

Balance Rigor, Relevance and Socio-Emotional Learning in Math

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Abstract : Supporting the social and emotional needs of young adolescents has become an emergent concern for schools around the world. Yet educators remain in a dilemma regarding the optimum approach for integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into their content area instruction. The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of secondary students regarding their schoolwide SEL interventions. Twenty-four International Baccalaureate students in a final year mathematics course at an American Public Secondary School near Washington D. C. were randomly selected for participation in this study via an online electronic survey. The participants in this study used Likert-scale items to rate the effectiveness of the socio-emotional and character development programs being implemented at their schools. Respondents also ranked their preferred mode of delivery of social and emotional support programs. About 71% of the teenagers surveyed preferred SEL support rendered via interactive team-building activities and games, 42% of the high school students in the study ranked focus group discussions as their preferred format for SEL interventions, while only 13% of the respondents in the study regarded lectures and presentations as their preferred mode of SEL delivery. About one-fourth of the study participants agreed that explicit instruction was critical to enhancing students' wellness, 79% agreed that SEL programs should foster less teacher talk, while 88% of the students indicated that student engagement was critical to their mental health. Eighty percent of the teenagers surveyed decried that the focus of their school-wide social and emotional programs was poorly prioritized. About two-thirds of the students agreed that social justice and equity issues should be embedded in their schools' advisory programs. More than half of the respondents agitated for strategies for managing stress and their school workload. About 54% of the respondents also clamored for SEL programs that reinforce emotion regulation and coping strategies for anxiety. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations were proffered for best practices in the design and implementation of effective learner-friendly social and emotional development interventions.

Keywords : SEL, math anxiety, student support, emotion regulation, social awareness, self awareness, self management, relationship building

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