

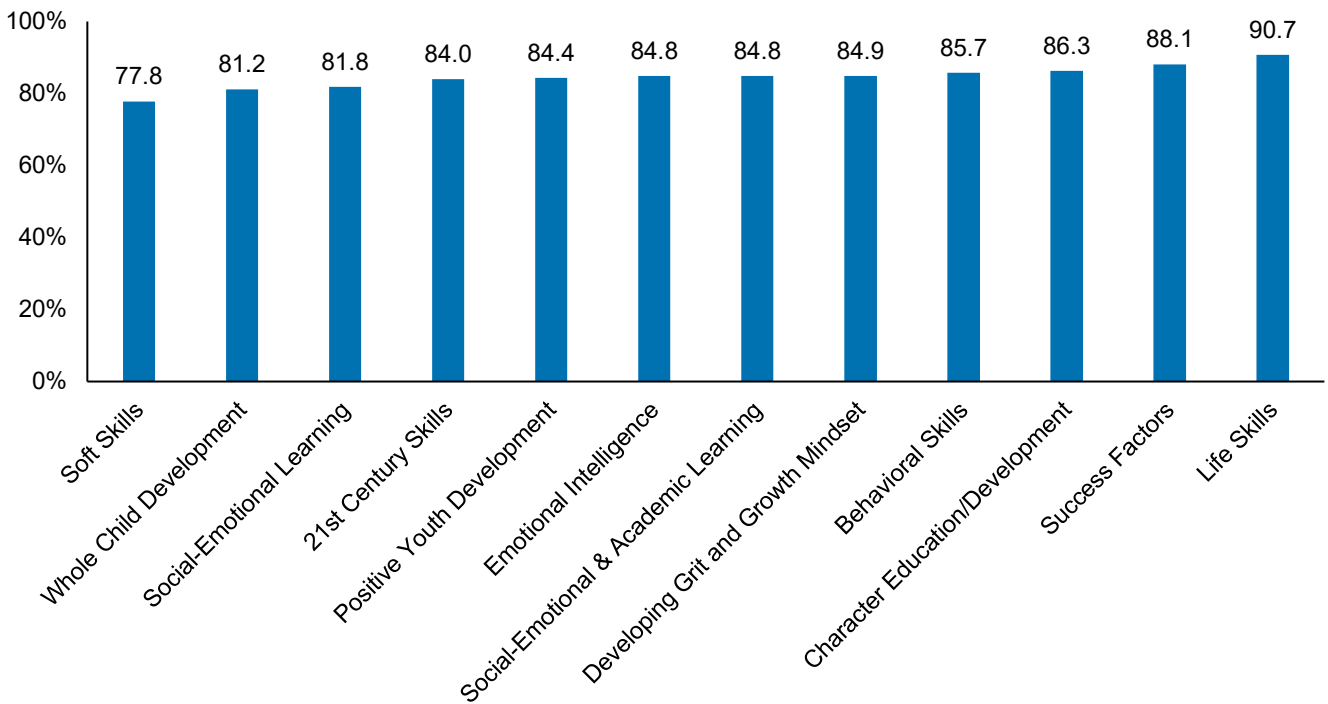
Parent and Caregiver Support for Social-Emotional Learning Programs

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Social and emotional (SE) skills are interpersonal, self-regulatory, and task-related behaviors that are important for adaption to and successful performance in educational and workplace settings (Casillas et al., 2015). These skills are related to important outcomes such as academic achievement and job satisfaction (e.g., Judge et al., 2002; Mammadov, 2022; Poropat, 2009). Additionally, students can improve these skills through social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions: programming designed to teach SE skill development to students in school settings (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2018). Despite research showing the benefits of SE skills and SEL programming, recent research with parents¹ suggests that the term "social-emotional learning"² is relatively unpopular (Tyner, 2021). This conclusion was based on the study having asked parents to select three school programs in which they would most and least want their child to be enrolled from a list of 12 programs that relate to aspects of their child's development beyond academic skills. There are two main limitations of this previous study. First, because it did not define the terms, the study assumed that the parents' responses were based on a common understanding. We explore this assumption in a recent data byte (Murano et al., in press) by directly examining parents' and caregivers' understanding of these programs. Second, because of this forced-choice format, the overall level of support for each of the programs was unclear. For instance, support for all programs could be relatively low, even if some programs may be considered preferable. In contrast, support could be relatively high for all programs. This data byte explores the overall levels of support for each of these SEL programs.

To examine caregiver support, we surveyed a group of parents and caregivers, asking them to rate their support for the 12 programs examined in the Tyner (2021) study. Parents/caregivers were informed that the survey was voluntary, and no incentives were given. The survey was sent to 25,000 parents/caregivers of ACT test takers following the April 2, 2022, National ACT test administration: 1,383 parents/caregivers began the survey, 1,084 respondents completed at least one block of the survey, and 485 completed the entire survey. We included partial responses in our analyses. Instead of offering a forced-choice format, the survey asked "How supportive are you of each of the following programs being taught in school?" Each of the 12 programs was listed, and parents/caregivers reported their support on a six-point scale (1 = very unsupportive; 6 = very supportive). Figure 1 shows the percentage of parents/caregivers who reported some level of support (somewhat supportive, supportive, or very supportive) for each of the programs. The sample size for these results was 773. As Figure 1 shows, overall support was high for all the programs. Support ranged from 77.8% for Soft Skills to 90.7% for Life Skills, and 84.5% of parents/caregivers reported some level of support across programs. Additionally, 81.8% of parents/caregivers supported the Social-Emotional Learning program.

Figure 1. The Percentage of Parents/Caregivers Who Reported Some Level of Support for Each Program



In addition to examining overall support, we also examined if support differed according to self-reported political affiliation. Individuals were asked to select the political affiliation they most associated with from these four response options: (a) Democrat, (b) Republican, (c) independent, and (d) prefer not to respond. A total of 108 parents/caregivers selected Democrat, 117 selected Republican, 88 selected independent, and 166 preferred not to respond. Table 1 shows the average reported support for each program by political affiliation. In general, support ratings were high for individuals of all political affiliations. Differences in ratings based on political affiliation were statistically significant for three programs: Social-Emotional Learning, Emotional Intelligence, and Social-Emotional and Academic Learning. For these programs, the average support of the Democrats was greater than that of the Republicans. Still, for each of these three programs, support was high across all political affiliations with more than 70% of individuals reporting some level of support for all 12 programs. These results suggest that support for all these programs is high for both Democrats and Republicans. In contrast to the results from the Tyner (2021) study that suggested the term SEL is unpopular, the results from the current study show that parents/caregivers of all political affiliations support SEL and SEL-related programs.

Table 1. Support For Each Program by Political Affiliation

Program	Democrat (%)	Republican (%)	Independent (%)	Prefer not to respond (%)
Soft Skills	73.1	70.1	87.5	78.3
Whole Child Development	82.4	75.2	83.0	83.1
Social-Emotional Learning	88.0	71.8	87.5	79.5
21st Century Skills	81.5	82.1	84.1	83.1
Positive Youth Development	81.5	88.9	79.5	86.1
Emotional Intelligence	85.2	78.6	88.6	84.9
Social-Emotional and Academic Learning	88.0	78.6	86.4	84.3
Developing Grit and Growth Mindset	80.6	83.8	87.5	82.5
Behavioral Skills	84.3	86.3	87.5	85.5
Character Education/Development	84.3	85.5	89.8	88.6
Success Factors	83.3	88.0	89.8	85.5
Life Skills	89.8	90.6	93.2	88.6

Note. Shaded rows denote statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level.

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Notes

¹ When describing the results of Tyner (2021), we use the term “parents” instead of “parents/caregivers” in keeping with the terminology in that report.

² In the current study, we use the term “social-emotional learning” instead of “social and emotional learning” in keeping with the terminology in the Tyner (2021) report.



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