

# USING SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE UNDERSERVED LEARNERS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

## LEARNING STORY



**Location:**  
South Texas



**Students:**  
1,768



**Demographics:**  
98% Hispanic  
84% Economically Disadvantaged  
34% Limited English  
6% Migrant

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As part of a long-standing collaboration with Region One Education Service Center in South Texas, ACT researchers investigated growth in social and emotional (SE) skills in a cohort of largely Hispanic, high-poverty students who participated in GEAR UP. GEAR UP is a discretionary federal grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in college. Specifically, Region One GEAR UP offered services designed to increase the college readiness of students over six academic years, starting in grade 7 and continuing through grade 12. Students in this study took ACT's first-generation SE skills assessments[1].

Students' scores from several of that assessments' scales and the Academic Success Index were examined longitudinally from grades 7-12. Further, Region One students were compared to a national sample of examinees of that same assessment.

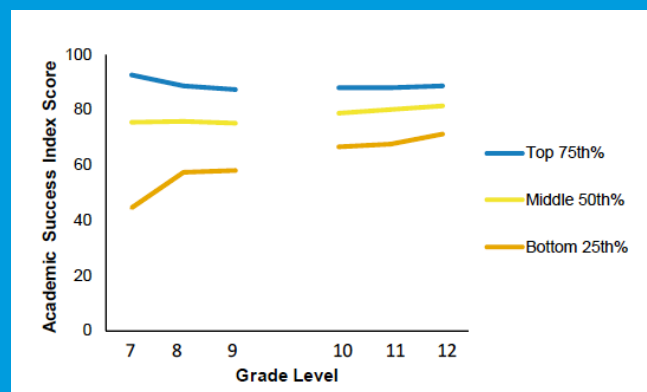
The findings from this study demonstrate the potential benefits that interventions can have for enhancing SE skills and reinforcing behavioral drivers of college readiness (e.g., higher levels of sustained effort that are predictors of college performance and persistence), particularly for learners from underserved populations. Based on these results, Region One is continuing their partnership with ACT SEL solutions to advance positive student outcomes.

[1] ACT Engage® Grades 6-9 and/or ACT Engage® Grades 10-12 assessments

## OUTCOMES

- Students showed significant growth in SE skills from grades 7-9 to grade 12, compared to the national sample
- Students who scored in the bottom 25% of the index in grade 7 improved substantially over time, thus reducing the gap in SE skills compared to those who scored in the upper three quartiles of the index.
- Students in the middle and top performance maintained or showed a moderate increase from grade 7-12.

Academic Success Index Mean Score Trends:



Note. The discontinuity from grade 9 to 10 represents the transition in assessments from Grades 6-9 to Grades 10-12.