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A Social and Emotional Learning Program for School-Aged Children

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A Social and Emotional Learning Program for School-Aged Children

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Introduction

- Children with neurodevelopmental disorders are more likely to display social and emotional learning (SEL) difficulties.
- SEL deficits interfere with occupational performance and engagement throughout school and life.
- Research consistently demonstrates positive outcomes for participants in SEL programs.

Site Description - Tampa Kids Therapy

- Pediatric private practice outpatient clinic in Tampa, FL.
- Services: Occupational therapy; behavior services; sensory, social & educational enrichment programs
- Population: Ages birth - 18 yrs. old with various diagnoses and conditions
- Mission statement: To help all children reach their potential through meaningful, fun learning, and developmental activities.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Development of an organized, comprehensive, evidence-based SEL program.
- SEL activities and lessons that support learning and engagement.
- Provision of resources, guidance, and educational opportunities for parents/caregivers.
- Strategies for increasing carryover of learned skills beyond the therapy sessions.



Literature Review Summary

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) organized decades of SEL research into a widely used framework (Foster et al., 2013).

- Schools implement SEL policies to accelerate learning, engage students, and promote mental health and well-being (CASEL, 2022b).
- Implementing SEL across various contexts encourages consistency and carryover of skills (CASEL, 2022b).

Children with SEL impairments often possess the desire to interact with others but lack the necessary skills to engage effectively (Autism Speaks, 2022).

- Children with neurodevelopmental disorders exhibit characteristics that profoundly impact their learning, behavior, communication, and social interactions (Scandurra et al., 2019).
- Children with SEL deficits are more susceptible to peer rejection and bullying, and less likely to form meaningful relationships (Fox et al., 2020).

Occupational therapists play a vital role in helping child further develop SEL skills (Anderson et al., 2017).

- SEL promotes successful engagement in almost all areas of occupational performance throughout school and life (Anderson et al., 2017; Foster et al., 2013).
- Persisting SEL deficits can have long-term consequences on health, education, and well being (Hawkins et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2015).

Capstone Project Description

Outline:

- 12-week social and emotional skill development program with emphasis on positive peer interactions and engaging sensory-based activities.
- 45-minute weekly sessions within a collaborative group setting.

Goals:

- Enhance social and emotional skills in school-age children by utilizing evidence-based frameworks and age-appropriate lessons and activities.
- Support parents/caregivers through the provision of educational material, at-home activities, and opportunities to share their experiences, needs, and concerns.
- Assess the effectiveness of the program and ensure its sustainability.

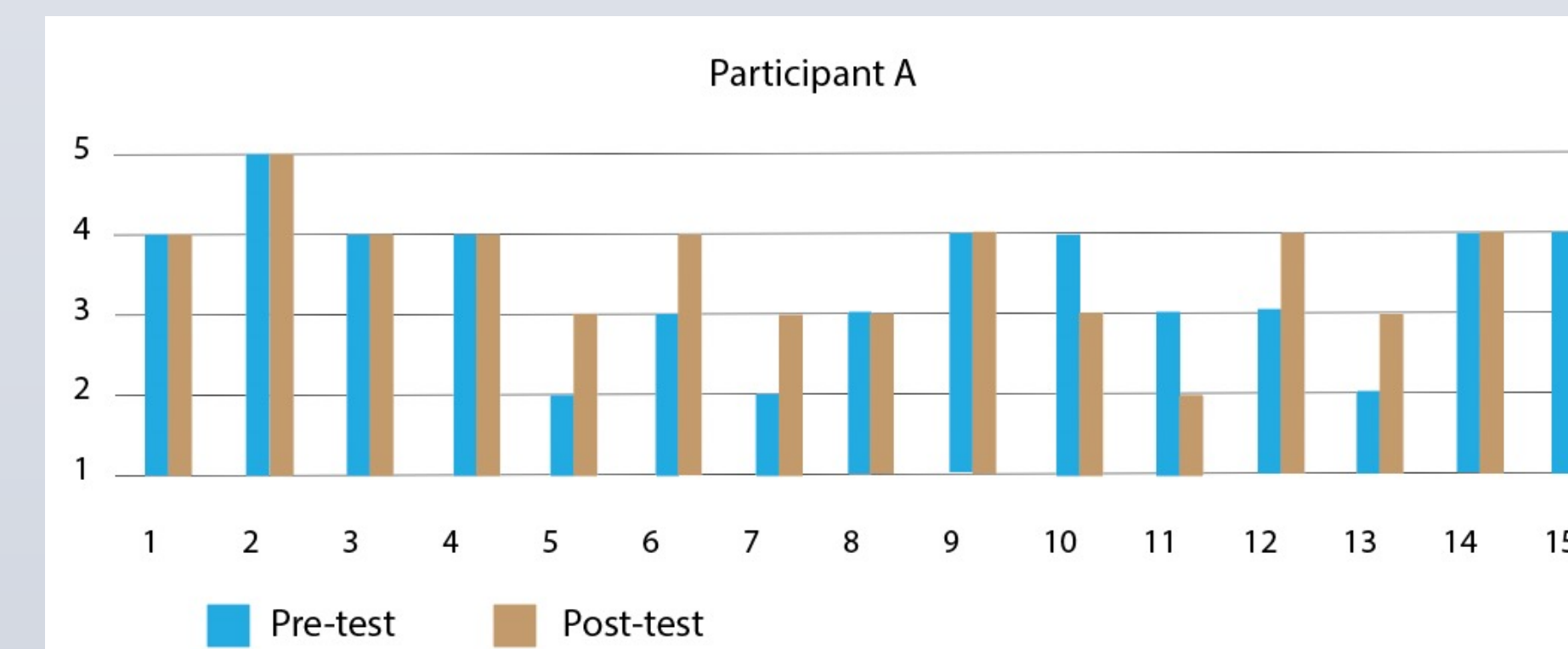


SEL framework [Photograph]. (2023). CASEL. <https://casel.org>

Capstone Project Outcomes

Pre-Post Parent Questionnaire:

- Results were impacted by small sample size, sickness during the program, and frequent cancellations.



Topics Covered:

- Growth Mindset
- Thoughts & Feelings
- Positive Self-Talk
- Calming Strategies
- Self-Control
- Perspective Taking
- Empathy/Kindness/Respect
- Problem Solving
- Being a Good Sport
- Asking For & Giving Help
- Getting Along with Others
- Apologizing & Tone of Voice

Self-Awareness

Growth Mindset

What is it?
Self-awareness is the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

Why is it Important?
With a growth mindset, children are more likely to embrace challenges with a positive attitude, persist in the face of setbacks, and believe in their abilities to learn, grow, and improve.

What We Learned:

- Understanding the concept of a growth mindset
- Identifying fixed vs. growth mindset thoughts
- Embracing challenges as opportunities for growth
- Strategies to bounce back from setbacks and persevere even when things get tough.

Take aways:

1. I can remind myself that I haven't mastered something YET, but with time, practice, and effort I can improve.
2. I can be proud of my progress and celebrate my successes along the way.

How To Support at Home:

- Encourage your child to focus on the effort they put in, rather than just the outcome. For example, instead of saying, "You're so smart!" you can say, "I'm proud of how hard you worked on that!"
- Help your child create positive affirmations that focus on their strengths, abilities, and growth mindset.
- Read books that reinforce growth mindset skills. Some suggestions:

Resources:
Today's session was adapted from Everyday Speech: Social and Emotional Learning Platform.
If you would like more resources on this topic, please let us know!

Learning Objectives Achieved

1. Design a social and emotional learning and development manual organized with weekly lessons, age-appropriate activities, and parent handouts.
2. Implement a 12-week SEL program, providing targeted interventions and activities.
3. Administer pre-post surveys and a parent-questionnaire.
4. Effectively communicate with parents/caregivers, offering support, guidance, education, and addressing any of their needs or concerns.

Implications for OT Practice

1. With the guidance and support of a skilled therapist, collaborative SEL environments:
 - Offer valuable opportunities for children to practice and develop skills alongside their peers.
 - Encourage children to understand and appreciate different perspectives.
 - Promote increased self-confidence as children actively participate, share their ideas, and receive positive feedback.
 - Foster the development of essential SEL skills (i.e., communication, active listening, cooperation, problem solving, decision making).
2. Family-centered services empower parents/caregivers to actively participate in their child's social and emotional skill development, promoting continuity of care.



References & Acknowledgments

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References Available Upon Request