the insights our collaboration surfaced. Two of the six educators contributed their thoughts, which are presented throughout the brief. These educators are identified with the pseudonyms Terry and Jordan. Both educators are white females. Terry currently teaches kindergarten at Lowell—she has 30 years of total teaching experience, 27 years teaching in Lowell’s school district, and 22 years at Lowell itself. Jordan currently teaches fourth grade—she has nine years of total experience, six years teaching in Lowell’s school district, and two years at Lowell itself.

Background and Model of Collaboration with Lowell

As discussed in Brief 2, the partnership with Lowell afforded an opportunity to engage in what promised to be a shared, mutually beneficial inquiry. The partnership consists of a CASEL Research Associate engaging with a team of six general education educators. This collaboration came together through conversations between a Lowell assistant principal and a CASEL instructional specialist. Based on priorities for SEL and equity set by the district and her longstanding intent to address equity through mathematics, the Lowell assistant principal saw an opportunity at Lowell to interrogate the place of SEL in mathematics and how it can be leveraged toward equitable outcomes. In discussing this idea with the CASEL instructional specialist, we uncovered a shared desire for a closer examination of teaching strategies that support equitable learning environments.

While the original conversations leading to this partnership involved the specific problem of inequitable practice described above, once the collaboration began, we framed the aims as:

1. Exploring integrating SEL into mathematics instruction.
2. Understanding how SEL might be leveraged towards promoting equitable outcomes.

This reframing was necessary, as RPPs must maintain mutualism as a grounding principle (Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013). With this broader scope, the inquiry’s aims now speak to a problem of practice that both researchers and practitioners find valuable. For CASEL, the value is the opportunity to further understand our Theory of Action. For the educators, the value is the opportunity to reflect on their pedagogical approach and assumptions as they relate to creating equitable, responsive, and supportive learning environments at Lowell.

As will be described later in this brief, professional learning community (PLC) sessions were the critical drivers for collaboration. These sessions occurred once a month, beginning in September 2019, with the same CASEL researcher co-planning each meeting with the designated leader from the team of participating educators.

The team initiated its work by co-creating a plan for collecting survey data from students relating to their SEL efficacy during math class. This data provided a reflective tool for iterative inquiry oriented towards creating strategies for SEL in mathematics. Each session also included a book study that drove discussions regarding educational equity. The book, selected by the Lowell team, is a collection of short, non-fiction narratives authored by writers of color local to Lowell's urban area. Each chapter addressed aspects of identity through the lens of each author's lived experience.

Insight 1: Strengthening adult SEL without working to understand how classroom practice connects to district priorities can make striving for educational equity seem like an indistinct and insurmountable task.

Focus Area 2 of CASEL's Theory of Action, Strengthen Adult SEL, offers guidance about how educators can undertake learning and reflection to build their practice of CASEL's five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Building these competencies enables educators to model them for students, an important component of promoting SEL in the school, the classroom, and beyond.

However, the focus cannot solely be about developing students' skills. In schools and districts that want to apply an equity lens, adult SEL entails a practice of applying educators' SEL competencies to self-reflect on and discuss topics like implicit bias, structuralized racism, and cultural responsiveness. This means that educators must understand what is meant by educational equity before they can promote equitable outcomes through the integration of SEL and academic instruction.

Teachers also need to understand how classroom practice connects to district (or state) priorities. Without this understanding, striving for educational equity can seem like an insurmountable task. For example, at an early PLC at Lowell, one educator said, "I'm still confused by how even to begin thinking about bringing equity into my instruction. Sometimes, it feels like whenever equity gets brought up at our school or at [district professional development], we're just throwing a bunch of things at the wall but not understanding how they are supposed to stick." While a districtwide strategy importantly creates common vision and aims, its educators still must engage in purposeful work to connect district strategies to the lived experience within their own school community.

One strategy uncovered through this RPP involved purposefully localizing the conversation, meaning utilizing locally created knowledge and resources to ground districtwide equity in one's own community. In the RPP between CASEL and Lowell, a book study engaging teachers in conversations around equity helped do this.

The book used to frame our equity discussions at Lowell contained reflections on identity written by people of color local to the metropolitan area where Lowell is located (title of book omitted to maintain anonymity of participating educators). The essays presented vivid accounts and reflections of the experiences of each author through the lens of their unique, intersectional identity. This grounded our discussions in the local community student at Lowell, with many of the authors in the book representing similar identities to Lowell students. Below, Lowell kindergarten educator, Terry, describes how using the book to root our equity conversations in the lived experience of her students pushed her thinking about equity beyond high-level hypotheticals:

"This year in our PLC, my mindset regarding how kids learn was stretched to include new dimensions of learning and interactions. As we read [title omitted], I could see how racism is alive and well in my hometown. It really hit home to hear personal stories of how racism plays out in my profession and the world just outside my front door. My heart broke for our students who are likely exposed to this behavior more than I ever knew.

Having that real yet small glimpse into the lives of people highlighted in the book, who grew up in a much different environment than my own, opened my eyes. I was able to evaluate my current practices and make improvements. One example is the interest survey I give at the beginning of each year. The purpose is to weave into my curriculum topics that students find interesting and motivating. I still believe this is a good practice, but now I see that it only scratches the surface. To do an excellent job at teaching young children, I must have an in-depth knowledge of who each child is. Knowing their family culture, what brings them joy and sadness, understanding their strengths and weaknesses help me to understand the intricacies of what makes each of them the unique person they are. It helps me form solid relationships with each student. These relationships help define the best way to approach each students' needs. The more I know about who that little person is, the better I can connect and serve them."

Terry is a seasoned and experienced educator, having taught for 30 years and consistently prioritized professional learning and development throughout her career. Valuing individual students' voices and experiences has been a priority for her for a long time; however, the book study brought a new lens to the implications of why that value is so critical in the development of her students. Terry continues to reflect on this, noting that even with a young student in kindergarten, finding ways to offer choice and elevating voice are both effective teaching strategies and critical in striving for equitable outcomes:

"Seeking to understand each child more deeply led me to realize how important it is that I promote the development of their individual voices. For some, speaking their thoughts is easy to develop. It uses the skills that we as educators were trained in. However, teaching shy students or those who are still at the beginning stages of development takes more thought.

Through my PLC work this year, I made the connection that offering choice is an excellent strategy for promoting student's voice. Making a choice helps children think through their likes and dislikes, giving them an opinion to speak about. Think-pair-share is another great tool in which shy student can take a few minutes to gather their thoughts and then share them with just one other person. Learning to share with only one person is the gateway to confidently sharing with progressively larger groups. When it comes to sharing with larger groups, allowing my most shy student to choose the topic and timing of their turn as well as giving them scaffolds along the way promotes confidence. All of these strategies are meant to encourage self-confidence in each student. They need to be heard and understand that they are worth listening to.

Overall this year, I learned that I need to even the playing field. I worked to overcome the usual dynamics that develop in the classroom regarding the students who are always heard and those who are rarely heard. I developed a goal of promoting empathy and caring among my students. I was determined to break down the groups that students create in a classroom setting before they were formed. In the midst of it all, I learned to enjoy the diversity of human growth and development."

As evidenced through Terry's reflections, frequently used strategies for promoting voice and agency are already in place in classrooms through practices like think-pair-share. Together with Terry and the rest of the Lowell team, we learned that localized conversations about equity supported meaningful self-reflection on biases/assumptions. Additionally, these conversations allowed an opportunity for the educators and researcher to integrate their personal experience and social identities into their approaches and strategies for promoting equitable outcomes.

Insight 2: When promoting SEL for students during math instruction, centers (rotating educator- and peer-led small groups) provide opportunities for students to practice SEL skills, particularly exercising voice and agency.

Despite its straightforward premise, **Promote SEL for Students (Focus Area 3)** is a complex undertaking. In particular, the question of integrating SEL purposefully and impactfully into academic instruction looms large in the field of SEL research. A study by Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg (2004) showed integrating SEL into academic curriculum can enhance the effectiveness of SEL implementation at a school; however, there is little consensus regarding what effective integration of academics and SEL looks like in practice. At Lowell (as at any school following the guidance of CASEL's Theory of Action), we started by strengthening adult SEL through our PLCs and then leveraging it in instruction (here, through SEL-math integration strategies) to respond to students' diverse needs.

At Lowell, using centers is a schoolwide norm. Educators work with a small group of students while other students work on different activities, and then the groups rotate during math instruction. While observing math instruction in each of the educators' classrooms, the researcher noticed there were many opportunities to practice SEL competencies in the very mechanics of centers:

- Educators can establish a hand gesture to indicate that students need to check the volume of their voice (self-management, social awareness).
- Students can be responsible for cleaning up their current center, transitioning to another part of the room, and independently beginning a new activity (responsible decision-making, social awareness).
- Educators can expect students to work collaboratively with classmates on a specific task (relationship skills).

The researcher raised this observation to the next PLC, sparking a discussion/brainstorming session about how to elevate students' awareness of these opportunities to practice. Below, Terry describes why she believes SEL to be an important feature during math, in kindergarten in particular:

“This year, I came to realize what a big part SEL plays in how students learn math. Since I initially came to this understanding, I recognized my advantage as a kindergarten educator. At the age of five, students in kindergarten come to school with all different emotions about learning and being in a new space. What they haven’t developed yet is a distaste for any one subject. When I look at how my students approach math at the beginning of the year, I see enthusiasm and wonder. They are so excited to dig in; they hardly realize they are learning. In fact, over the years, multiple parents contact me and ask when I will begin teaching math. They say that their child comes home and reports that they just had fun during our math time. In reality, math really can be that much fun. [Negative feelings about math] haven’t taken root in kindergarten, so I have the unique opportunity to capitalize on their enthusiasm and wonder. Building in some self-confidence along the way will hopefully lead to more students gravitating toward the love of math in subsequent years.”

In recognizing that young students’ enthusiasm sometimes makes it so “they hardly realize they’re learning,” Terry saw the opportunity for explicit SEL instruction. Rather than simply equating observed enjoyment with cultivating a love of learning, Terry saw the opportunity to purposefully and explicitly bring SEL practice into math centers, as described here:

“I used some precise strategies to make [SEL during math centers] happen. To begin with, I intentionally grouped students to work in heterogeneous groups (multiple ability levels) when they were rotating through different math stations. My purpose was to build their SEL skills when interacting with others. We spent a good deal of time learning how to give compliments to others about their work. Students were taught how to help each other without giving away the answer. Instead, they learned to ask leading questions to guide other students’ thinking. With continued modeling and monitored practice, they had many opportunities to accelerate this skill. This was no small task, but well worth the time. I intentionally gave students specific jobs to help everyone feel valued and responsible for their learning and the learning of others.

I still pulled students into small groups to promote learning at their level. We worked on misconceptions and the next steps in a flexible grouping model. The groups were flexible because they change with each concept studied or each mistake needing correction. This approach demanded copious notes on my part. However, students got instruction based on their needs instead of the needs of a group of students. Also, students move forward based on their rate of learning instead of waiting for everyone in their group to master a concept.

Meanwhile, back in their heterogeneous groups, students were helping each other through the activities, which eventually were all self-differentiated. Students could choose a level of difficulty they were comfortable with for each activity. Surprisingly, students tended to select a level that was similar to their ability level. If they happen to choose a difficulty level that was too easy for them, they often become bored and chose the correct level. I recall one example when a student in my lowest group chose a difficult activity. The child sitting next to her moved into action. I could hear the questions and modeled thinking start shortly after the first student asked for help. The two kids walked through the activity together. The next day that student picked a more appropriate activity. The most significant success of this story is that since everyone had been trained on how to help others, they were more than happy to practice their teaching skills.”

Through identifying these opportunities for SEL during math, Terry uncovered strategies for allowing students to exercise their voice and agency in a guided way. Similarly, fourth-grade educator Jordan saw SEL during math centers as an opportunity to promote equity through increased ownership of learning:

*“The handing of ownership over to the students means that students can move from dependent learners to independent learners. **They are advocating for their social-emotional as well as academic needs.** This also means that they are increasing their student voice in the classroom.”*

This is not to claim that strategies for increasing voice and agency for students in and of themselves lead to equitable outcomes. Rather, engaging in the iterative and deliberative process of the RPP prompted educators to think more deeply about how their practice creates space for equitable outcomes. Below, Jordan further reflects on how integrating SEL into math creates “comfort” and why that is so critical for the lifelong success of her students:

*“Integrating SEL into daily learning, especially math, has allowed my students to feel a sense of comfort in their learning space. **I want students to feel comfort on a physical level and emotional level. I really want to meet the basic needs of my students in my classroom to help them achieve their academic best.** As fourth-graders, they start developing insecurities in their learning. **My goal in teaching has always been to create a space where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas.** Students see the creation of rules and rubrics as a sense of ownership in the room and their learning. Since the students are creating the rules instead of me as the educator, there is an increase in student ownership that helps to promote equitable outcomes for all students. We talk as a group about each of the rules and rubrics to make sure when they are edited that they don’t lose their core meaning. They start to recognize how their actions and words impact others and how they can use those to succeed. They are also able to start respectful agreements and disagreements and give reasons to support their thinking. I have seen this transfer over into other areas of their academic lives.”*

Insight 3: When framed around the educator's lived experience, reflecting on data for continuous improvement can facilitate both action-oriented thinking and reflection on educational equity.

While **Focus Area 4** of **CASEL's Theory of Action** explicitly states the essential role **continuous improvement** plays in systemic SEL implementation, in practice it is implicitly embedded in all four focus areas. Continuous improvement is not a discrete step in implementing SEL, but rather a process constructed in support of the other focus areas.

Additionally, through activities like collaborative data reflection, continuous improvement conversations can stimulate support for multiple focus areas. This insight references the Lowell team using survey data collected from educators' students to inform their practice. In the context of these conversations, continuous improvement supported both strengthening adult SEL (Focus Area 2) and promoting SEL in students (Focus Area 3).

As previously mentioned, PLCs were the primary setting for collaboration between the CASEL researcher and the Lowell team. These sessions occurred once a month, beginning in September 2019, with the same CASEL researcher co-planning each meeting with the designated leader from the team of participating educators. The initial steps were:

1. Co-creating a plan for collecting data relating to the participating educators' and students' SEL efficacy during math class.
2. Once data was collected, using the CASEL Looking at Data Protocol ([Appendix A](#)) to collaboratively reflect on what the data say and what actions to take in addressing those observations.
3. Leveraging the discussions from the data collections into the development of strategies for integrating SEL into mathematics instruction.

The CASEL researcher also asked educators to complete a weekly diary reflection (facilitated through Google Forms) to begin documenting how SEL already shows up in their math class and start brainstorming innovations to instruction.

The CASEL researcher prepared the survey with educator feedback and asked the educators to administer it to their students by a specific date. While most educators were amenable, some were concerned about taking instructional time for a survey. Others questioned the value of the surveys. One educator stated, "I feel like all we do is collect data, but there's never a clear way actually to use that data in my classroom." Others wanted to skip data collection and jump right into developing strategies. We saw this desire to begin creating and learning about new strategies immediately in the "wows and wonderings" section of their weekly diaries:

"I am realizing that I am not hitting certain areas [of SEL during math]. I need to have specific strategies and lessons that promote these other areas."

"How can I put in affirming cultures/backgrounds, civic engagement and social awareness into my lessons? I would like to get some ideas."

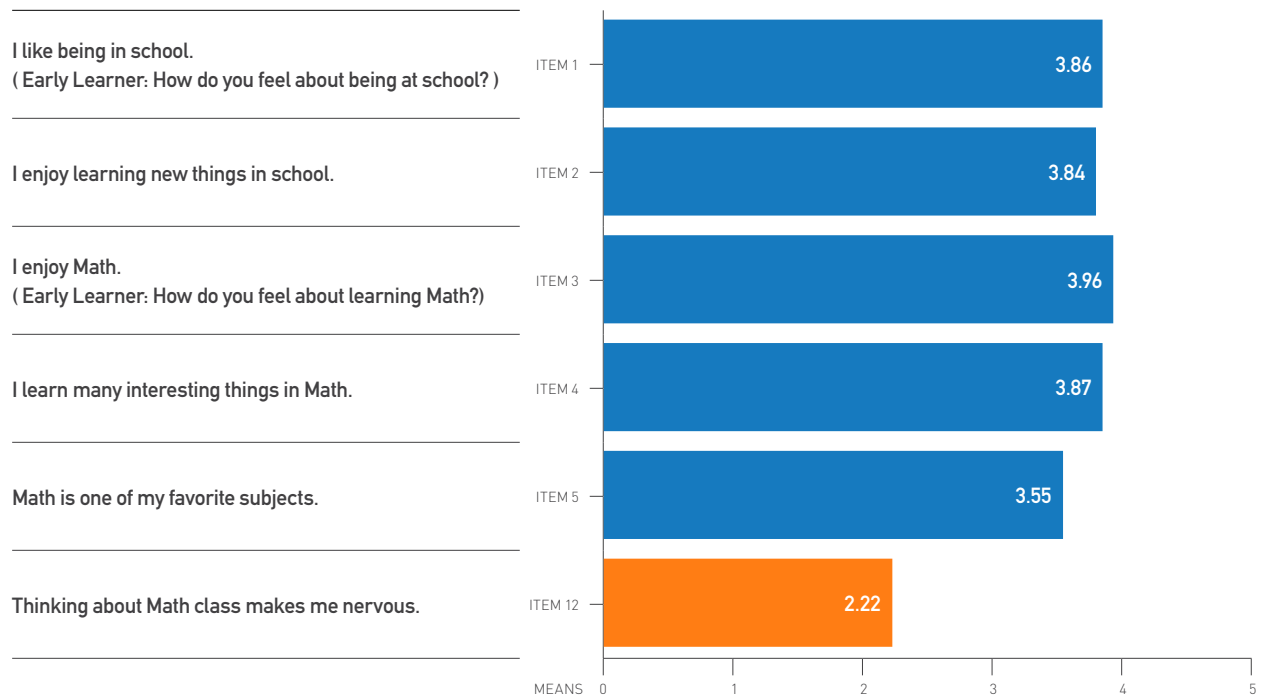
"How can I connect my read-alouds to the math lessons?"

The educators showed a preference for using their own experience as a primary reflection point in developing their practice (e.g., trying a new strategy, reflecting on the success, and adjusting for next time). An action-oriented mindset is undoubtedly a key strength of effective educators, and their hesitance about data-reflection is understandable if the data and reflection don't clearly apply to educators' lived experience.

To this point, a recent nationally representative survey of educators commissioned by the NewSchools Venture Fund (2019) found that 81% of educators rate other educators as their most trusted source of information about what works. This compares to far fewer for principals (28%), district staff (34%), review websites (39%), and evidence-based reports (18%).

Bearing this in mind, the CASEL researcher strove to collect data that reflected the lived experiences of educators and present it in a way that foregrounded the relevant information in a clear, concise, and digestible way. The researcher used R Studio to present survey question averages as bar graphs, creating five charts containing the averages from survey questions that relate to each of CASEL's five SEL competencies ([Appendix B](#)).

SELF-AWARENESS



Each graph was printed on large poster paper and displayed on the wall at the next PLC.

One educator said, "These graphs give a clear starting point for talking about this data. [As a staff] we usually just look at raw numbers and it can be hard to know where to start."

Additionally, following CASEL's Looking at Data Protocol (Appendix A) allowed the researcher to guide (rather than dictate) the PLC reflection with a lens towards equity in the data. When an interesting thought or idea came up, rather than responding to it, the researcher attempted to create room for more conversation with comments like, "Say more about that" or "How does this thought relate to [another group member's] previous thought?"

The educators also eagerly participated in a fruitful discussion of how the data matches up with what they think about their students. In particular, Item 16, "Other students in my class are better at math than me," instigated some critical collaboration. With a mean of 3.1 (out of 5), one educator stated, "That's surprisingly high!" Another educator agreed, saying, "I always think most of my students believe that they are better than everyone else." This comment stimulated a substantive conversation about how they could leverage this higher-than-assumed regard for other students' ability for integrating SEL into mathematics.

After this data reflection, we continued our discussion. The educators were excited to continue interrogating the data observation. The educators planned and subsequently piloted instructional strategies that capitalized on students' perceptions of their classmates' higher math abilities. Ideas included having students ask other students for help before coming to the teachers and having students practice sharing math mistakes with the entire group. At later PLCs, teachers discussed and brainstormed about these strategies based on successes and obstacles experienced in their classrooms. Additionally, this conversation contributed to Terry's strategy for math centers described in Insight 2.

The CASEL Looking at Data Protocol ([Appendix A](#)) also affords the opportunity to situate the conversation within the context of educational equity. The protocol embeds an equity lens into the discussion by prompting the group to take time to consider what omissions in the data (e.g., key information about the experience of the students, like race or gender, that the current presentation of the data does not speak to). This step reminds the group that student data can present only a partial context of a students' life. Additionally, reorganizing the same set of data according to observed omission is an effective strategy to foster purposeful conversations about educational equity.

For example, at a later PLC, the researcher again brought visualizations of the survey data, but this time with mean responses to each survey item reported by gender (APPENDIX C). The team identified that male students rated questions statements like "My educator helps me when I make a mistake" significantly lower than female students, causing educators to discuss how their own gender (all of the participating educators identify as women) may contribute to this and how to address it. Leaving this conversation, the teachers decided to pay attention and reflect on the differences in relationships with students to understand how gender may impact those relationships. This strategy for incorporating equity competency in an educator's practice has allowed educators to (1) approach equity on their own terms without it feeling forced or prescribed, and (2) think about equity through their own students and the instructional strategies they were developing.

» RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Essays, book, or other media that specifically speak to inequities in the educators' local community are excellent aids for these conversations. Inquiry related to developing strategies for equitable outcomes for students must begin with the adults. Prior to reflecting on instructional practice, educators should take time to come to a shared understanding of what is meant by equity and self-reflection on how one's identity and assumptions impact creating equitable outcomes.
2. During math instruction, look at how educators already incorporate SEL and build from there. SEL is implicit in many teaching strategies (e.g., centers, think-pair-share). By making those opportunities explicit, schools can create space for educators to explore how the strategy may be leveraged to support equitable outcomes.
3. When facilitating data reflection with educators, researchers should guide, but not prescribe, the conversation. Using a structured protocol, like the CASEL Looking at Data Protocol, supports this differentiation.

Learning About SEL From Districts and States

As forecasted in previous briefs from this series, CASEL's RPPs uncovered new understandings about teaching and learning. Where Briefs 2 and 3 focused on CASEL's school-level RPP, the remaining briefs in this series expand the conversation to the district and state levels. Brief 4 describes CASEL's district-level engagement with Minneapolis Public Schools, specifically spotlighting the engagement in their continuous improvement processes in service of educational equity. Brief 5 discusses CASEL's RPP engagement with a state education agency with the aim of exploring how states can provide technical assistance for region, district, and school-level systemic SEL implementation.

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Appendix A

SEL Data Reflection Protocol—Facilitator's Guide

At the start of the meeting:

- Designate a team member to take notes during the meeting.
- Establish norms for discussion or revisit existing norms and how they apply to this discussion.
- Preview the steps below so team members know what to expect. Be sure to explain the difference between describing the data objectively (step 1) and offering interpretations about the data later on.

1. Facts: Describe the data. (3-5 minutes)

The team member who prepared the data gives a brief statement of the data and avoids explaining what she or he concludes about the data.

Ask: **What do you see?**

Team members describe what they see in the data in a neutral way, avoiding interpretations, judgement, or conclusions. If there is little or inequitable engagement, you can use the following techniques:

- Have team members take notes independently about what they see and then share out.
- Have team members discuss what they see in small groups and then share out.
- Use follow-up prompts:
 - o *Look at parts of the data that relate to the students you work with. What do you see?*
 - o *Are there any noticeable differences among the populations represented in the data? Similarities?*
 - o *Are there any clarifications you need about how the data is presented?*

If judgments or interpretations arise, prompt the team to describe the evidence that supports their argument. Use the following prompts to redirect interpretations:

- o *That sounds like an interpretation. Be sure to write that down so we can discuss it later.*
- o *Remember, let's try to read the data objectively first so the discussion about interpretations can be well-informed.*
- o *We want to wait to make interpretations until we've established what everyone can agree on about this data.*

Compile the team's observations on chart paper, a whiteboard, or anywhere that is visible to the whole team. The notetaker should record the team's observations as well.

2. Omissions: What information is missing in this data? (3-5 minutes)

Ask: **What additional information could help us interpret this data?**

As needed, use one or more of the following prompts to stimulate discussion:

- Who is not represented in this data?
- Whose experiences or perspectives should we learn more about to understand this data (e.g., students)?
- Do certain voices represented have more influence at our school than others?
- What personal biases should we be mindful of before we move into the interpretation stage?
- What additional context (such as race, gender; ethnic background, socioeconomic level) should frame how we interpret and make decisions using this data?

3. Interpretations: What does the data suggest? (5-10 minutes)

During this section of the protocol, the team tries to make sense of what the data says about SEL implementation and infer what is or isn't working and why. Encourage the team to think creatively and try to generate as many different interpretations as possible. When appropriate, surface them from the discussion in step 2 or pose a question to prompt reflection about equity.

Ask: ***What does the data suggest?***

As needed, follow up with:

- What root causes might best account for what we see in the data?
- Think about the students you work with. What does this data mean for them?
- In what ways do the actions of school staff members or our organizational routines impact this data?

If engagement is low or inequitable, use the following techniques:

- Have team members journal independently about their interpretations and then share out.
- Have team members discuss interpretations in small groups and then share out.
- After providing think time, pass a 'talking piece' around the table. When a team member has the talking piece, they may offer a question, a comment, or they may pass. During the passing of the talking piece, team members do not respond directly to one another.

4. Implications for Practice (10-15 minutes)

Ask: ***How might this data inform our approach to schoolwide SEL?***

As needed, follow up with:

- What are the ways we can innovate to address what we see in the data to be more effective and equitable?
- Does the data suggest that any of our practices are ineffective? How could they be changed?
- What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your practice? About teaching and learning in general?

5. Articulating Next Steps (3-5 minutes)

Ask: ***What are our team's next steps to promote continuous improvement?***

As needed, follow up with:

- Who else needs to see this data? How will we share it?
- What else do we need to know before taking action on this data? How will we gather that information?
- What are we going to stop doing/start doing/keep doing as a result of this data? How will we communicate that to our staff and stakeholders?

The team collaboratively develops next steps for taking action, assigns ownership, and sets a timeline for each. Within 24 hours, use the meeting notes to send a summary to all team members.

SEL Data Reflection Protocol–Participant Handout

1. Facts: Describe the data (3–5 minutes)

- Describe—do not interpret or judge,
- Focus on observations of 'Who,' 'What,' 'Where,' and 'When.'
- Notice differences/disparities across the data.

2. Omissions: What information is missing in this data? (3–5 minutes)

- Consider the lived experience behind this data. What additional context would be helpful to the team in interpreting and acting on this data?
- What additional information would give us insight?
- Whose voices and experiences are not represented?
- What biases or blind spots might exist within our team as we interpret this data?
- How could students help us make sense of this data?

3. Interpretations: What does the data suggest? (5–10 minutes)

- Look for the bright spots and think about what may be contributing to success.
- Consider root causes.
- Connect the data to your personal observation and experience without blaming or naming individuals.
- Interpretations should be framed with an equity mindset.

4. Implications for Practice (10–15 minutes)

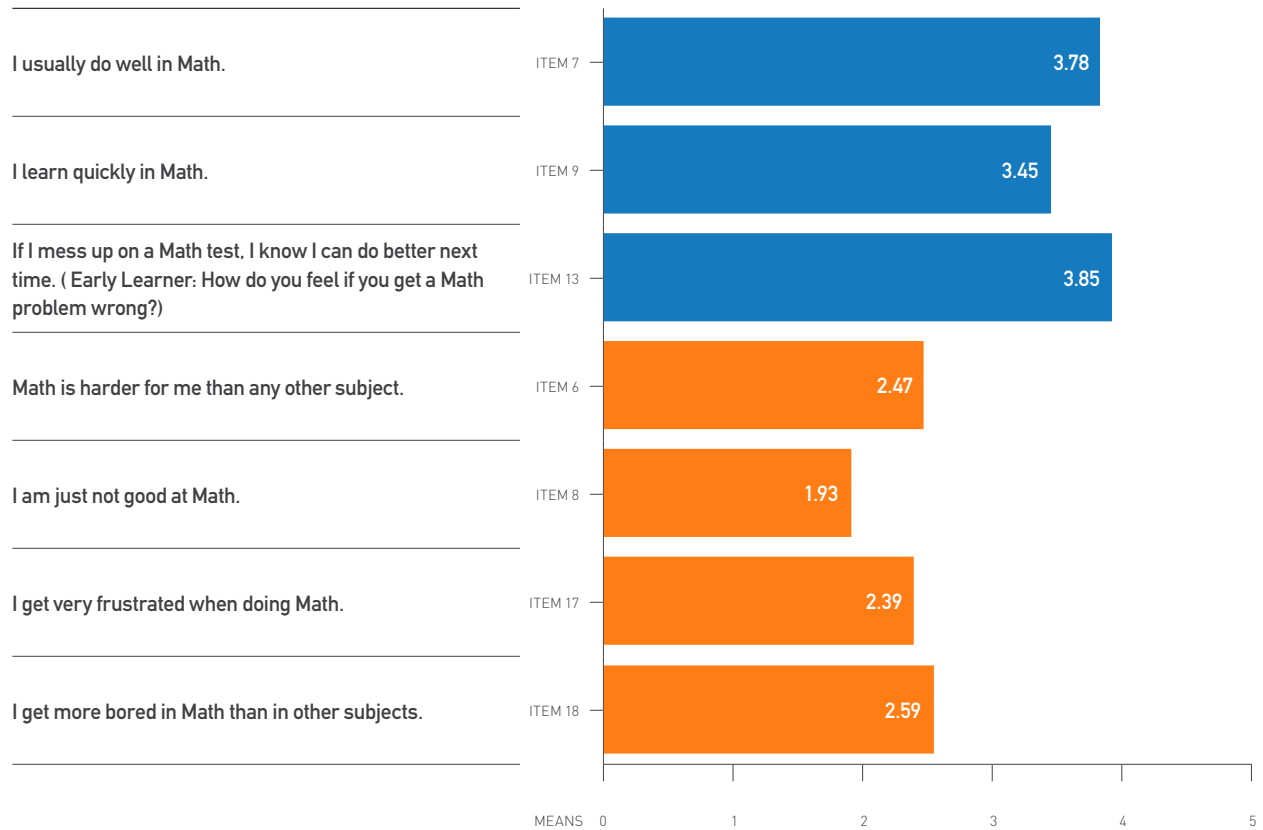
- What are ways we can innovate to be more effective and equitable?
- Does the data suggest that any of our practices are ineffective? How could they be changed?
- What does this conversation make you think about in terms of your practice? About teaching and learning in general?
- What ambitious yet feasible actions could our team take?

5. Next Steps (3–5 minutes)

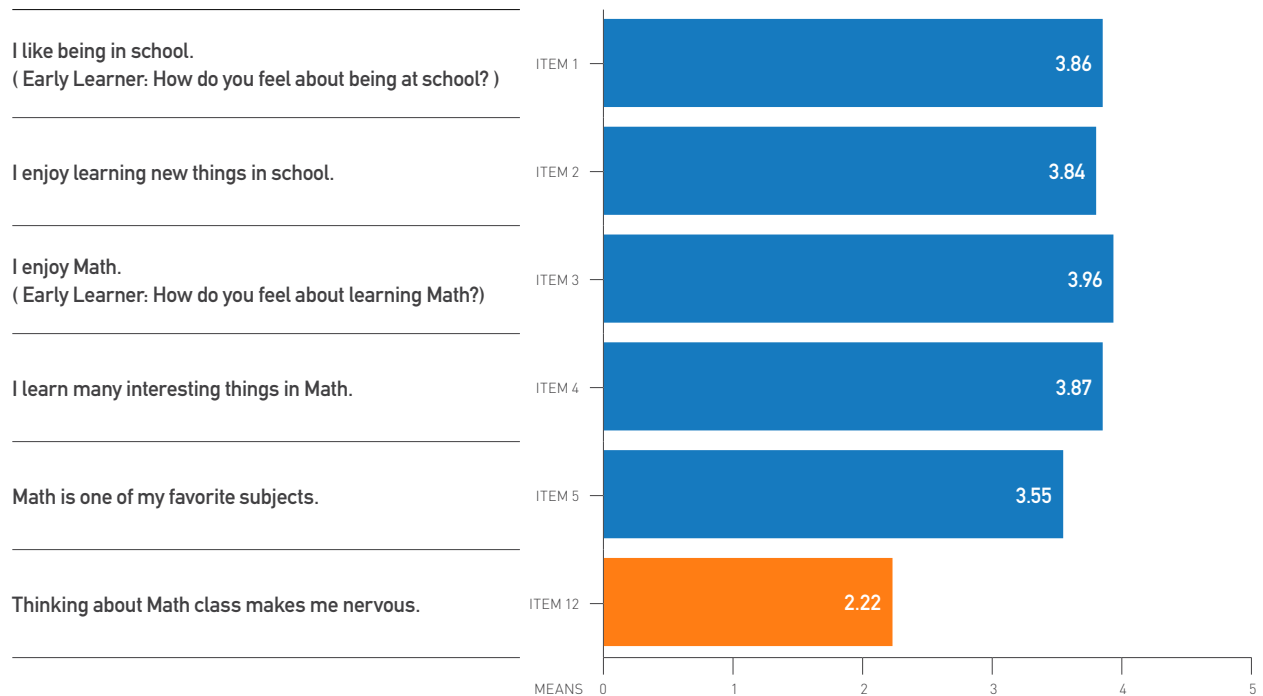
- Team next steps (think communication, further inquiry, and possible adjustments to SEL implementation)
- My personal next steps

Appendix B

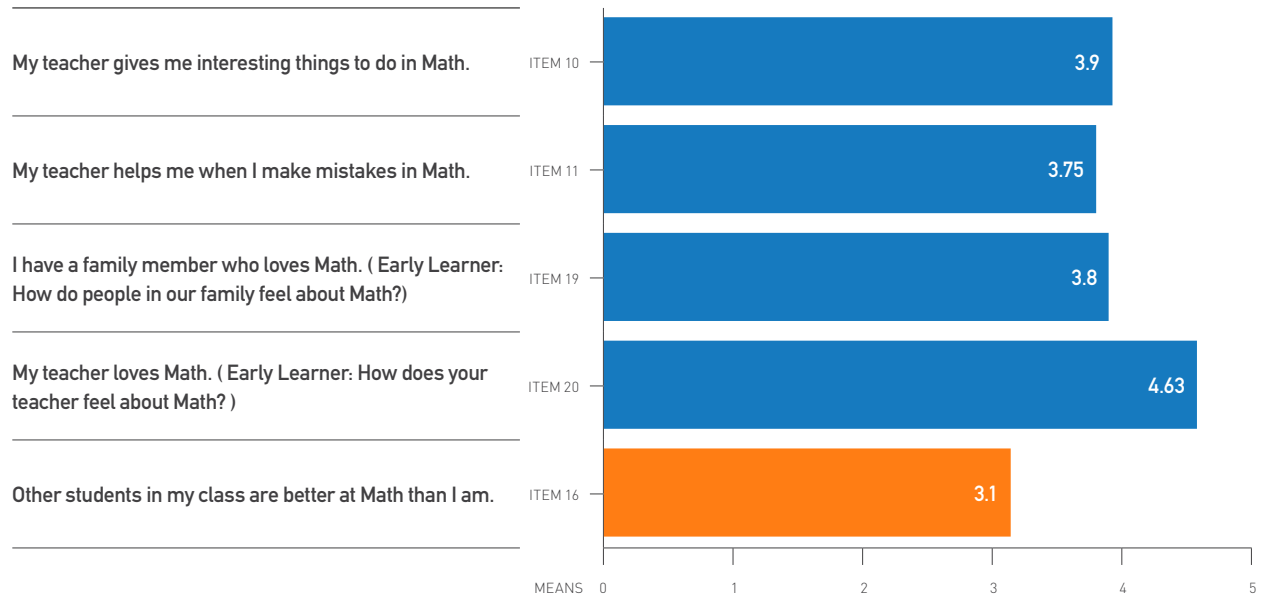
SELF-MANAGEMENT



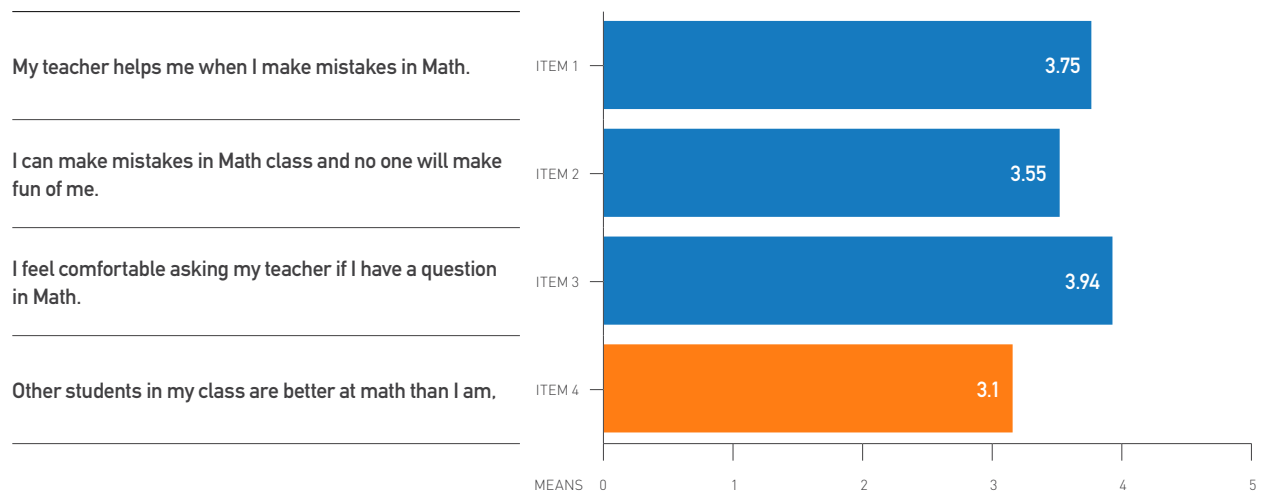
SELF-AWARENESS



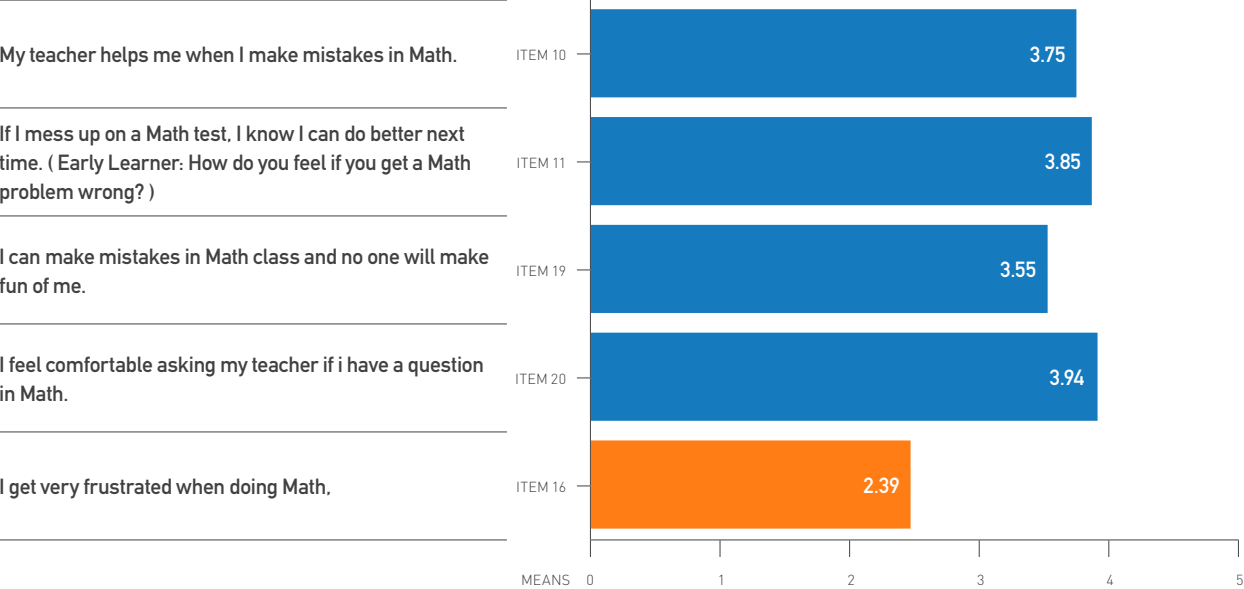
SOCIAL AWARENESS



RELATIONSHIP SKILLS



RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

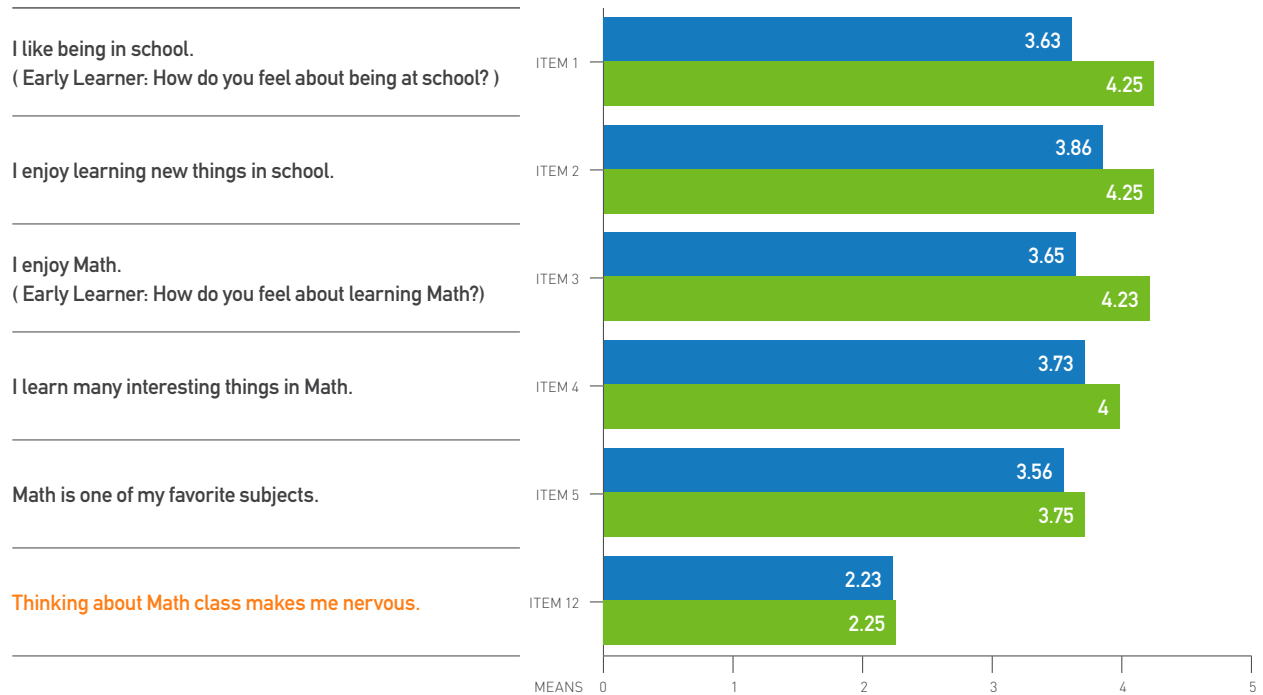


Appendix C

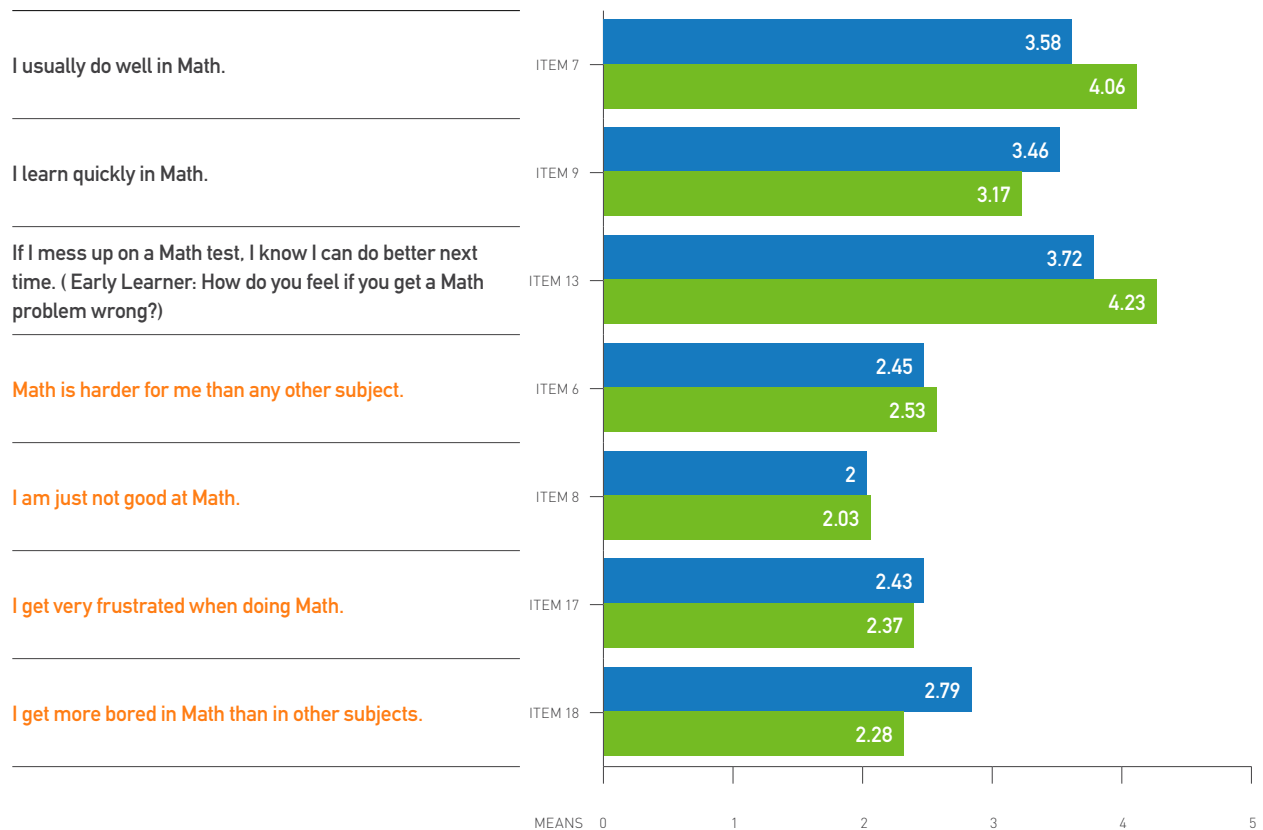
Black = positively framed question (higher score is better)
 Orange = negatively framed question (lower score is better)

BOY GIRL

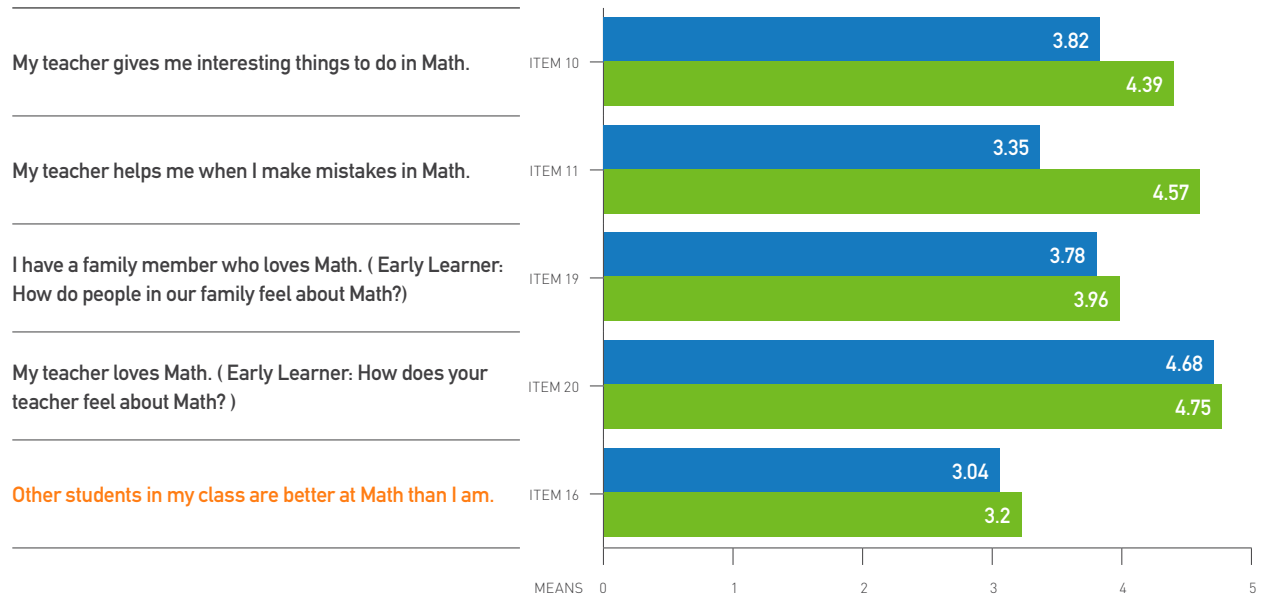
SELF-AWARENESS



SELF-MANAGEMENT

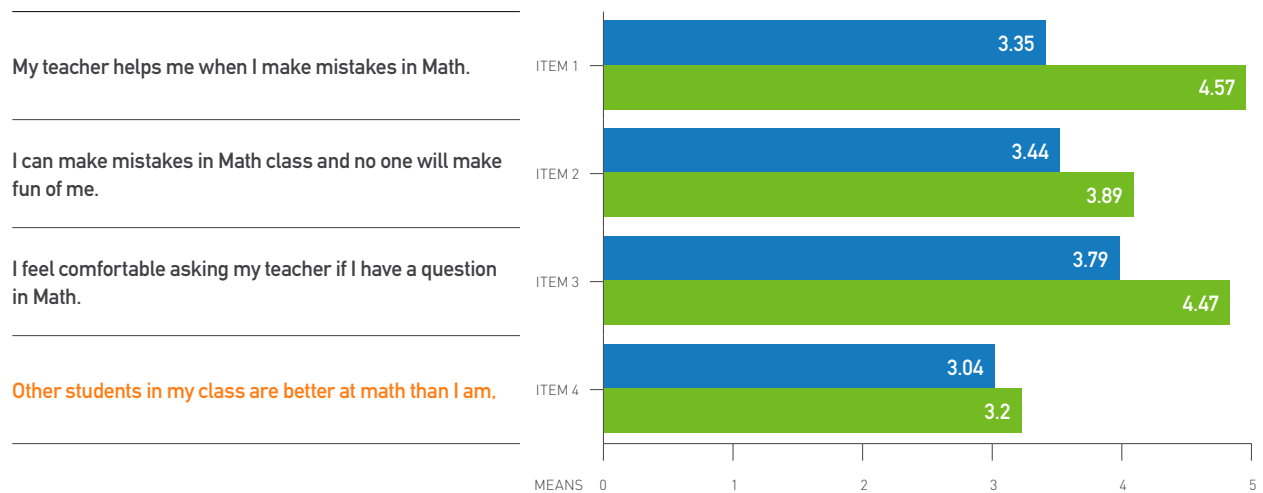


SOCIAL AWARENESS

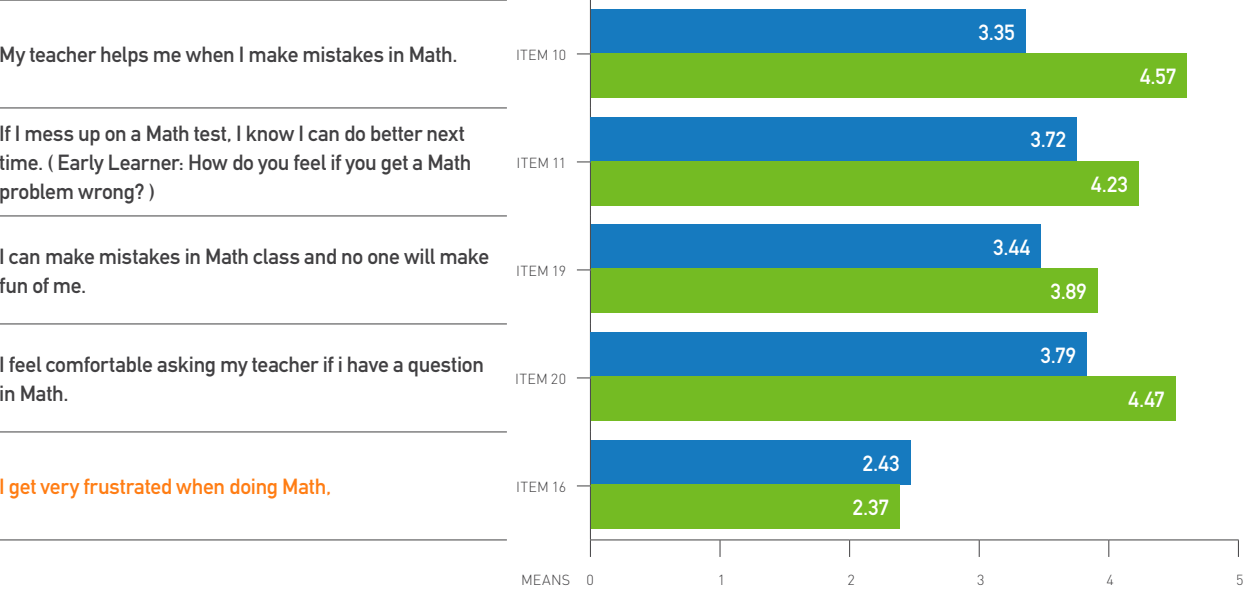


Black =positively framed question (higher score is better)
 Orange= negatively framed question (lower score is better) ■ BOY ■ GIRL

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS



RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING



Black = positively framed question (higher score is better)
 Orange = negatively framed question (lower score is better) ■ BOY ■ GIRL