



Evaluation of Summer 2011 Kansas City Freedom Schools

KC-AERC Team

Sarah Frazelle
Dr. Leigh Anne Taylor Knight

Technical Assistance

Emily Kennedy

Evaluation completed by Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium, August 2011

In the spring of 2011 the Kansas City Freedom Schools Initiative (KCFSI) contracted with the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KC-AERC) to assess whether the Freedom Schools summer program had a positive impact on its scholars, both academically and socially. The leadership of Freedom Schools and KC-AERC identified the following objectives for the Freedom Schools Assessment and Evaluation:

- 1) Design and facilitate the administration of instruments to pre-assess attitudes and behavior of scholars participating in the program in summer of 2011
- 2) Design and facilitate the administration of instruments to post-assess attitudes and behavior of scholars participating in the program in summer of 2011
- 3) Design a model to test academic and behavioral changes in scholars using a treatment group and comparison group based on participation in the program in summer of 2011

This document summarizes the findings for Objectives 1 and 2 in the evaluation effort. The academic study to meet Objective 3 will be conducted with data from the previous and current academic school year as standardized assessment information comes available in the next 12 months.

The Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KC-AERC) is a consortium of researchers at four regional research universities—the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the University of Kansas, the University of Missouri in Columbia and Kansas State University—and cooperating school districts in the metropolitan Kansas City area. The purpose of KC-AERC is to provide partner school districts, as well as state, community and private sector stakeholders with access to the highest quality of research informing student achievement, classroom practice and educational policy.

For more information, go to www.kcaerc.org.

Professional Qualifications of Project Coordinators

Sarah Frazelle Sarah Frazelle has been involved with the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KC-AERC) since Fall 2008 and currently serves as the Assistant Director. Additionally, she has been a research analyst at the Institute for Policy & Social Research (IPSR), University of Kansas, and has taught college courses in economics on the campus. She received her Master's Degree in economics at the University of Kansas in May 2007 and is currently working on a PhD in Public Administration with emphasis on performance measurement, social inequality and education. Her major projects have included: database training and implementation; statistical analysis with multi-variate and panel datasets; conducting comparative analysis reports; hosting and facilitating focus groups; and creating, administering, and analyzing survey instruments. Additionally, she has conducted several literature reviews on subjects ranging from women in business to best practices in education research to income effects on family units. Her work with KC-AERC has been involved with the implementation of the data repository, negotiating data sharing agreements and procedures, statistical analysis in the pilot projects, writing reports, creating surveys, and analyzing research needs with community education agencies.

Leigh Anne Taylor Knight, Ed.D. Dr. Taylor Knight has spent the past 20 years teaching and working in positions of leadership in school districts in the Kansas City region. She has managed the launch of a new LEED certified high school, has developed problem-based learning programs that have linked secondary education and the private sector, has collaborated in initiating online learning programs that serve over 6,000 secondary students, participated in preparing grants that have obtained over \$5 million in instructional funding, and coordinated the development of a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the rigor of secondary curricula in K-12 environments. From classroom teaching to district curriculum and programming coordination to building administration, she has significant experience with using data to guide teaching and learning. Most recently, Dr. Taylor Knight served five years as an executive team leader on the Superintendent's Cabinet of North Kansas City Schools. Currently, she serves as the Executive Director of the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium. Dr. Taylor Knight's long experience and knowledge of the education environment of the regional schools made her a key asset in coordinating the collection and analysis of data for this project.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
What are Freedom Schools?	4
Introduction to the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS).....	5
Summary of SSIS Results	6
Areas for Application of Results	7
How Can Freedom Schools Make a Difference?	7
Part 2 - Mission and Description of the Freedom Schools Initiative	9
Introduction to the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS).....	10
Why Test Social Skills?	10
Part 3 - Explanation of the Social Skills Improvement System	11
Social Skills.....	11
Problem Behaviors	13
Part 4 - The Pre-Assessment Results	14
Interpreting Results.....	15
Part 5 - The Post-Assessment Results	27
Results By Sites.....	27
Overall Results for KCFSI Scholars	28
Part 6 - Conclusion	30
Attachment: HANDOUT TO SITE COORDINATORS	32
Interpreting Your Scholars' SSIS Results.....	32
Why Test Social Skills?	32
Social Skills.....	32
Problem Behaviors	34
What Can I Do With These Results?	36
Interpreting Results.....	36

Evaluation of Summer 2011 – Kansas City Freedom Schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alika is a girl living in the urban core of Kansas City, Missouri who just finished 3rd grade. At her school last year only 1 in 5 children in her grade completed their annual testing with a score of proficient or above in Communication Arts. At the area high school, 35.6% of the seniors did not graduate last year.¹ Alika's mother, concerned about her daughter's educational future and the amount of knowledge Alika might lose over the summer, took the initiative to enroll her daughter in a summer reading program which claimed to emphasize positive socialization and self-esteem as well as focusing on the importance of reading.

The program's focus on self-esteem and community involvement piqued Alika's mother's interest because she knew the neighborhood in which their family lived. Only 55% of Blacks in their county were employed. For all the families in their county, regardless of race, almost 40% had received some form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or cash public assistance income in the past 12 months.² Poverty was a state of life for not only their family, but for almost everyone with whom Alika interacted, including 80% of her classmates who qualified for free and reduced lunch at her school. The evening news frequently broadcast stories of homicides that had occurred in their community. Forty-one unsolved homicides still remained from 2010 and over half of those were of black young adults under the age of 30 years.³

Alika's mother enrolled her in the Freedom Schools reading program, not only to help her maintain her reading skills, but also to give her a positive place to go during the summer.

What are Freedom Schools?

The mission of the Kansas City Freedom Schools Initiative (KCFSI) is to provide a safe environment for operations of a literacy based summer program managed by caring adults who utilize teaching techniques that nurture, build self-esteem, foster leadership, promote a love of reading, and empower children like Alika.

KCFSI provides six weeks of summer classes to help urban children ages 5 to 17 enjoy reading, increase self-esteem, and develop positive attitudes toward learning. The children, referred to as scholars, are taught using a curriculum model that centers around five essential components: high quality academic enrichment; parent and family involvement; civic engagement and social action; intergenerational

¹ 2010 district information for Kansas City, Missouri can be found at:

<http://dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/arsd048078.html>

² The most recent employment and wage information for Jackson County Missouri can be found at the U.S. Census Bureau website: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US29095&-qr_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_S2301&-ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_&-redoLog=false

³ Unsolved homicides can be found at the Kansas City, Missouri police department website: <http://www.kcmo.org/police/Crime/ViolentCrimes/Homicide/2010UnsolvedHomicides/index.htm>

leadership development; and nutrition, health and mental health. In addition, KCFSI's Servant Leader Intern component provides meaningful summer work opportunities for college-aged students who are hired and trained to work with small groups of KCFSI scholars. KCFSI is a partner organization of the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools Initiative.

Introduction to the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS)

Social Skills

"Well-developed social skills contribute to academic success and the learning environment for everyone. Students with these skills tend to pay better attention to speakers, work more cooperatively with others, ask for help when needed, and behave more responsibly."

*Gresham and Elliot
SSIS Rating Scales Manual*

To address the social impact on scholars, KC-AERC used the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) as a tool to measure changes in social skills and problem behaviors over the course of the six-week program. This assessment fit well with the Freedom Schools equal emphases on teaching pro-social behavior and reading skills.

The KCFSI differentiates itself from other summer programs in their focus on civic engagement and social action. The attention given to pro-social behavior is motivated by the body of literature supporting the finding that greater academic gains are found in children who are competent in their application of social skills. As stated by the SSIS Rating Scales Manual designed by scientist-practitioners, Dr. Frank Gresham and Dr. Stephan Elliot:

Social skills are critical to successful functioning in life. As children age, they interact with an increasing number of people – family members, peers, teachers, and others – in varied settings and situations. Some children skillfully navigate these social encounters effortlessly, while others lack the ability or motivation to use positive social behaviors when interacting with others. Well-developed social skills contribute to academic success and the learning environment for everyone. Students with these skills tend to pay better attention to speakers, work more cooperatively with others, ask for help when needed, and behave more responsibly. Conversely, social skills deficits can lead to poor academic outcomes and may result in later social adjustment problems or serious psychopathology.

Importantly, social skills can be developed and improved. Without intervention, social skills deficits usually persist. Thus, identifying and intervening with students with social skills deficits is important for educators, psychologists, and others who work with children.

The Freedom Schools scholars were given an SSIS pre-assessment during the first week and an SSIS post-assessment during the last week of the summer program. Each child's score was then examined for changes significantly different from no change at all (zero) between their initial and final assessment scores – thus indicating true gains or losses over seven social skills and four problem behaviors.

Most Consistent Change

“Statistical tests run on all scholars showed a decrease in internalizing behavior, defined as feeling anxious, sad, lonely, and exhibiting poor self-esteem. The decrease was most pronounced for the younger scholars ages 8 to 12.”

Summary of SSIS Results

Overall, scholars who participated in the 2011 Kansas City Freedom Schools Initiative experienced positive social skill changes throughout their time in the six-week program. Statistical tests run on all scholars showed a decrease in internalizing behavior, defined as feeling anxious, sad, lonely, and exhibiting poor self-esteem. The decrease was most pronounced for the younger scholars ages 8 to 12.

The older scholars, ages 13 to 18, increased their level of assertion, defined as initiating behaviors such as asking others for information, introducing oneself, and responding to the actions of others, their level of cooperation, defined as helping others, sharing materials, and complying with rules and directions, and their level of communication, defined as taking turns and making eye contact during a conversation, using appropriate tone of voice and gestures, and being polite by saying “thank you” and “please”. The largest gain was found in the older scholars who showed a significant and positive increase in their overall social skills score. Table 1 shows the changes by age group with the level of significance indicated by the asterisks. More asterisks mean greater evidence of real change. In particular, one asterisk means the results have at least a 90% probability of being significant, two asterisks means the results have at least a 95% probability of being significant and three asterisks means the results have at least a 99% probability of being significant. Although most of the margins of change are relatively small, it must be noted that the time between SSIS assessments was only six weeks, thus any margin of change at all is impressive.

Most Significant Change

“The largest gain was found in the older scholars who showed a significant and positive increase in their overall social skills score.”

Table 1		
All Scholars		
Social Skill	Assertion	+0.456**
Problem Behavior	Internalizing	-0.974***
Age Group: 8-12		
Problem Behavior	Internalizing	-1.124***
Age Group: 13-18		
Social Skill	Communication	+0.564*
Social Skill	Cooperation	+0.723*
Social Skill	Assertion	+1.309***
Social Skill	Overall Social Skill Score	+4.340***

Interestingly, each analysis of the scholars shows evidence of an increase in bullying behavior. Possible explanations for the increase might include a lack of trust during the pre-assessment and/or the negative connotations children learn about bullying behavior. If the tested scholars did not trust the pre-assessment and answered conservatively to hide perceived incriminating behavior, then scholars

being more honest in the post-assessment would seem to be engaging in more bullying behaviors. Interviews with program interns, the individuals working closest with the children, are being planned to gather more evidence for whether or not bullying behavior actually increased over the course of the program.

The SSIS also helped identify an area of relative weakness in the Freedom Schools scholars. The pre-assessment placed all scholars from every age group in every site within the average scoring range for children across the United States with one exception. The pre-assessment identified empathy, defined as showing concern and respect for others' feelings and viewpoints, as an area of relative weakness, particularly for scholars ages 13 to 18. In the final analysis, there was no evidence of change in this weakness. Based on this evidence, future Freedom Schools programs should develop conversation and lessons around the subject of empathy for their older scholars.

Area of Growth

"The pre-assessment identified empathy, defined as showing concern and respect for others' feelings and viewpoints, as an area of relative weakness, particularly for scholars ages 13 to 18."

Areas for Application of Results

The final analysis pointed to one site of Kansas City Freedom Schools with a particular strength in increasing their scholars' communication and responsibility. A qualitative assessment of the difference in practices at the site could prove beneficial for achieving better skill increases across all Freedom Schools sites in the Kansas City area. Another option for increasing social skills in Freedom Schools' scholars could be to integrate the pre-assessment results into a curriculum tailored to addressing each tested behavior category. After receiving the initial results, sites would then be able to work with the scholars in their specific areas of relative weakness or help foster areas of relative strength.

The SSIS assessments have provided valuable information in analyzing the changes in social skills of the KCFSI scholars. The assessments provided an initial benchmark of how the scholars entered the program as well as measured areas of growth for groups of scholars. One of the most profound results was the increase in overall social skills for youths aged 13-18 participating in the program. Another important change to be noted was the decrease in internalizing behavior displayed by children ages 8-12 years old in the KCFSI. Although bullying appears to have increased, the change may be explainable by test-taking procedures, and was not as large a result as the positive changes that simultaneously occurred. Continued analysis via the SSIS, coupled with the upcoming academic analysis, will build evidence of the changes KCFSI made in inner-city youth over the six-week program.

How Can Freedom Schools Make a Difference?

Every morning at Freedom Schools Alika sings at the Harambee, a time of celebration, dancing, and empowerment used to kick off the day. She, as well as some children as young as four, has learned how to spell "announcements" through one of the daily chants. She knows every hand movement to the inspirational song and bellows out the chorus:

"Something inside so strong,
I know that I can make it

Though you're doing me wrong, so wrong
You thought that my pride was gone
Oh no, there's something inside so strong"

Never losing sight of the Freedom Schools motto, "I can make a difference," the staff members have tried to work with each student to instill hope. They focus on helping each child find the voice inside that will say, "I believe I can make a difference in myself, my family, my community, my country and my world."

PART 2 - MISSION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The mission of Kansas City Freedom Schools is to provide a safe environment for operations of a literacy based summer program managed by caring adults who utilize teaching techniques that nurture, build self-esteem, foster leadership and develop a love for reading. The program empowers parents, children, young adults and the community as it centers around the daily theme, "I can make a difference" in myself, my family, my community, my country and my world, through hope, education and social action.

The Kansas City Freedom School Initiative (KCFSI) provides six weeks of summer enrichment to help urban children ages 5 to 17 enjoy reading, increase self-esteem, and develop positive attitudes toward learning. Children are taught using a model curriculum that supports children and families around five essential components: high quality academic enrichment; parent and family involvement; civic engagement and social action; intergenerational leadership development; and nutrition, health and mental health. KCFSI is a partner organization of the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools Initiative.

Through its Servant Leader Intern program, The Kansas City Freedom School Initiative provides meaningful summer work opportunities for college-aged students who are hired and trained to work with small groups of students. To participate, Servant Leader Interns must be qualified as substitute teachers (i.e. have 60 College credit hours) and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA. Through an application and interview process, they must demonstrate leadership skills on their college campuses or in their communities and must be registered voters. Servant Leaders participate in 15 days of training and are eventually supervised by a site coordinator, as they work with groups of ten students.

In the spring of 2011 the Kansas City Freedom Schools Initiative (KCFSI) contracted with the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KC-AERC) to assess whether the Freedom Schools summer program had a positive impact on its scholars, both academically and socially. The leadership of Freedom Schools and KC-AERC identified the following objectives for the Freedom Schools Assessment and Evaluation:

- 1) Design and facilitate the administration of instruments to pre-assess attitudes and behavior of scholars participating in the program in summer of 2011
- 2) Design and facilitate the administration of instruments to post-assess attitudes and behavior of scholars participating in the program in summer of 2011
- 3) Design a model to test academic and behavioral changes in scholars using a treatment group and comparison group based on participation in the program in summer of 2011

This document reports the findings for Objectives 1 and 2 in the evaluation effort. The academic study to meet Objective 3 will be conducted with data from the previous and current academic school year as standardized assessment information comes available in the next 12 months.

Introduction to the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS)

To address the social impact on scholars KC-AERC used the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) as a tool to measure changes in social skills and problem behaviors over the course of the six week program. This type of assessment fit well with the Freedom Schools prioritization of the equal importance of pro-social behavior along with the purely academic reading program. The Freedom Schools scholars were given an SSIS pre-assessment during the first week and an SSIS post-assessment during the last week of the Freedom Schools program. Each child's score was then examined for differences significantly different from zero between their initial and final assessment scores – thus indicating true gains or losses over seven social skills and four problem behaviors.

Why Test Social Skills?

As stated by the SSIS Rating Scales Manual designed by experienced scientist-practitioners, Dr. Frank Gresham and Dr. Stephan Elliot:

Social skills are critical to successful functioning in life. As children age, they interact with an increasing number of people – family members, peers, teachers, and others – in varied settings and situations. Some children skillfully navigate these social encounters effortlessly, while others lack the ability or motivation to use positive social behaviors when interacting with others. Well developed social skills contribute to academic success and the learning environment for everyone. Students with these skills tend to pay better attention to speakers, work more cooperatively with others, ask for help when needed, and behave more responsibly. Conversely, social skills deficits can lead to poor academic outcomes and may result in later social adjustment problems or serious psychopathology.

Importantly, social skills can be developed and improved. Without intervention, social skills deficits usually persist. Thus, identifying and intervening with students with social skills deficits is important for educators, psychologists, and others who work with children.

A list of scholarly works is available upon request if further investigation into the link between social skills and student outcomes is desired.

PART 3 - EXPLANATION OF THE SOCIAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

Social Skills

Social skills represent learned behaviors that promote positive interactions while simultaneously discouraging negative interactions when applied to appropriate social situations. The Freedom Schools scholars were assessed in common social skills behaviors in seven sub-domains: Assertion, Communication, Cooperation, Empathy, Engagement, Responsibility, and Self-Control. Below are definitions of each sub-domain and examples of the types of statements the children (and parents regarding their children for children under 8 years old) were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 3. Higher ratings indicate areas of strengths while lower ratings indicate areas of weakness.

Assertion

Defined as: initiating behaviors, such as asking others for information, introducing oneself, and responding to the actions of others

Sample statements from assessment:

- I ask for information when I need it.
- I stand up for others when they are not treated well.
- I show others how I feel.
- I tell others when I'm not treated well.

Communication

Defined as: taking turns and making eye contact during a conversation, using appropriate tone of voice and gestures, and being polite by saying "thank you" and "please"

Sample statements from assessment:

- I say "please" when I ask for things.
- I take turns when I talk with others.
- I look at people when I talk to them.
- I smile or wave at people when I see them.

Cooperation

Defined as: helping others, sharing materials, and complying with rules and directions

Sample statements from assessment:

- I pay attention when others present their ideas.
- I do what the teacher asks me to do.
- I do my work without bothering others.

- I work well with my classmates.

Empathy

Defined as: showing concern and respect for others' feelings and viewpoints

Sample statements from assessment:

- I try to forgive others when they say "sorry."
- I try to make others feel better.
- I help my friends when they are having a problem.
- I am nice to others when they are feeling bad.

Engagement

Defined as: joining activities in progress and inviting others to join, initiating conversations, making friends, and interacting well with others

Sample statements from assessment:

- I make friends easily.
- I ask others to do things with me.
- I meet and greet new people on my own.
- I ask to join others when they are doing things I like.

Responsibility

Defined as: showing regard for property or work and demonstrating the ability to communicate with adults

Sample statements from assessment:

- I'm careful when I use things that aren't mine.
- I keep my promises.
- I do the right thing without being told.
- I tell people when I have made a mistake.

Self-Control

Defined as: responding appropriately in conflict (e.g., disagreeing, teasing) and non-conflict situations (taking turns and compromising)

Sample statements from assessment:

- I stay calm when I am teased.
- I try to find a good way to end a disagreement.
- I stay calm when dealing with problems.

- I stay calm when I disagree with others.

Problem Behaviors

Problem behaviors interfere with either the acquisition or performance of social skill behaviors. The Freedom Schools scholars were assessed in common problem behaviors in four sub-domains (five for parents assessing their children under 8): Bullying, Externalizing, Hyperactivity/Inattention, and Internalizing, as well as Autism for children under 8. Below are definitions of each sub-domain along with examples of the types of statements the children (and parents regarding their children for children under 8 years old) were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 3. Higher ratings indicate areas of weakness while lower ratings indicate areas of little to no issue for the child.

Bullying

Defined as: forcing others to do something, hurting people physically or emotionally, and not letting others join an activity

Sample statements from assessment:

- I make people do what I want them to do.
- I do not let others join my group of friends.
- I try to make others afraid of me.
- I say things to hurt people's feelings.

Externalizing

Defined as: being verbally or physically aggressive, failing to control temper, and arguing

Sample statements from assessment:

- I often do things without thinking
- I hurt people when I am angry.
- I talk back to adults.
- I break the rules.

Hyperactivity/Inattention

Defined as: moving about excessively, having impulsive reactions, and becoming easily distracted

Sample statements from assessment:

- I find it's hard to focus on what I am doing.
- I have temper tantrums.
- I find it hard to sit still.
- I waste a lot of time.

Internalizing

Defined as: feeling anxious, sad, and lonely; exhibiting poor self-esteem

Sample statements from assessment:

- I'm afraid of a lot of things.
- I think bad things will happen to me.
- I can't sleep well at night.
- I think no one cares about me.

Autism Spectrum (ONLY ON PARENT FORMS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 8)

Defined as: interacting poorly, not taking part in conversations, or not making eye contact; making odd gestures, becoming upset at changes in routine or having non-functional routines

Sample statements from assessment:

- Makes eye contact when talking.
- Repeats the same things over and over.
- Becomes upset when routines change.
- Interacts well with other children.

PART 4 - THE PRE-ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The pre-assessment results represent a general mapping of each Freedom Schools site broken down by sub-domain and age group. There are no right or wrong answers and all of the sites fell within the average scoring range for children across the United States with one exception. The pre-assessment identified empathy, defined as showing concern and respect for others' feelings and viewpoints, as an area of relative weakness for scholars ages 13 to 18 years. The provided diagrams help identify how various sites compare to the overall average of all scholars by social skills within age groups. Additionally, after the pre-assessment, each site was given an individual breakdown of how their scholars scored on the SSIS. The individual data was provided to aid the interns and site leaders in identifying potential strengths and weaknesses of each of their scholars. The handout each site leader was given can be found as Attachment: HANDOUT TO SITE COORDINATORS.

Throughout the SSIS results it is important to note that the SSIS rating system is a complex, multi-tiered analysis that, when used to its fullest, draws upon multiple observations from the students, parents and teachers. The Freedom Schools scholars (or parents) have only been assessed on one strand of the rating system, which is highly contingent on the level of trust they had with answering such personal questions and the emotional state of the scholar (or parent) when taking the assessment. **The results are not to be taken as concrete evidence of behavior patterns. Rather, the results should be used as a map of possible areas of strengths or weaknesses.**

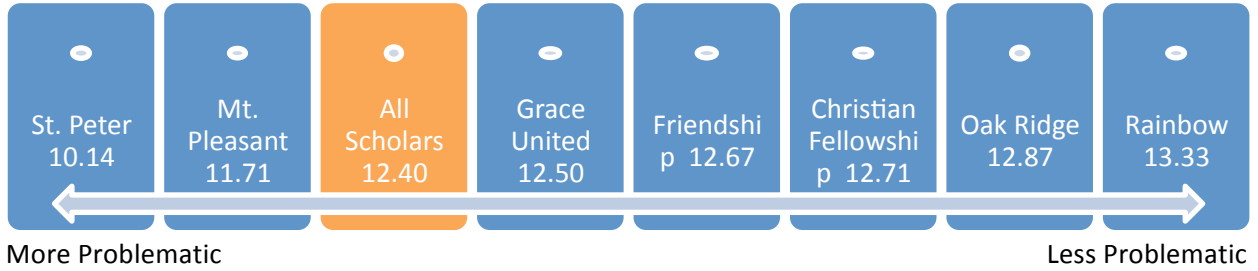
Interpreting Results

In the diagrams, the average scores for each site are identified and broken down by age group. The average range of scores for children across the United States is provided in the header of each graph. Average U.S. scores are provided above each graph to identify how close to the cut-off of “below average” or “above average” each site scored. On each diagram, the orange highlighted block is the average for all scholars in the identified age group, by sub-domain. Each sites’ average was then placed on a continuum of how their scholars scored compared to the average of all of the Kansas City Freedom Schools Scholars. Sites placed on the left side of the orange highlighted block scored below the average of all scholars. Sites placed on the right of the orange highlighted block scored above (or equal to in some cases) the average of all scholars. Keep in mind, **lower** scores in the “social skills” sub-domains indicate areas of relative weakness, while **higher** scores in the “problem behavior” sub-domains indicate areas of relative weakness.

COMMUNICATION

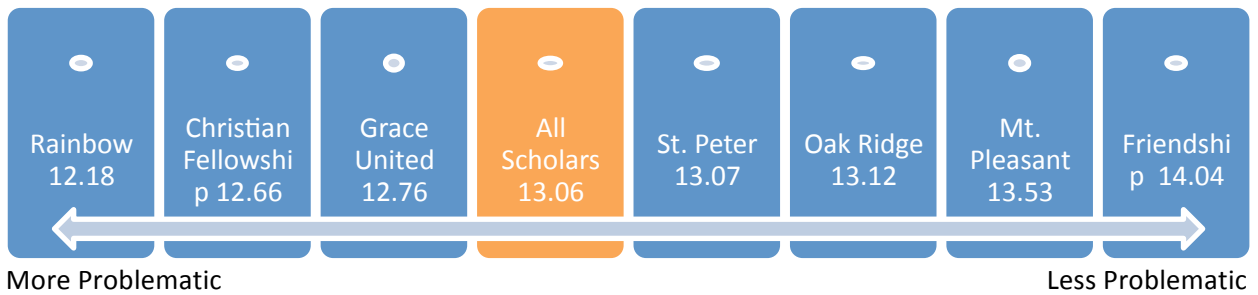
Communication – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 10-17



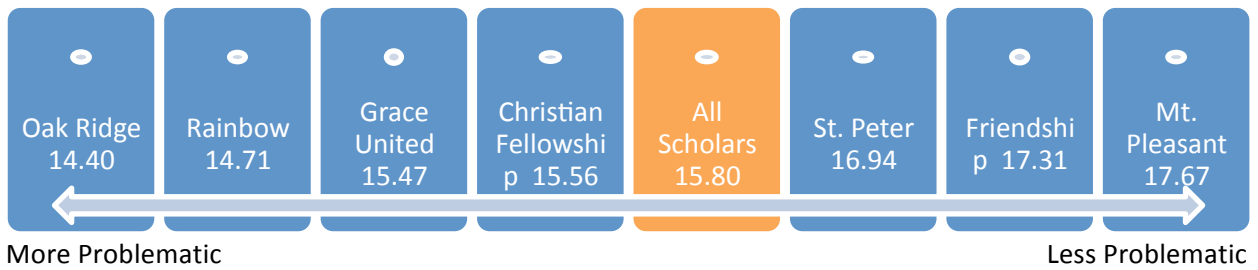
Communication – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 11-17



Communication – Under 8

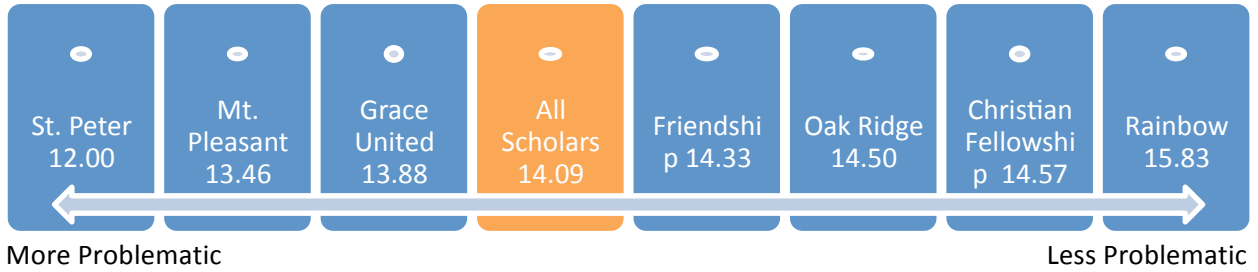
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 13-19



COOPERATION

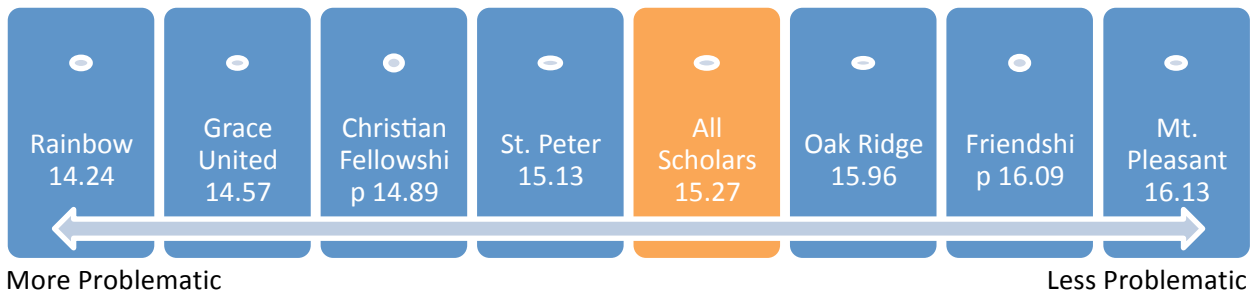
Cooperation – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 11-19



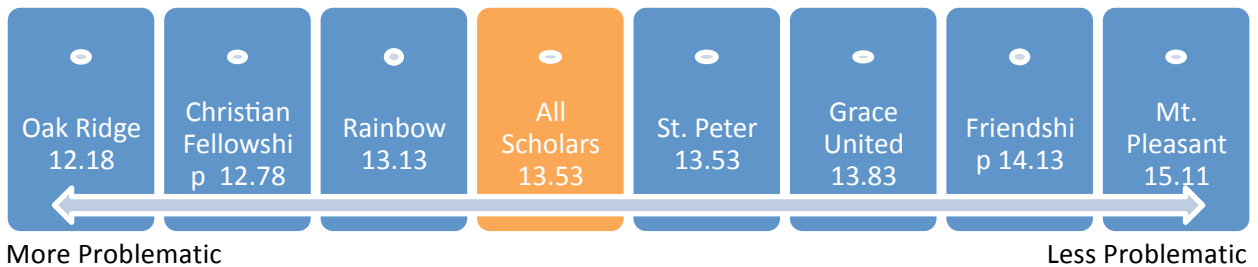
Cooperation – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 13-20



Cooperation – Under 8

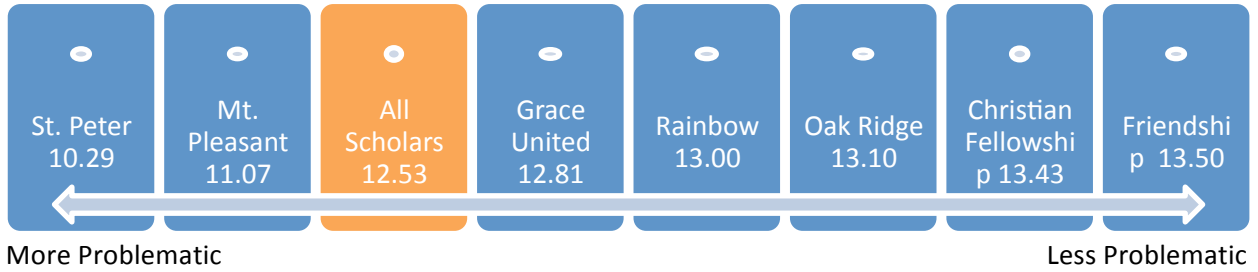
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 10-16



ASSERTION

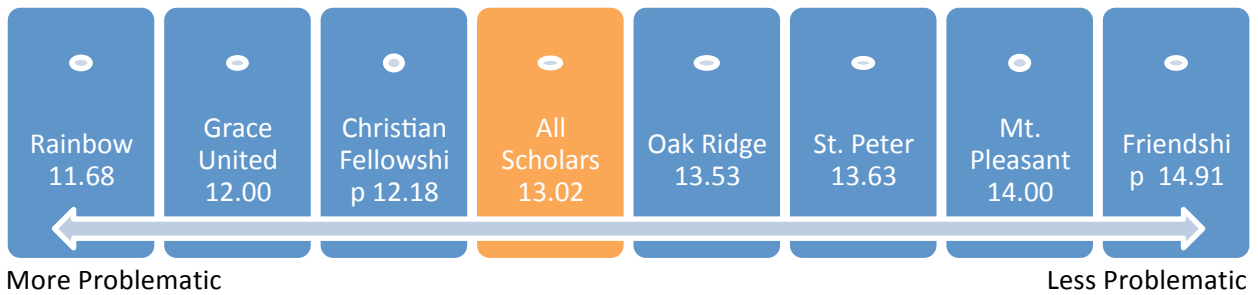
Assertion – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 10-17



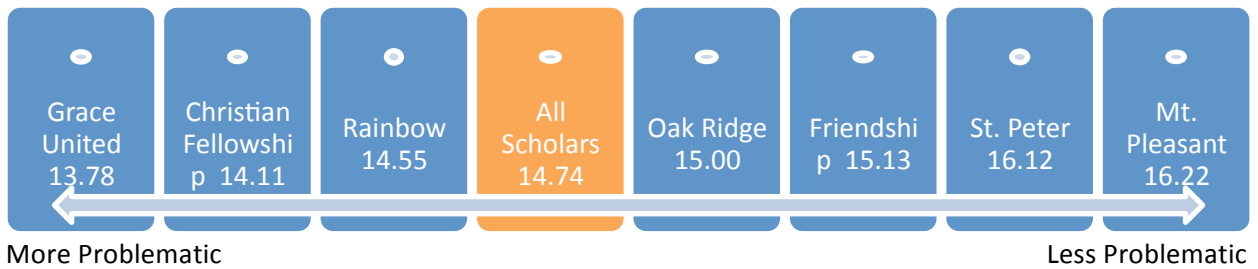
Assertion – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 10-18



Assertion – Under 8

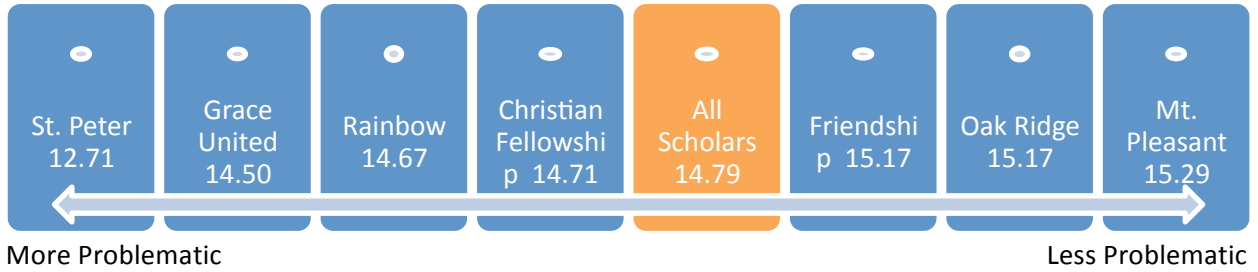
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 12-18



RESPONSIBILITY

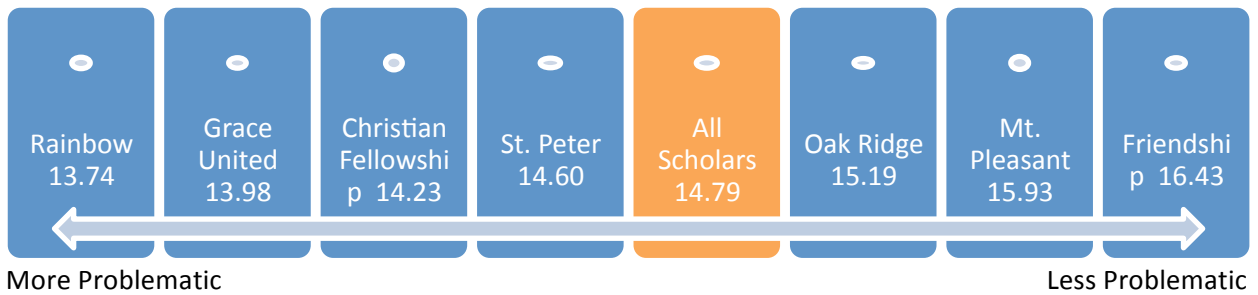
Responsibility – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 11-18



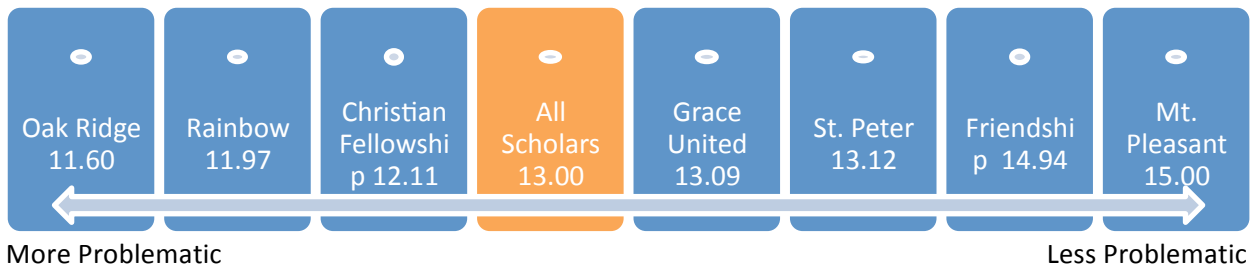
Responsibility – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 12-19



Responsibility – Under 8

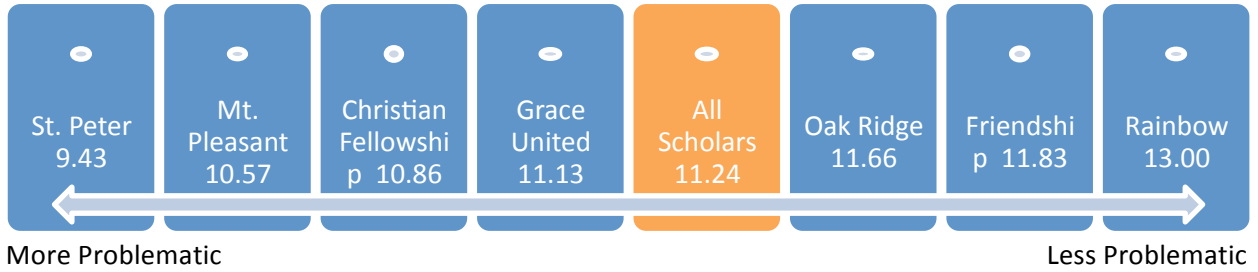
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 10-16



EMPATHY

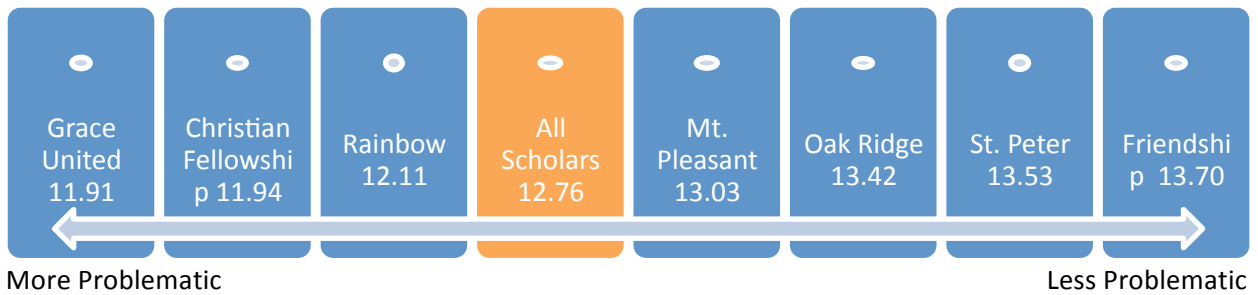
Empathy – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 11-18



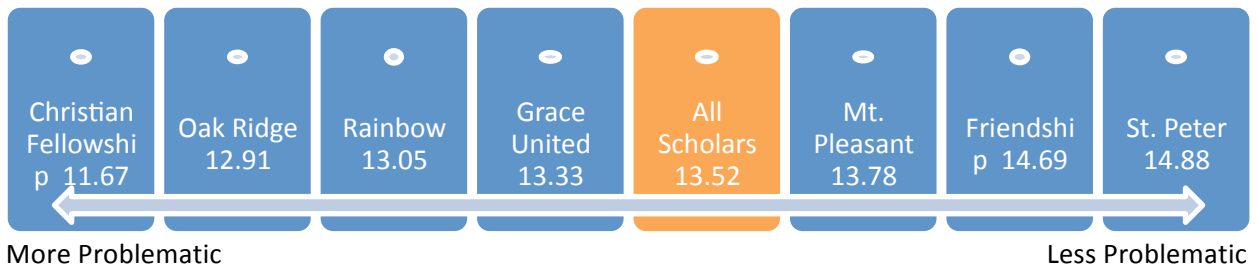
Empathy – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 10-17



Empathy – Under 8

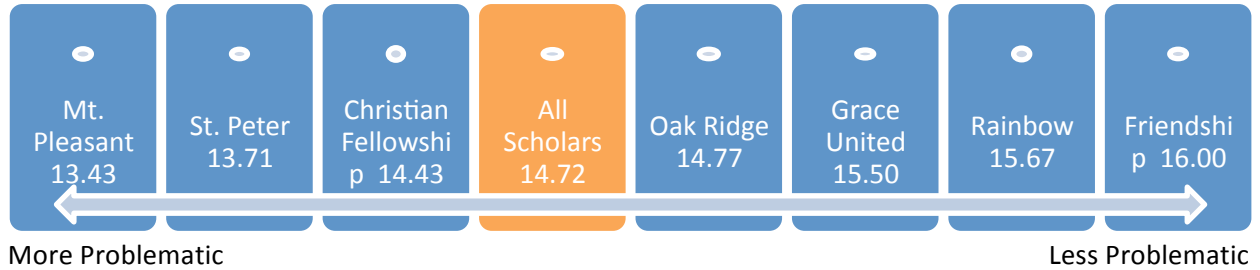
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 10-17



ENGAGEMENT

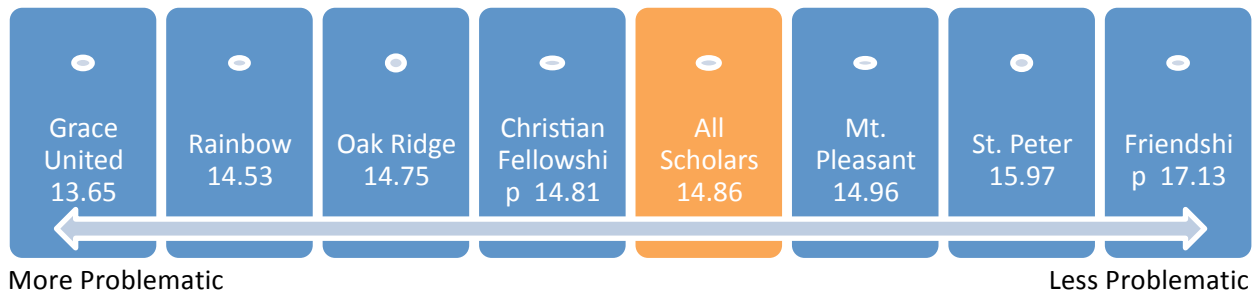
Engagement – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 11-18



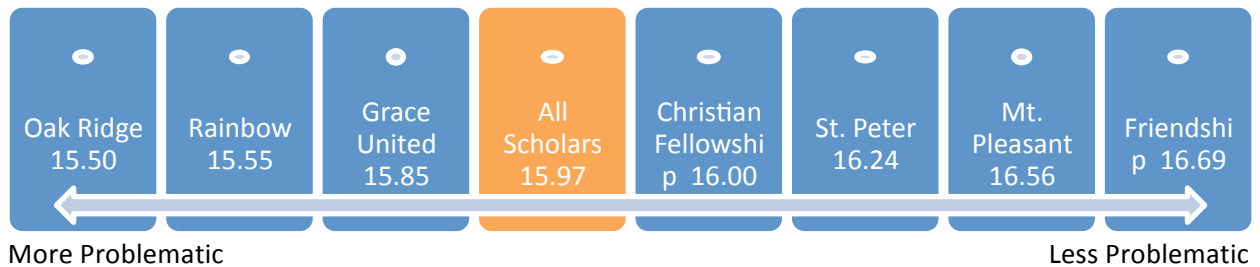
Engagement – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 12-19



Engagement – Under 8

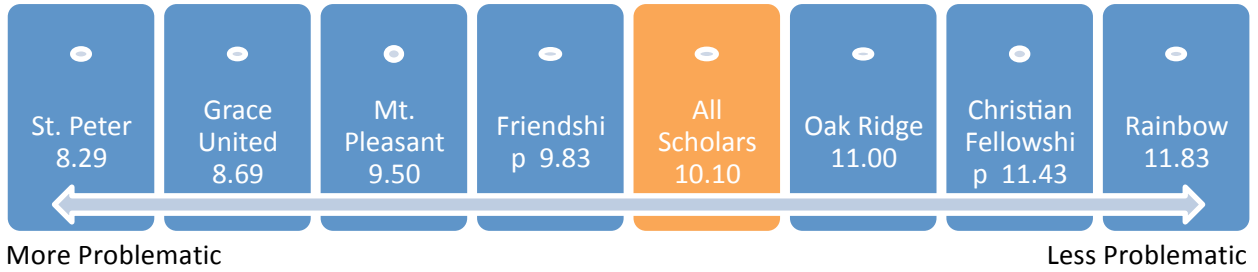
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 12-19



SELF CONTROL

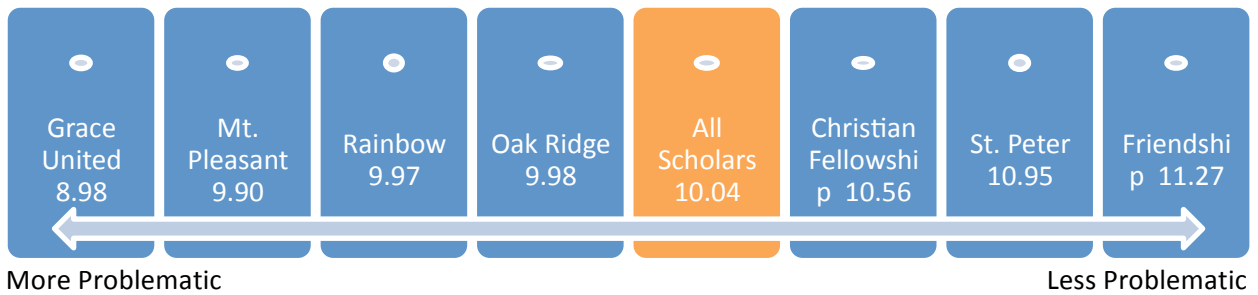
Self Control – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 7-14



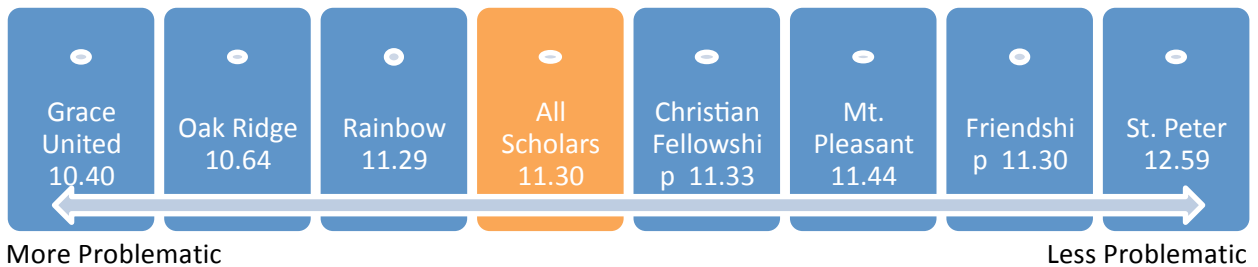
Self Control – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 7-15



Self Control – Under 8

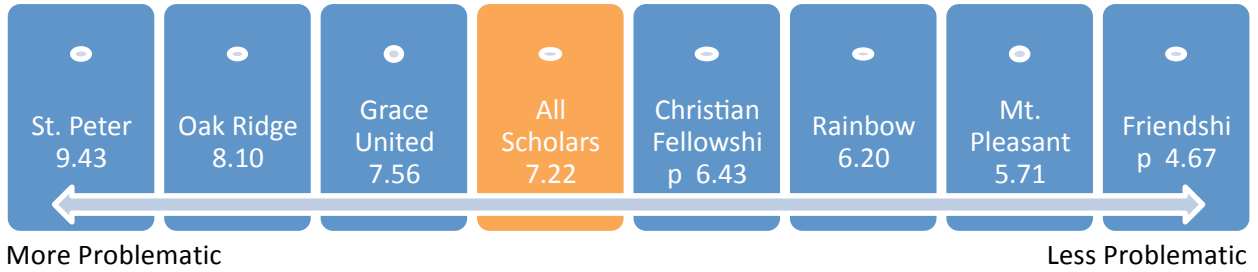
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 8-16



EXTERNALIZING

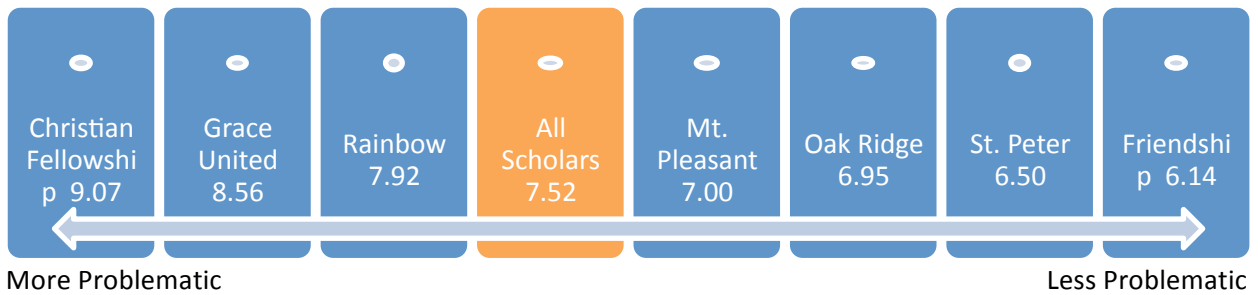
Externalizing – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 1-14



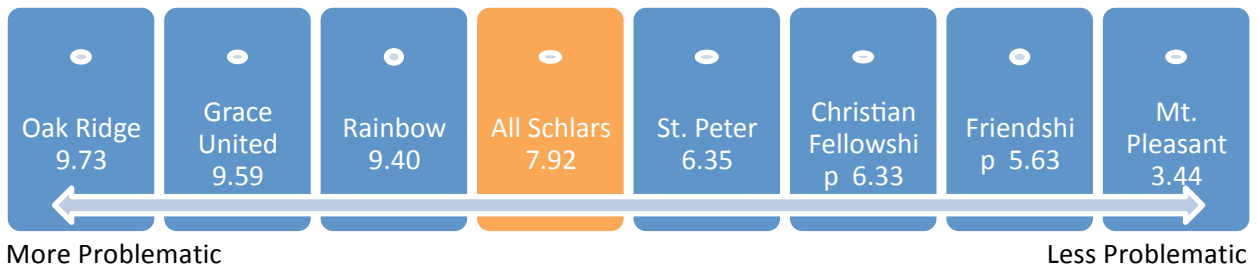
Externalizing – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 1-13



Externalizing – Under 8

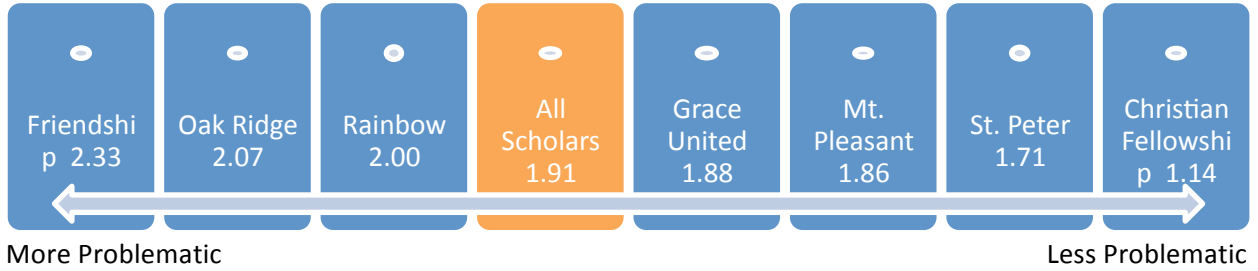
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 1-12



BULLYING

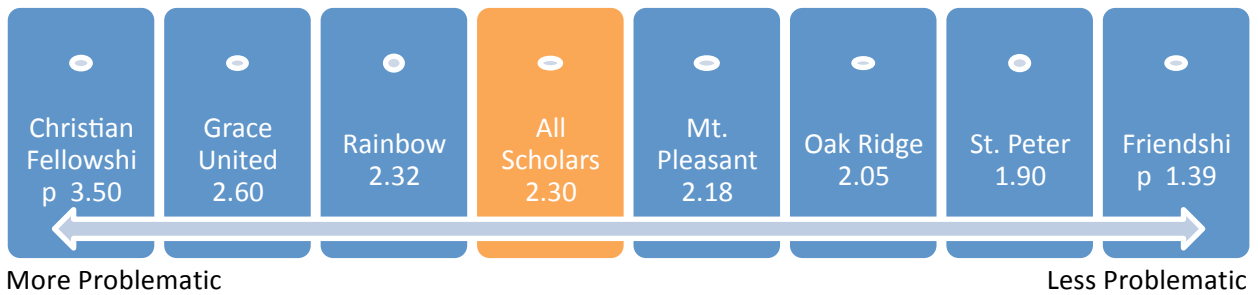
Bullying – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 0-5



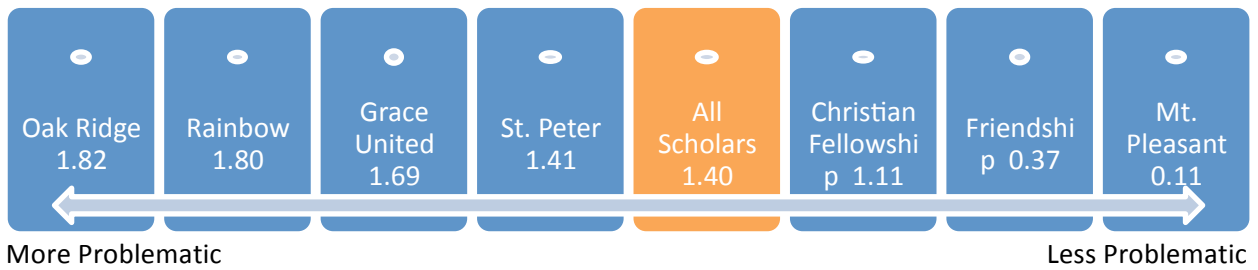
Bullying – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 0-5



Bullying – Under 8

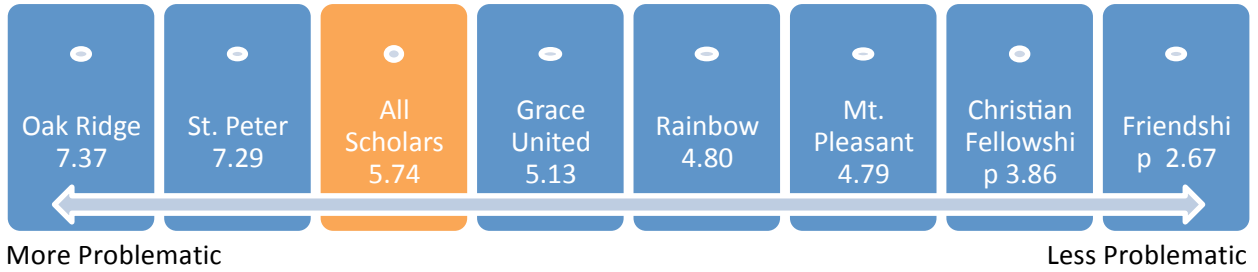
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 0-3



HYPERACTIVITY

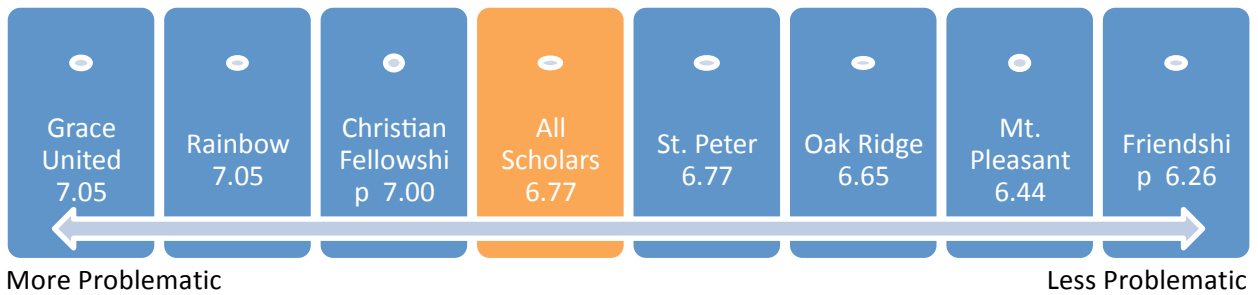
Hyperactivity – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 1-11



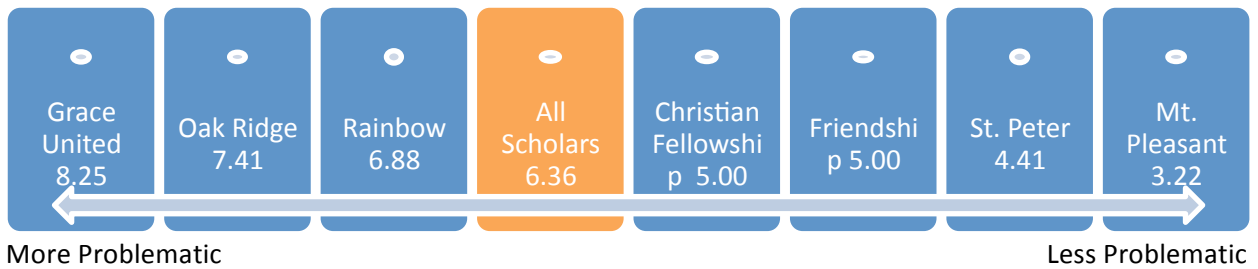
Hyperactivity – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 2-11



Hyperactivity – Under 8

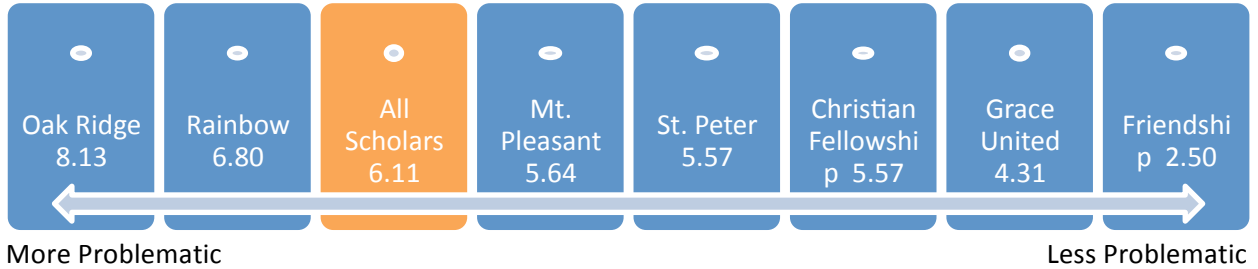
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 1-9



INTERNALIZING

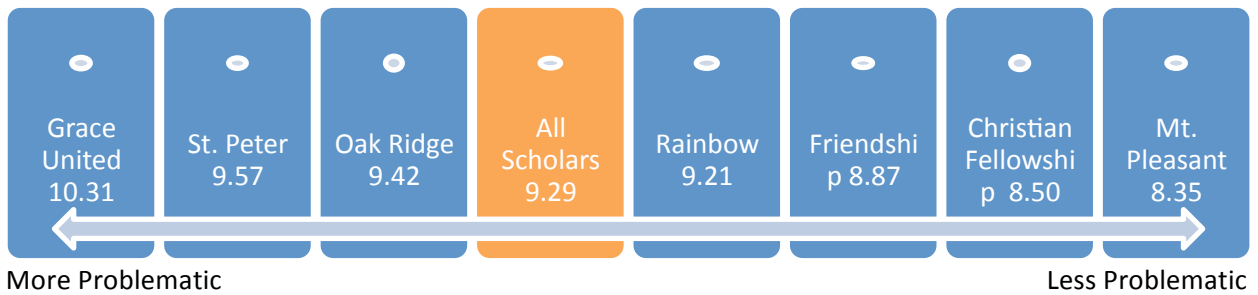
Internalizing – Ages 13-18

Average Score for U.S. 13-18 year olds: 1-13



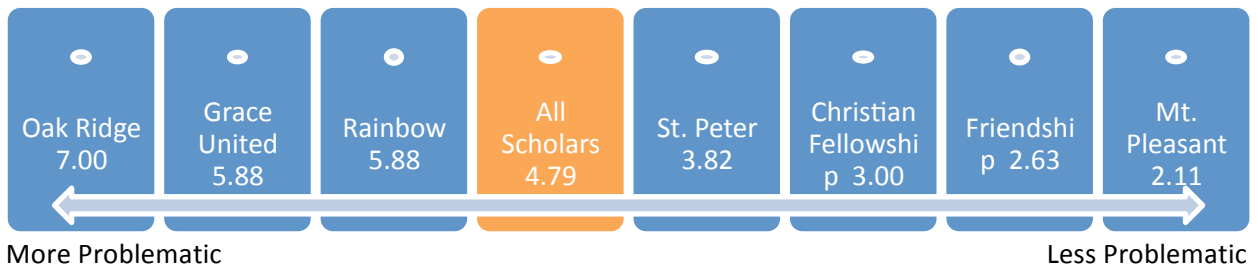
Internalizing – Ages 8-12

Average Score for U.S. 8-12 year olds: 3-15



Internalizing – Under 8

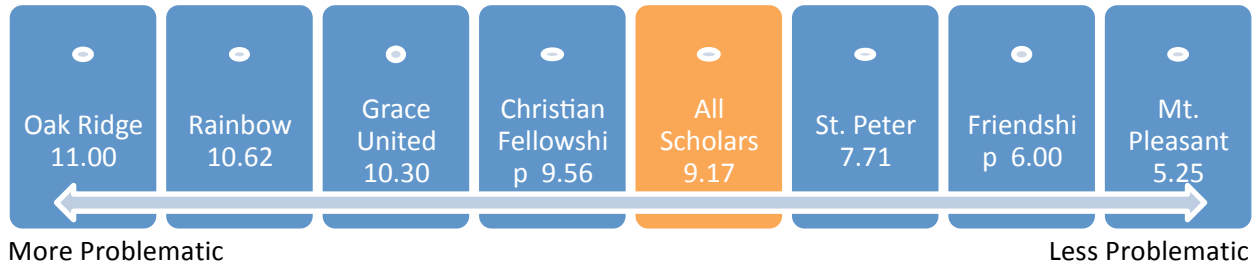
Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 1-9



AUTISM

Autism Spectrum – Under 8

Average Score for U.S. under 8 years old: 3-14



PART 5 - THE POST-ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Kansas City Freedom Schools' scholars were given the SSIS post-assessment at the end of the six-week program in order to assess the impact KCFSI had on their scholars' social skills and problem behaviors. The difference between each child's pre-assessment and post-assessment scores by sub-domain was calculated and then checked for a significant gain or loss through a t-test. The t-test used for this analysis checked whether the gain had at least a 90% probability of being significantly different than zero. For the individual sites, only results found to be significant are reported and all other sub-domains should be assumed to have no change from the initial assessment.

It is important to realize the limitations of this analysis. In an ideal situation, all scholars who took the pre-assessment would have also taken the post-assessment. In this case the number of scholars who took the post-assessment was very small compared to the number of scholars given the pre-assessment. For 13 to 18 year olds the number surveyed dropped from 85 to 57 scholars. For 8 to 12 year olds, the number of assessed kids dropped from 270 scholars to 209 scholars. The greatest affected group was children under 8 years old who needed their parents to fill out and return the post-assessment. This group dropped from 129 scholars to 4 scholars. Thus, the under 8 analysis has been dropped from the final results.

In the post-assessment results section we do not present the analysis by Freedom Schools site because many of the sub-domains did not significantly change over the six week program. Only the statistically significant results are provided.

Results By Sites

A t-test was run for each site individually to find the scholars with significant changes throughout the program. The following results are the actual gains or losses by scholars and were identified as statistically significant at these sites. Please note, while positive numbers show a positive change for

social skills, positive numbers for the problem behaviors indicate the problem behavior was reported to worsen over the six-week program at that site.

Site: Friendship			
Social Skill	Assertion	1.25*	↑
Problem Behavior	Bullying	1.3*	↑
Site: Grace			
Social Skill	Communication	-0.72*	↓
Problem Behavior	Internalizing	-1.17*	↓
Site: Mt. Pleasant			
Social Skill	Assertion	0.882*	↑
Site: Oak Ridge			
Problem Behavior	Bullying	0.508*	↑
Problem Behavior	Internalizing	-0.844*	↓
Site: Rainbow			
Problem Behavior	Internalizing	-1.814*	↓

Additionally, a multivariate regression model on the change in each of the sub-domains was run. The regression analysis allows for individual effects from many variables to be assessed, while taking into consideration the effect of possible interactions between variables. For example, this model allows for the individual analysis of each site, while keeping the scholars' background variables such as gender, grade, age group and whether the child had ever attended Freedom Schools before, constant. Thus, discovering a positive, statistically significant change in one of the sub-domains for a particular site can more accurately be attributed to the performance of the site.

The only statistically significant results for the regression analysis were found at the Christian Fellowship site. Scholars attending Christian Fellowship had greater positive gains in both Communication and Responsibility for their scholars compared to any other site despite differences in scholars' background variables.

Overall Results for KCFSI Scholars

In addition to testing each individual site, scholars were tested as a whole for significant changes in their social skills and problem behaviors. The multivariate regression model found, holding all other variables constant, for each additional year of school the child had completed, the scholar's communication score went up by roughly 41%. This held constant regardless of the site attended. Also, females had a positive and statistically significant increase in the category of Engagement.

The t-test results used to assess changes in each sub-domain are provided in Table 1, however, only the scores marked with an asterisk are statistically significant. The more asterisks the sub-domain has, the stronger the results are. In particular, one asterisk means the results have at least a 90% probability of being significant, two asterisks means the results have at least a 95% probability of being significant and three asterisks means the results have at least a 99% probability of being significant. For example, when assessing all scholars in the sub-domain of Assertion, there is a 95% probability that there was a positive

change in the scholars over the six-week program. When looking at the sub-domain of Internalizing, there is even stronger evidence the scholars decreased the amount of internalizing they reported.

Table 1. All KCFSI Scholars

Social Skills							
Communication	Cooperation	Assertion	Responsibility	Empathy	Engagement	Self Control	Overall Social Skills
-0.0674	-0.168	0.456**	0.205	-0.22	-0.018	-0.074	0.030
Problem Behaviors							
Externalizing	Bullying	Hyperactivity	Internalizing				Overall Problem Behaviors
0.563*	0.402***	-0.369	-0.974***				-0.427

In Tables 2 and 3 the scholars were also divided by the two age groups: 13 to 18 years old, and 8 to 12 years old, respectively. Again, only the sub-domains marked with asterisks should be considered to have undergone a change throughout the Freedom Schools six-week program and more asterisks indicate stronger evidence for the result.

In general, the older scholars most significantly increased their overall social skills and their level of Assertion throughout the program. The change in the overall Social Skills Scale for the older scholars is the largest change found throughout all of the analyses at an average increase of 4.34 points and is highly significant. An appropriate interpretation is that, for children between the ages of 13 to 18, enrolled in a Kansas City Freedom Schools, there was a significant and positive increase in their social skills.

Table 2. All KCFSI Scholars, Ages 13-18

Social Skills							
Communication	Cooperation	Assertion	Responsibility	Empathy	Engagement	Self Control	Overall Social Skills
0.564*	0.723*	1.309***	0.383	0.489	0.266	0.606	4.340***
Problem Behaviors							
Externalizing	Bullying	Hyperactivity	Internalizing				Overall Problem Behaviors
0.564	0.479**	-0.202	-0.319				0.202

The younger scholars most significantly decreased their level of Internalizing, but increased their reports regarding bullying others. Bullying is defined as forcing others to do something, hurting people physically or emotionally, and not letting others join in an activity. This measure was only slightly higher, but still a statistically significant result. Internalizing, defined as feeling anxious, sad, lonely, and exhibiting poor self-esteem, was the highest reported problem behavior in the pre-assessment for

scholars ages 8 to 12. The post-assessments show a statistically significant decrease in this type of negative behavior for scholars in this age group by a much larger margin than compared to other categories. The decrease in internalizing is one of the larger changes in any of the KCFSI groups.

Table 3. All KCFSI Scholars, Ages 8-12

Social Skills							
Communication	Cooperation	Assertion	Responsibility	Empathy	Engagement	Self Control	Overall Social Skills
-0.212	-0.374	0.261	0.164	-0.384	-0.083	-0.232	-0.973
Problem Behaviors							
Externalizing	Bullying	Hyperactivity	Internalizing				Overall Problem Behaviors
0.563	0.385**	-0.407	-1.124***				-0.571

PART 6 - CONCLUSION

For the most part, scholars who participated in the 2011 Kansas City Freedom Schools Initiative experienced positive social skill changes throughout their time in the six-week program. Statistical tests run on all scholars showed a decrease in internalizing behavior, defined as feeling anxious, sad, lonely, and exhibiting poor self-esteem. The decrease was most pronounced for the younger scholars ages 8 to 12. The older scholars, ages 13 to 18, increased their level of assertion, defined as initiating behaviors such as asking others for information, introducing oneself, and responding to the actions of others. Additionally, older scholars showed an overall increase in their total social skills scale by a large and statistically significant margin.

Interestingly, each analysis of the scholars shows evidence of an increase in bullying behavior. One possible explanation for the increase might be a combination of a lack of trust during the pre-assessment and the negative connotations children learn in school toward bullying behavior. If the tested scholars did not trust the pre-assessment and, consequently, chose to hide perceived incriminating behavior, then scholars being more honest in the post-assessment would seem to be engaging in more bullying behaviors.

The pre-assessment placed all scholars from every age group in every site within the average scoring range for children across the United States with one exception. The pre-assessment identified empathy, defined as showing concern and respect for others’ feelings and viewpoints, as an area of relative weakness, particularly for scholars ages 13 to 18. In the final analysis, there was no evidence of change in this weakness. Empathy might be an area for emphasis in future Freedom Schools programs based on this evidence.

The final analysis pointed to one site of Kansas City Freedom Schools with a particular strength in increasing their scholars’ communication and responsibility. A qualitative assessment of the difference in practices at the site could prove beneficial for achieving more homogenous increases across all

Freedom Schools sites in the Kansas City area. Another option for increasing social skills in Freedom Schools' scholars could be to integrate the pre-assessment results into a curriculum tailored to addressing each tested SSIS behavior category. After receiving the initial results, sites would then be able to work with the scholars in their specific areas of relative weakness or help foster areas of relative strength.

In order to achieve faster pre-assessment results, communication between the individual sites and the KC-AERC representative should be increased. Specifically, a list of scholars, with their background information already included, provided before the start of the program would speed data entry, increase data accuracy, and increase the efficiency of giving the SSIS assessment at each site. Also, consent forms for KC-AERC could be combined with the current consent forms KCFSI already has parents sign. Documented consent before the start of the program would allow for a quicker turnaround of the pre-assessment results. Finally, a more systematic approach to collecting parent surveys of scholars ages 8 and under needs to be devised. It is suggested that the KC-AERC representative administer the surveys during the first and last parent meetings if possible.

Overall, the SSIS assessments have provided valuable information in analyzing the changes in social skills of Kansas City Freedom Schools' scholars. The assessments were able to provide an initial benchmark of how the scholars entered the program and then measured areas of growth for groups of scholars. One of the most profound results was the increase in overall social skills for youths aged 13-18 participating in the program. Another important change to be noted was the decrease in internalizing behavior displayed by children ages 8-12 years old in the KCFSI. Although bullying seemed to increase in self-reporting, the change may have occurred from an increase in trust with the Freedom Schools administration and was not as large a result as the positive changes that simultaneously occurred. Continued analysis via the SSIS, coupled with the upcoming academic analysis, will build evidence of the positive change KCFSI is making in inner-city youth over the six-week program.

ATTACHMENT: HANDOUT TO SITE COORDINATORS

Interpreting Your Scholars' SSIS Results

Recently your scholars were administered the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) assessment by Sarah Frazelle, Assistant Director of the Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium (KC-AERC). This following brief is to be used as a guide to interpreting your scholars' scores and using the feedback as a tool to help your scholars build upon their areas of strengths and weaknesses in social skills over the remaining weeks of Freedom Schools.

Why Test Social Skills?

As stated by the SSIS Rating Scales Manual written by Dr. Frank Gresham and Dr. Stephan Elliot:

Social skills are critical to successful functioning in life. As children age, they interact with an increasing number of people – family members, peers, teachers, and others – in varied settings and situations. Some children skillfully navigate these social encounters effortlessly, while others lack the ability or motivation to use positive social behaviors when interacting with others. Well developed social skills contribute to academic success and the learning environment for everyone. Students with these skills tend to pay better attention to speakers, work more cooperatively with others, ask for help when needed, and behave more responsibly. Conversely, social skills deficits can lead to poor academic outcomes and may result in later social adjustment problems or serious psychopathology.

Importantly, social skills can be developed and improved. Without intervention, social skills deficits usually persist. Thus, identifying and intervening with students with social skills deficits is important for educators, psychologists, and others who work with children.

A list of scholarly works is available upon request if further investigation into the link between social skills and student outcomes is desired.

Social Skills

Social skills represent learned behaviors that promote positive interactions while simultaneously discouraging negative interactions when applied to appropriate social situations. Your scholars were assessed in common social skills behaviors in seven sub-domains. Below are how each sub-domain is defined and examples of the types of statements the children (and parents regarding their children for children under 8 years old) were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 3. Higher ratings indicate areas of strengths while lower ratings indicate areas of weakness.

Communication

Defined as: taking turns and making eye contact during a conversation, using appropriate tone of voice and gestures, and being polite by saying "thank you" and "please"

Sample statements from assessment:

- I say "please" when I ask for things.
- I take turns when I talk with others.
- I look at people when I talk to them.
- I smile or wave at people when I see them.

Cooperation

Defined as: helping others, sharing materials, and complying with rules and directions

Sample statements from assessment:

- I pay attention when others present their ideas.
- I do what the teacher asks me to do.
- I do my work without bothering others.
- I work well with my classmates.

Assertion

Defined as: initiating behaviors, such as asking others for information, introducing oneself, and responding to the actions of others

Sample statements from assessment:

- I ask for information when I need it.
- I stand up for others when they are not treated well.
- I show others how I feel.
- I tell others when I'm not treated well.

Responsibility

Defined as: showing regard for property or work and demonstrating the ability to communicate with adults

Sample statements from assessment:

- I'm careful when I use things that aren't mine.
- I keep my promises.
- I do the right thing without being told.
- I tell people when I have made a mistake.

Empathy

Defined as: showing concern and respect for others' feelings and viewpoints

Sample statements from assessment:

- I try to forgive others when they say "sorry."
- I try to make others feel better.
- I help my friends when they are having a problem.
- I am nice to others when they are feeling bad.

Engagement

Defined as: joining activities in progress and inviting others to join, initiating conversations, making friends, and interacting well with others

Sample statements from assessment:

- I make friends easily.
- I ask others to do things with me.
- I meet and greet new people on my own.
- I ask to join others when they are doing things I like.

Self-Control

Defined as: responding appropriately in conflict (e.g., disagreeing, teasing) and non-conflict situations (taking turns and compromising)

Sample statements from assessment:

- I stay calm when I am teased.
- I try to find a good way to end a disagreement.
- I stay calm when dealing with problems.
- I stay calm when I disagree with others.

Problem Behaviors

Problem behaviors interfere with either the acquisition or performance of socially skilled behaviors. Your scholars were assessed in common problem behaviors in four sub-domains (five for parents assessing their children under 8). Below are how each sub-domain is defined and examples of the types of statements the children (and parents regarding their children for children under 8 years old) were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 3. Higher ratings indicate areas of weakness while lower ratings indicate areas of little to no issue for the child.

Externalizing

Defined as: being verbally or physically aggressive, failing to control temper, and arguing

Sample statements from assessment:

- I often do things without thinking
- I hurt people when I am angry.
- I talk back to adults.
- I break the rules.

Bullying

Defined as: forcing others to do something, hurting people physically or emotionally, and not letting others join an activity

Sample statements from assessment:

- I make people do what I want them to do.
- I do not let others join my group of friends.
- I try to make others afraid of me.
- I say things to hurt people's feelings.

Hyperactivity/Inattention

Defined as: moving about excessively, having impulsive reactions, and becoming easily distracted

Sample statements from assessment:

- I find it's hard to focus on what I am doing.
- I have temper tantrums.
- I find it hard to sit still.
- I waste a lot of time.

Internalizing

Defined as: feeling anxious, sad, and lonely; exhibiting poor self-esteem

Sample statements from assessment:

- I'm afraid of a lot of things.
- I think bad things will happen to me.
- I can't sleep well at night.
- I think no one cares about me.

Autism Spectrum (ONLY ON PARENT FORMS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 8)

Defined as: interacting poorly, not taking part in conversations, or not making eye contact; making odd gestures, becoming upset at changes in routine or having non-functional routines.

Sample statements from assessment:

- Makes eye contact when talking.
- Repeats the same things over and over.
- Becomes upset when routines change.
- Interacts well with other children.

What Can I Do With These Results?

The SSIS assessments were given to Freedom Schools' scholars mainly as a way to measure changes in the attitudes of the children on each sub-domain over the course of the Freedom Schools program. The assessment will be given again the last week of Freedom Schools and each child's score will be examined for differences from their initial assessment. This type of assessment has been used because Freedom Schools stresses equal importance of pro-social behavior along with the purely academic reading program.

In the process of choosing the SSIS assessment, it was realized that important information could be given on each individual child toward the beginning of the program to help identify and reach out to children who were perhaps struggling in certain social skills. Likewise, positive reinforcement could be given to children displaying strengths in their social skills.

However, the SSIS rating system is a complex, multi-tiered analysis that, when used to its fullest, draws upon multiple observations from the students, parents and teachers. Your scholars (or parents) have only been assessed on one strand of the rating system, which is highly contingent on the level of trust they had with answering such personal questions and the mood of the scholar (or parent) when taking the assessment. **The results are not to be taken as concrete evidence of behavior patterns. Rather, the results should be used more as a guide or warning system of POSSIBLE areas of strengths or weaknesses.** In particular, if a scholar scored extremely high, or low, in more than one category, this could indicate an overstatement of their strengths if a lack of trust was perceived, or an overstatement of their weaknesses if they were tired or feeling poorly the day they took the assessment.

Interpreting Results

On your results sheets you will find the scores for each scholar who took the assessment, broken down by age groups on separate Excel sheets. An average for each age group at your site, by sub-domain, is provided for you. On the individual scores:

- Pink highlighting indicates areas of weakness
- Green highlighting indicates areas of strength.
- "INVALID" indicates a scholar skipped more than one question in the sub-domain.

The SSIS assessment also has a built in validity check to attempt to identify the scholars (or parents) who answered randomly or inconsistently. The results from the validity checks are given in the "Warning" category.

- Yellow implies some caution should be taken in interpreting the results.
- Burgundy implies extreme caution should be taken in interpreting the results.

If you have any other questions or concerns regarding understanding the assessments or interpreting the results, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Frazelle at sfrazelle@kcaerc.org.



Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium

Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium
For more information about KC-AERC or this report, email:
Email: lknight@kcaerc.org
www.kcaerc.org/