



THE ACADEMY FOR SEL IN SCHOOLS PROVIDER SURVEY STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

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Introduction to the Academy for SEL in Schools

The Academy for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Schools is a training certificate program for educators and associated school staff to foster Social-Emotional Learning skills, character development and positive school culture. With the mission to prepare school leaders to coordinate SEL implementation at building and district level, the Academy is designed to help professionals involved at all levels of school communities, included and not limited to: principals, student support personnel, curriculum coordinators, lead teachers, school-wide committee members and district central officials.



To cater to such a vast audience, the Academy offers two training tracks - a school leader track, directed towards administrators and supporting staff on a school-wide level; as well as an instructor track, focusing on classroom level application.

Both instructor and leadership tracks offer two sequential courses that are led by SEL experts, followed by a third practicum-based course. The completion of all three courses typically takes 1-2 years. Both tracks are primarily online, however the instruction track does offer a hybrid format, with occasional live in-person workshops and followed by online coursework.

Drawing on SEL principles and best practices for professional development, both Academy tracks utilize a cohort model to develop a learning community and a job-embedded practicum which allows educators to integrate their learning into their classrooms and schools. In addition, all Academy alumni and participants have access to a Virtual Professional Learning Community (VPLC). The VPLC allows participants to connect with other members in the SEL community, as well as to maintain communication with course peers and instructors; thus allowing participants and alumni to grow their SEL toolbox and receive support in their on-going SEL implementation.

SEL Providers Council Background

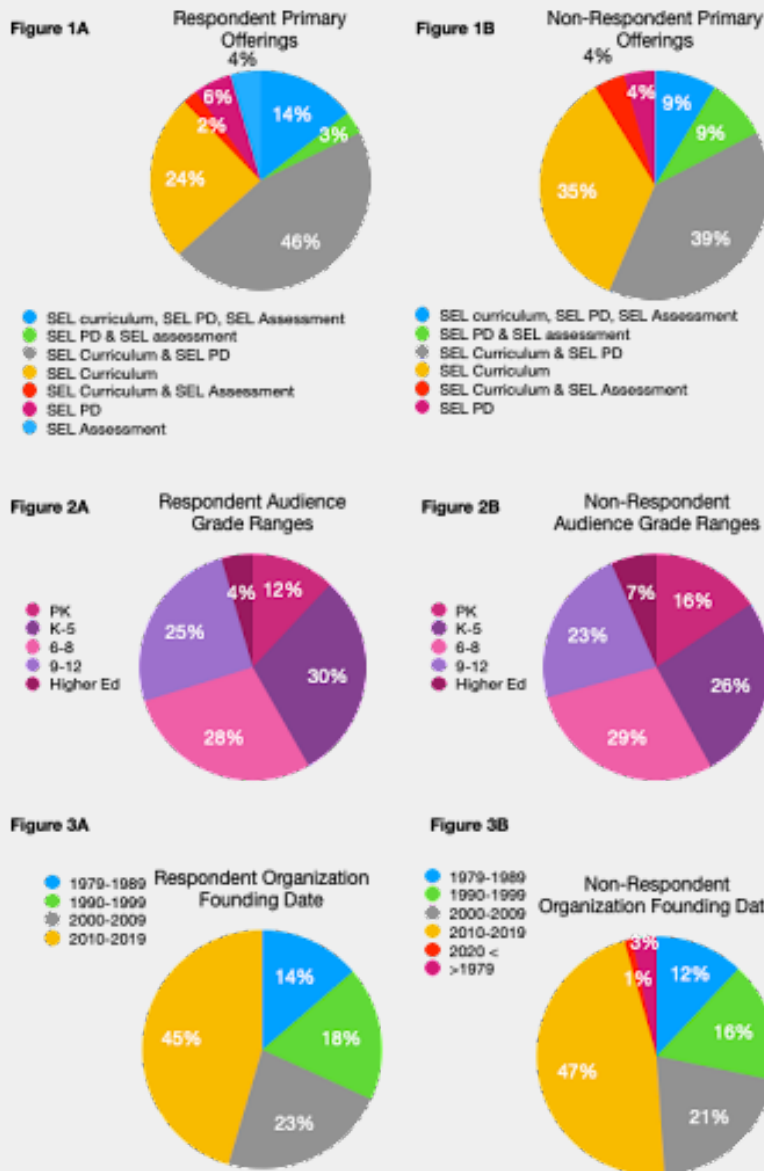
Launched in January 2020, the SEL Providers Council was developed with the goal to advance high-quality SEL implementation by bringing together SEL providers for networking, shared learning, collective promotion, and advocacy. 171 providers of SEL curriculum, programs, and assessment have joined to-date.

The Council aims to advance high-quality SEL implementation by connecting professional SEL providers that will aid in the building of a prestigious network of professionals that fosters meaningful partnerships and facilitates collaborative learning among research, clinical practice and fieldwork. Further goals of the Council are to use their network to promote and increase awareness surrounding SEL in schools and organizations that advocate for policies and funding for high-quality SEL application.

To advance their goals of SEL implementation, the Council engages in numerous in-person and virtual events, discussion boards, and initiatives conducted by subcommittees.

The demographics of the Providers Council are broken down into Group Participation, Primary Offerings and Grade Range(s) Offered. Participants were also categorized by organization founding dates ranging from 1958 to 2020. For the purposes of this report, we have also identified the frequency and trends of respondents versus non-respondents.

118 Council members responded to our survey request. 22% identified their organization (respondents had the option to remain anonymous). Although only a fraction of survey respondents identified their organization in the survey, it should be noted that the 22% were largely representative of the whole Providers Council; one exception was the category combination “SEL Assessment” (see figures 1A and 1B). Likewise, there was little difference in representation of organization target audience and organization founding dates, suggesting that background differences did not determine why organizations did not participate in the feedback survey (see figures 2A through 3B)



The Academy and Professional Development

The Academy has adopted their vision for PD training design by drawing from key components of design from research and literature to develop both effective and sustainable teaching methods for optimum application in the classroom and beyond.

What makes effective Teacher Professional Development?

There are many studies that contemplate the factors that combine to achieve a successful professional development program. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), effective PD programs must incorporate 7 essential features. What follows is how the Academy has adapted them into its pedagogy, process, and structure:

- The Academy has been developed to offer SEL-based curriculum teaching strategies to be applied in a number of classroom settings;
- The Academy provides ample time for learning, practice and implementation of SEL teaching skills, as reflected through the two courses and subsequent practicum course, which allows for participants to not only refine their skills over two courses, but also to put them into job-related relevant practice;
- The courses are designed to include various activities that encourage participants to really engage and have a more interactive learning experience that goes beyond simple lecture-style classes. Participants have the ability to practice, interact and apply knowledge into their day to day as part of the learning experience;
- Teamwork and professional networking were highly emphasized aspects of designing the Academy's curriculum with not only interactive activities that foster collaboration, but also a VPLC aimed to connect, support and maintain connections, well after the courses have been completed;
- By using the cohort model to structure teaching and instruction, Academy believes that not only does it set a clear vision for practices and curriculum, but also supports the best practices of the Academy and further contributes to the sustainability of SEL;
- Each of the Academy's courses are taught by SEL experts who mentor, advise and adapt the courses as required to best support the needs of their participants;
- As well as incorporating opportunities for participants to reflect on their learning, the Academy is committed to continually improving and making changes to cater to the needs of participants and the current climate. As such, the Academy sees it necessary to conduct evaluations on the experiences of participants through surveys and focus groups, with the goal to create a program that is of high prestige and accomplishment.

The latter demonstrates the seamless integration of effective PD measures into the Academy curriculum and coursework. Emphasis is especially geared towards implementing practices that enhance the long-term sustainability of SEL practices through the school-based practicum, cohort model, and virtual professional learning community.

As part of its continued effort to provide the most effective SEL PD resources, the Academy worked with the Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab to conduct a survey of members of the Providers Council to evaluate the visibility of the Academy, in addition to the extent of engagement that the Academy receives from SEL Providers.

Methods

To maintain the goal of the Academy to continue improving and evaluating the effectiveness of the program, **a survey was created to assess the visibility and usage of the Academy among the Providers Council.** This survey was developed and sent out periodically over the course of two in-school semesters. Initially, the survey was sent from the Academy, followed by the Social Emotional and Character Development Lab, followed by Dr. Maurice Elias and Dr. Patricia Heindel - Co-Directors of the Academy - in an attempt to cover all bases in avoiding our emails going to spam or junk folders. After the survey distribution period, the data were collected and evaluated.

The responses received were coded based on the categories that emerged. The survey item, "What might you expect an Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools to provide?" was coded for by identifying any terms associated with training, research, professional networking, student and educator resources, certifications, consultation, SEL strategies for minority populations, professional development and ways to promote SEL for example "strategies for teaching", "how tos" were coded under Training.

Responses from the item, "Where did you hear about the Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools?" were organized by categorizing like responses i.e. SECD Lab, Maurice Elias or the Academy were combined into "SECD Lab/Academy" since all of those resources are essentially one and the same source. Any conference references were categorized as "Conferences". Any references to colleagues or workplace engagement were coded as "workplace/word of mouth" and any internet or social media mention were categorized as "internet".

Examining reasons for why individuals may not choose to participate in the Academy's program, the responses were sorted by closest association to various categories that emerged; for example, "Lack of Awareness" responses were identified by phrases that indicated a lack of knowledge of the program i.e. "not knowing about it".

Responses to the item, "What social-emotional and character development (SECD)-related learning opportunities are you aware of?" were categorized based on like responses. Although there were few discrepancies between other sources of SEL education, we combined responses that included other university-led programs; any indications of not knowing or being unsure were assigned to the category "Not sure" and "Vague SEL references" was used for responses such as "program trainings", "google search", "occasional workshops and webinars". Similarly, responses to the question, "Where would you recommend colleagues go to build their competencies as social-emotional and character development (SECD) educators or leaders?" were coded in this way (i.e., other university-led programs; not sure" and vague SEL references).

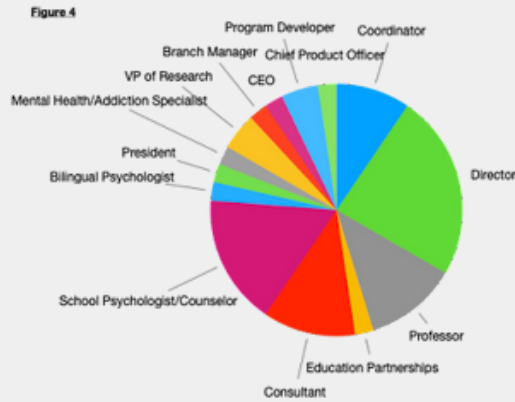
Findings

The survey sought to evaluate multiple dimensions of the effectiveness and impact of the Academy, including Providers Council demographics, involvement with the Academy, SEL knowledge and resources, and how much Providers knew about the Academy and its features.

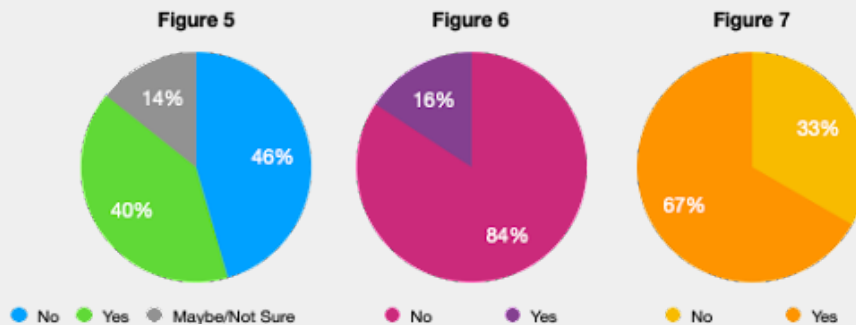
Since the survey was primarily anonymous in nature, of the 118 survey respondents, known responses came from individuals in the following organizations:

- Aperture Education
- BASE Education
- Center for Responsive Schools
- Center for Schools and Communities
- Devereux Center for Resilient Children
- Greater Good Science Center (UC Berkeley)
- INSIGHTS Intervention
- International Observatory for School Climate and Violence Prevention
- QuaverEd
- REAL Prevention
- Rutgers Social Decision Making Program
- SAIL Collaborative, LLC
- The Core Project
- The Social Express
- University of Virginia
- CREATE for Education
- Committee for Children
- 7 Mindsets
- CASEL
- EVERFI
- Kinful
- PATHs Program
- The Spark Initiative
- Sanford Programs
- Changing Perspectives
- Dreamaplay
- Generation Schools Network

Of those responding members, the known titles and positions that they held varied greatly from psychologists and consultants, to company CEOs and school leadership roles (see figure 4).

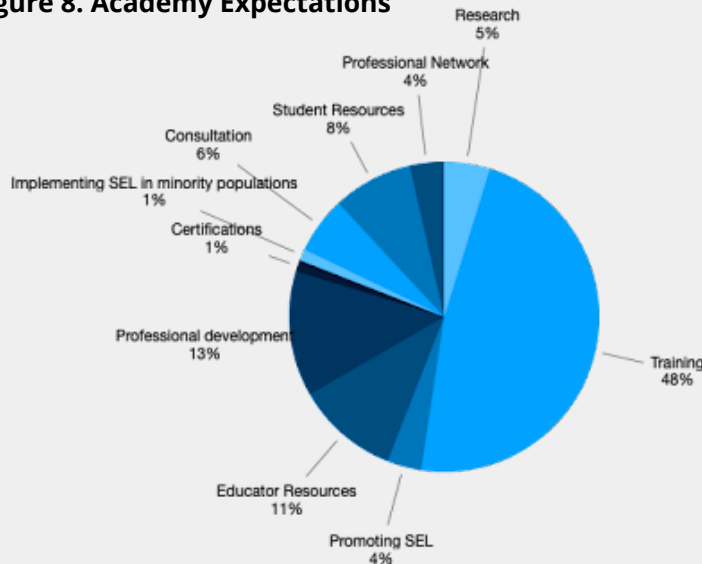


Of the professionals taking part in our survey, 46% were not familiar with the Academy, 40% were and 14% were unsure, indicating that the majority of our providers had not heard of the Academy (figure 5). Individuals who were familiar or unsure whether they were familiar with the Academy, the larger majority of respondents had not taken part in the certification courses (see figure 6). Despite the lack of participation in the courses, a vast majority of the Providers Council would still recommend the Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools to their colleagues (figure 7).



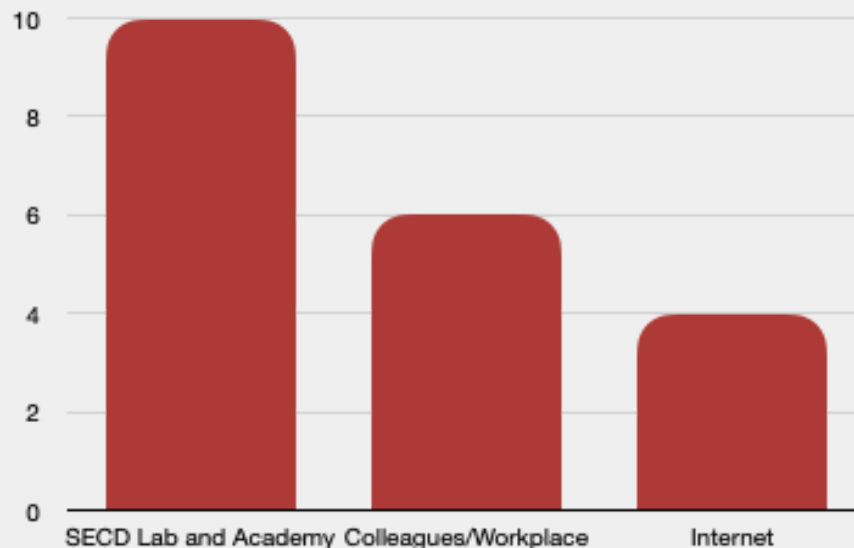
Further information that we sought to find out from our survey included what participants expected the Academy for SEL in schools to provide. We received numerous answers including: training, research, professional networking, student and educator resources, certifications, consultation, SEL strategies for minority populations, professional development and ways to promote SEL. The top three responses for this question highlighted training, professional development and educator resources as the most expected response categories (see figure 8).

Figure 8. Academy Expectations



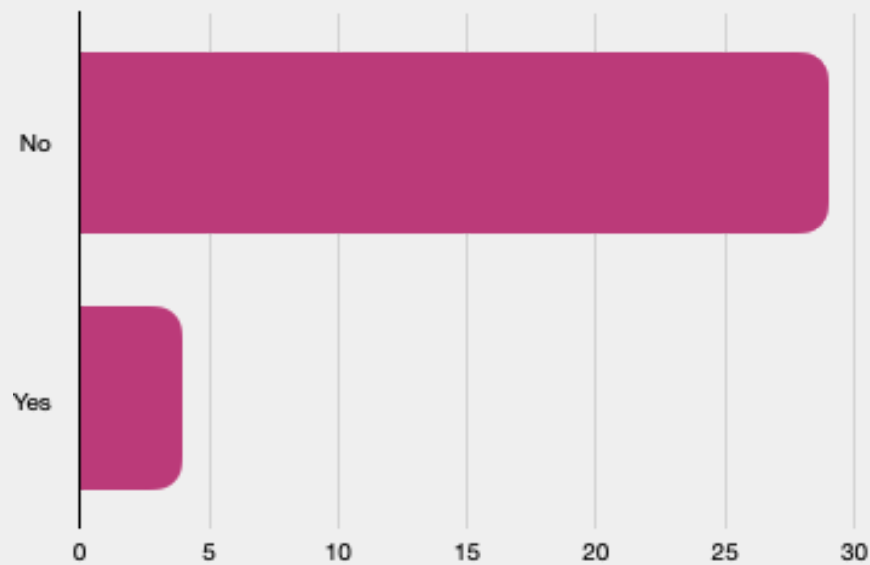
To evaluate the visibility of the Academy, we asked participants to identify how they came to hear about the Academy for SEL in Schools certification courses. Responses differed widely between CASEL, SECD Lab/Academy, SEL Related Work, NJASP, Word of Mouth, Web search, Conference/Convention and CPSEL. Of those, the top most frequent response totaled 10 responses for SECD Lab/Academy with 9 responses including Dr. Elias within their answers. The second-ranked response was from colleagues and/or their workplace and the third-ranked response was from Internet sources (other than emails); 4 responses included websites or social media sources in their answers (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Where did you hear about the Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools?



The Virtual Professional Learning Community (VPLC) is an online help center staffed by experts for all things SEL and anything associated with courses conducted by the Academy. With networking and collaboration at the heart of this construct, we evaluated the Providers Council's usage of and familiarity with the VPLC, and found this to be very low (figure 10).

Figure 10. The Virtual Professional Learning Community (VPLC) is an online help center staffed by experts for all things SEL related. Are you familiar with it?

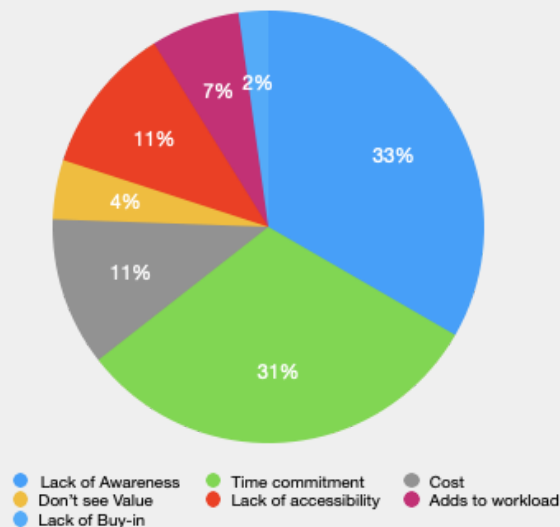


In an attempt to improve our audience outreach and participation numbers, we collected information on the perceived reasoning that individuals may not get involved in the Academy. The top response was the lack of awareness of the Academy’s existence; responses included not knowing about it or mentioned lack of awareness in their answers. The second-ranked response was the time commitment needed; responses included time, not having enough time to commit. The third-ranked response was money; responses included money and cost concerns, in addition to lack of accessibility.

Other responses relating to the preventative factors for getting involved in the Academy included (see figure 11):

- Not seeing the value
- Lack of buy-in
- Adding more to an existing workload

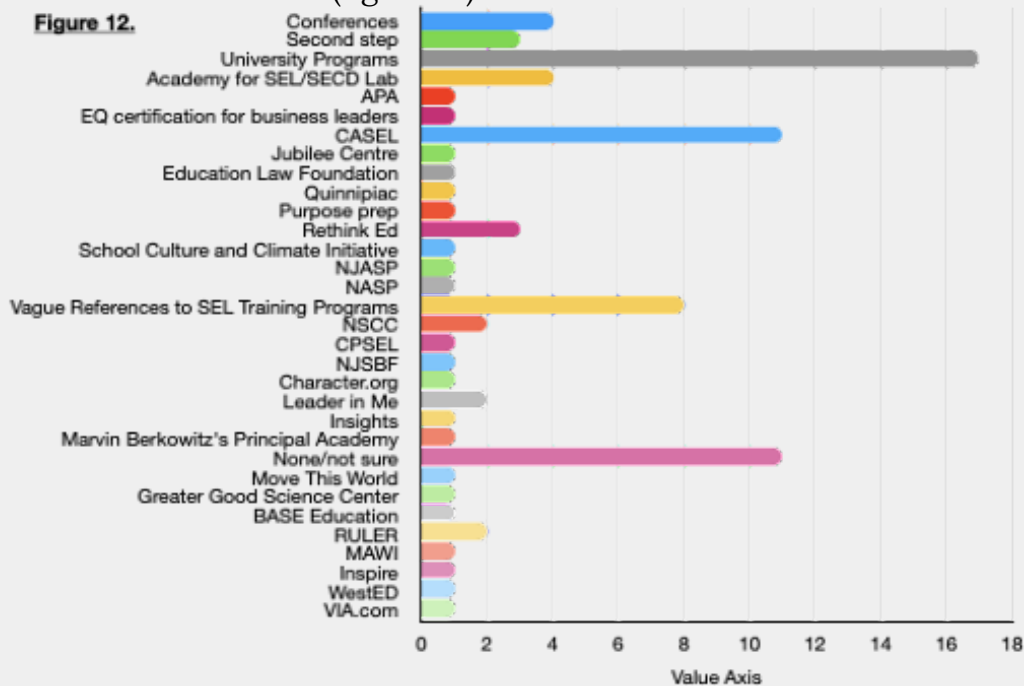
Figure 11.



Upon exploring the other known SEL-related learning opportunities, we learned that the most frequent responses to “What social-emotional and character development (SECD)-related learning opportunities are you aware of”, with 17 responses, were University-affiliated SEL Training programs at locations such as:

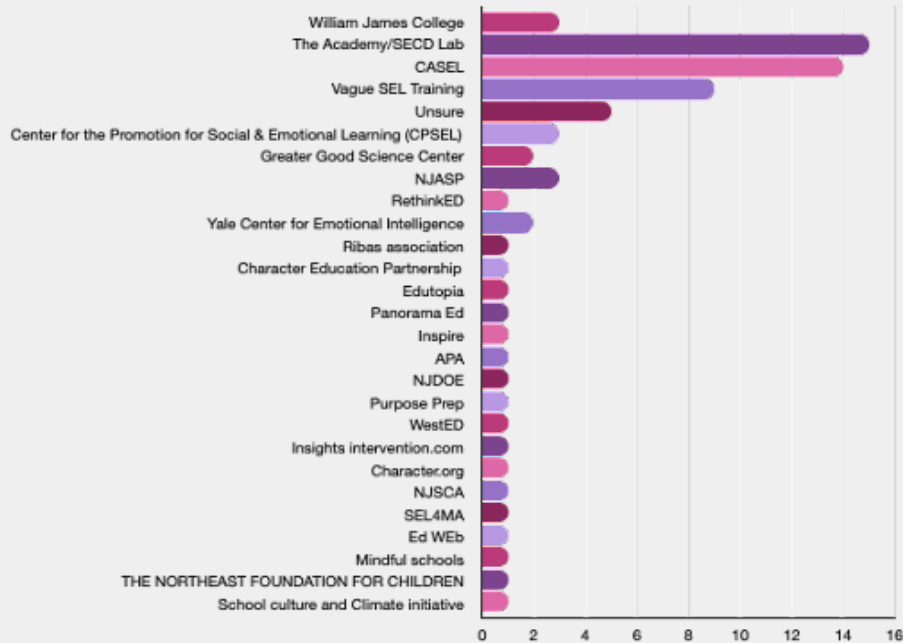
- William James College
- University of Colorado Boulder
- Northampton MA
- Zaentz Initiative at Harvard University
- InterconnectED at Lynch School of Boston College
- Center for Innovative Education in Vienna VA
- Morris Union
- North Central College in Illinois
- Arizona State University
- Neumann University
- North Central College in Naperville
- Emory University
- Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

The second-ranked response was CASEL and responses that indicated uncertainty about which programs to recommend, with 11 responses. The third-ranked response was vague references to SEL training programs and workshops. The fourth-ranked response was affiliated with the SECD Lab and/or Academy at Rutgers and The College of St. Elizabeth Universities and Conferences including National Educators for Restorative Practices (NEDRP), International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), Regional and national, Mental health of America Houston (figure 12).



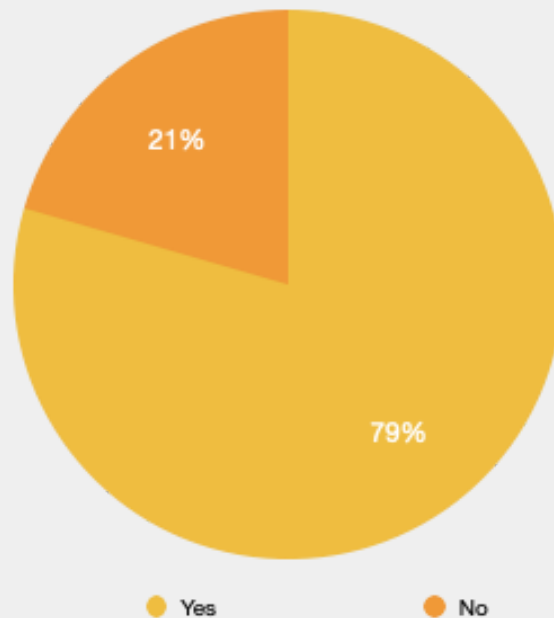
Further questioning on where providers would recommend colleagues to go to build their competencies as social-emotional and character development (SECD) instructors or leaders revealed that the top response was referring to the SECD Lab and/or the Academy at Rutgers and St. Elizabeth Universities. The second-ranked response specified CASEL. The third-ranked response was along the lines of vague answers relating to SEL training and online searches (figure 13).

Figure 13.



Following our main survey questions, we asked whether the participants would be interested in learning more about The Academy, to which the majority of responses were “Yes” (see figure 14).

Figure 14



Discussion

The results of the survey indicate that on average, the Provider Council, although seemingly not well-versed in the ins and outs of the Academy, recommend the Academy to their colleagues and look for features of a PD program that the Academy offers. However, it is also clear that there are areas of the Academy that need some work; primarily increasing visibility in the SEL PD environment (marketing and social media), in addition to virtual engagement through the VPLC. Other improvements that can be made are reflected in the perceived justifications for lack of teacher engagement - time commitment and lack of knowledge about the Academy.

The limited nature of our population should also be considered. Although the analyses indicate that the data was reflective of the overall participant pool, potential follow-up data collection and analysis should focus on increasing participation for greater reliability.

Future Directions

Based on recommendations from the survey, the primary goals for the Academy would be to increase knowledge about what the Academy does, to increase virtual networking and to add continuation and refresher courses.

Future directions of improving the usage and accessibility of the VPLC are already being put in motion through rebranding efforts that aim to zone in on utilizing the VPLC to a greater capacity and extending SEL outreach to as many members as possible.

Through the initiative to rebrand the VPLC, we also believe that this will help to increase visibility in academic circles. Proposed efforts to amplify this initiative include a different approach to newsletter distribution, as well as increasing social media content and advertising efforts.

A tertiary goal of the Academy and VPLC aims to not only add to the goal of increasing knowledge about what the Academy does, but to also help increase and continue offering opportunities for professionals to continue their SEL journeys through refresher courses and workshops, following their official certifications.

References

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