

# Adapted Strong Kids Curriculum for English Language Learners During COVID-19

A Research Brief Adapted for the Center of Equity, Leadership, and Social Justice

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## Why this study?

English language learners (ELLs) in the United States education system face many challenges, managing learning a new language and academic content simultaneously. During the COVID-19 pandemic, data shows that ELLs were disproportionately harmed by the impacts of the pandemic due to preexisting hardships and lack of resources. One way to address achievement gaps for ELLs is through culturally appropriate social/emotional learning (SEL) programs. The purpose of this study was to describe a culturally and linguistically adapted SEL program, Strong Kids, and provide information on the effectiveness of this program on the social/emotional knowledge and well-being of 26 ELL students from 6th to 10th grade.

## What are the research questions?

1. Does a significant difference exist between ELL student's pre- and post-intervention self-ratings of SEL knowledge?
2. Does a significant difference exist between ELL students' pre- and post-intervention self-ratings of internalizing problem symptoms?
3. What are ELL students' perceptions of their experiences in this culturally and linguistically adapted virtual SEL program?
4. What are school counselor trainee interventionists' perceptions of ELL students' experiences in this culturally and linguistically adapted virtual SEL program?

## What are the key findings?

- ELL students learned useful skills, including managing emotions and coping strategies. Helpful coping strategies students reported learning were mindfulness skills like breathing and distancing themselves from the problem.
- The students gave positive responses to the virtual format, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting it gave them a platform to interact with teachers and other students, and additionally allowed them to prepare to go into a fully online school year.
- Interventionists' reports also supported positive outcomes from the study observing that ELL participants learned how to be mindful of their emotions and behaviors and how to apply SEL skills to real life situations.

## Implications of the study?

- Fully online SEL programs can provide social/emotional and mental health supports for students and families in unprecedented situations.
- Collaboration between school counselors and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers is recommended to encourage reciprocal learning and promote the application of concepts across classrooms.
- Future studies could utilize a randomized experimental to determine if other variables might influence participants' experiences and outcomes of the program.

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