

A Case Study of Westbury UFSD

WESTBURY, NEW YORK



Research Brief: Sustainable SEL - How Counselors Built a Scalable, Impactful, and Lasting Framework Using Schoolbeat

This case study highlights the powerful impact of a school counselor-led implementation of the Schoolbeat social-emotional learning (SEL) platform in an elementary school setting with school counselors from Fall 2024 - Spring 2025. Using a counselor-anchored approach to build teacher buy-in, outcomes show meaningful impact on ease of teaching, student emotional growth, academic readiness, behavior, and attendance. The results demonstrate how structured, interactive video-based SEL programming can transform both student outcomes and educator experience. **Following the introduction of Schoolbeat, educators reported a significant reduction in instructional barriers.** Ease of teaching scores on a 10-point scale rose from 5.0 at baseline to a sustained 10.0 over the following school year, reflecting reduced cognitive load, fewer disruptions, and increased educator satisfaction. The platform's plug-and-play design—requiring minimal prep or training—enabled educators to confidently deliver SEL instruction that seamlessly integrated with academic goals. **Student outcomes showed equally meaningful gains.** Emotion management improved from 3.0 to 8.7, and students demonstrated greater empathy, stronger peer

relationships, and improved conflict resolution skills. Academic learning ability also rose dramatically, with scores increasing from 4.0 to 9.7. Educators observed students becoming more self-reflective, emotionally aware, and behaviorally responsive. Schoolbeat's interactive videos, emotion check-ins, and journal prompts created safe, developmentally appropriate spaces for students to understand and regulate their emotions. These results point to the essential connection between emotional well-being and learning. By reducing educator burden and equipping students with real-world social-emotional tools, Schoolbeat helped foster a more supportive and engaging classroom environment. **The sustained improvements in both educator experience and student growth emphasize the value of integrating SEL into daily practice**—not as an add-on, but as a core part of what makes learning possible.



Westbury UFSD

Westbury Union Free School District (also known as Westbury UFSD) is a public school district located in Nassau County, New York, serving the Greater Westbury community—including parts of Westbury, Old Westbury, and New Cassel. It spans six schools with about 360 teaching staff ranging from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with a student population of approximately 4,700 as of the 2022–2023 school year. Westbury serves a diverse student population - the demographic breakdown includes 76% Hispanic/Latino, 19-20% Black/African American, 3-4% White, 1% Asian/NH/PI, and less than 1% American Indian/Alaska Native/Multiracial. Roughly 75–80% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The district is deeply committed to promoting academic excellence, social development, and emotional growth, articulating a mission to empower students as lifelong learners prepared to contribute meaningfully to our global society.

Westbury adopted a thoughtful, tiered rollout of Schoolbeat across the district starting with Powells Lane Elementary. This multi-year implementation plan began with school counselors, empowering them to lead the way by integrating the program into classroom push-in lessons and small group settings. At Powells Lane Elementary, for the 2024–2025 school year, counselors utilized this approach and reported positive outcomes. They found particular success with the interactive nature of the videos and activities, which helped engage students and supported social-emotional learning in a meaningful way.

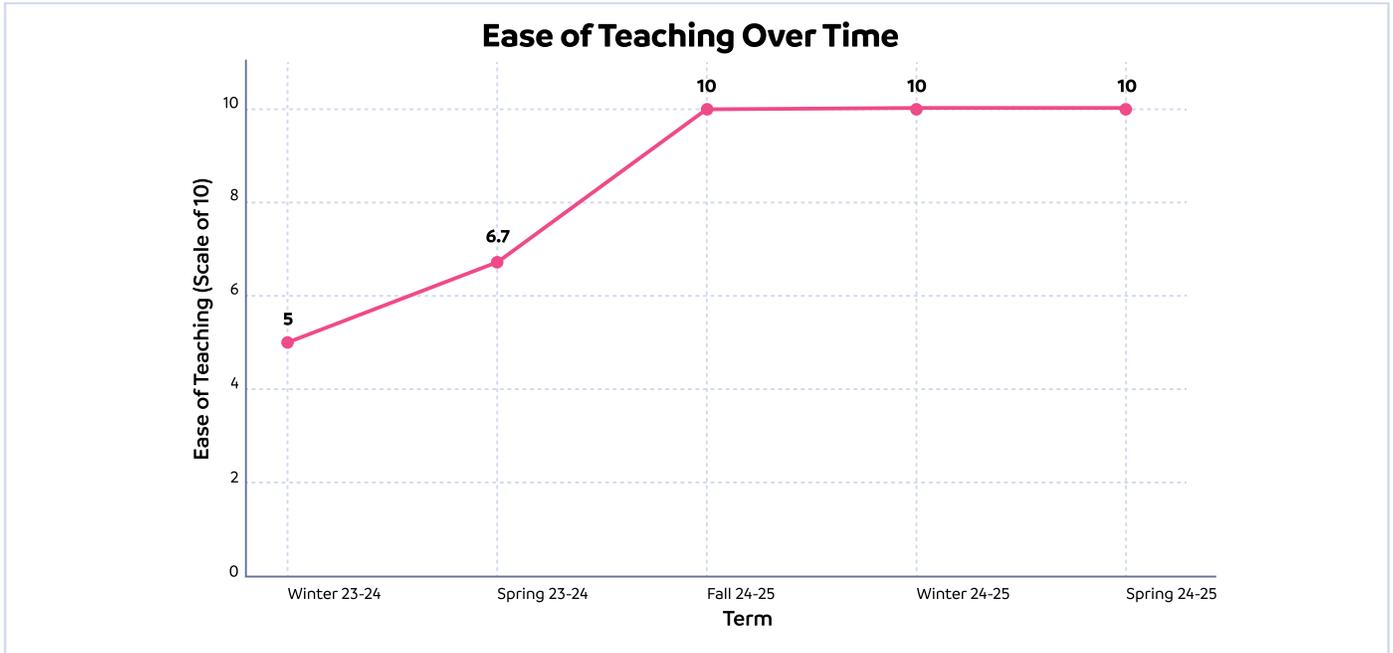
Plug, Play, and Teach: Reducing the Load, Increasing the Impact

Creating conditions that support ease of teaching is critical in elementary education. When educators experience fewer obstacles in delivering instruction—such as disruptive behavior, unclear expectations, or inadequate resources—student learning and teacher well-being improve.

A 10-point Likert scale was used to evaluate educator perception of ease of teaching. **According to Powells Lane Elementary educators, ease of teaching greatly improved for teaching SEL after implementing Schoolbeat** from the start of implementation in the Winter of 23-24 to the Spring of 23-24. Scores for ease of teaching remained at 10 (the highest possible score) throughout the 24-25 school year. This finding is important because it demonstrates a significant and sustained improvement in teachers' experience of delivering SEL instruction after implementing Schoolbeat.

Education staff stress and instructional quality are closely linked. According to Herman et al. (2018), elementary teachers working in emotionally supportive and well-managed environments report lower stress and greater instructional efficacy. High-stress school environments, on the other hand, are associated with lower student achievement and reduced student engagement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). When instructional flow is frequently disrupted, educators struggle to meet academic and social-emotional learning goals. Improving the ease of teaching reduces educator stress. Deadra Faulkner (District Director of Guidance for Westbury Public Schools) notes that the Schoolbeat *“implementation was done in a very smart and seamless way.”* She also comments on how Schoolbeat integrates smoothly into existing practice without burdening teachers. **“Teacher buy-in is essential. Teachers need to be able to say, ‘Why is this useful, and how can I support it?’ It’s important they feel they’re not being given extra work, but rather a resource supported by the counseling team. That way, implementation becomes collaborative and seamless.”**





Reduced cognitive load for educators leads to better student outcomes. When staff aren't constantly managing off-task behavior or unclear curricula, they can focus more energy on instruction, differentiation, and building relationships (Yoon, 2002). Ease of teaching supports both academic rigor and SEL integration by giving staff the bandwidth to respond to student needs. **Schoolbeat provides pre-built, CASEL-aligned lessons covering a wide range of SEL topics so teachers, counselors, and other education staff don't have to create SEL content from scratch, saving valuable prep time.** Using Schoolbeat requires very little preparation or training so that even educators new to SEL can facilitate effective lessons right away. Tameika Lovell, School Counselor at Powell's Lane Elementary, shared that Schoolbeat has significantly reduced her planning time. *"It definitely helped with lesson planning and breaking things down into different topics and categories,"* she explained. Tameika described how much time she used to spend searching for materials: *"I thought the movie-clip lesson format was great because I was pulling a lot of lessons from YouTube. This focuses on the core competencies, so it really streamlines planning and makes it easier to break lessons down."*

The lessons in Schoolbeat are built around realistic video scenarios that reflect students' everyday experiences. The videos capture students' attention, reduce classroom management challenges, and encourage natural discussion—educators can

focus on facilitation rather than direct instruction. In the Schoolbeat curriculum, students can suggest topics, customize avatars, and engage in independent or group activities. Thus, students are more motivated, reducing staff workload and increasing lesson effectiveness. Ms. Lovell describes how student-led engagement reduces her teaching load - ***"It minimizes my talking, which is good, and the students are talking more, which is kind of what we want."*** Schoolbeat scenarios reflect everyday social conflicts and values like responsibility, empathy, and respect. It complements classroom expectations and makes SEL instruction feel natural and relevant—not one more thing.

Ease of teaching is a critical factor in both instructional quality and teacher well-being. When educators report fewer barriers to delivering content—especially content as nuanced as social-emotional learning—they are more likely to teach with confidence, consistency, and fidelity. Ease of teaching is not a luxury but a prerequisite for effective instruction, student development, and educator sustainability in elementary schools. Schools that intentionally reduce barriers to teaching like using Schoolbeat promote both student success and educator retention.

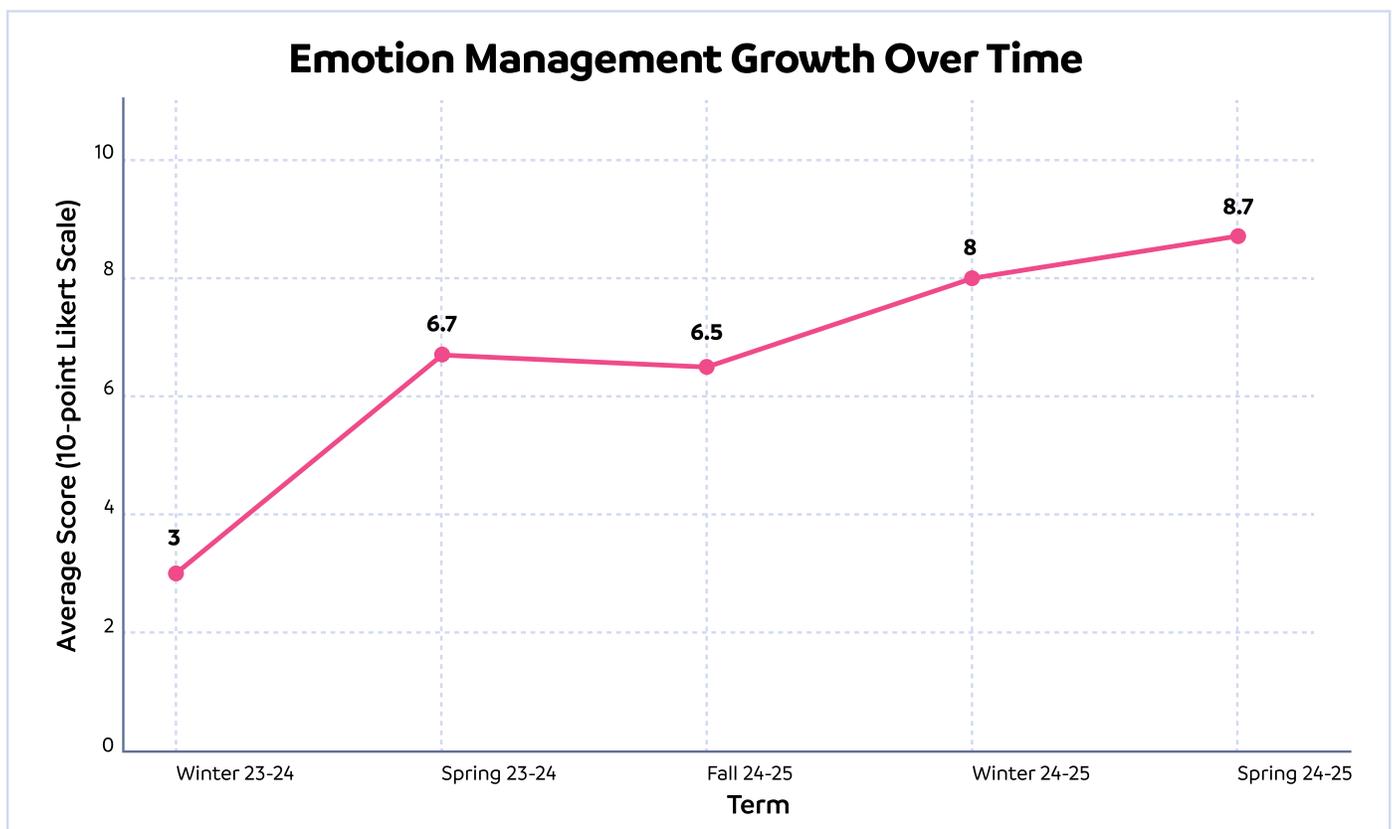
Building Emotional Muscles by Strengthening Emotion Management

Effective emotion management is foundational to student well-being, classroom behavior, and academic success. In elementary settings, students are still developing the cognitive and social capacities necessary to regulate intense emotions such as frustration, sadness, or anxiety. Without explicit instruction and support, these emotions can manifest as disruptive behavior, withdrawal, or difficulty focusing (Denham et al., 2012). Teaching students how to recognize, label, and regulate their emotions contributes to stronger self-awareness and improved interpersonal interactions—both essential components of social-emotional competence (CASEL, 2020).

Research shows that emotion regulation skills are predictive of long-term outcomes including academic achievement, mental health, and peer relationships (Graziano et al., 2007; Blair & Raver, 2015). In one meta-analysis, students who participated in SEL programs that emphasized emotional regulation strategies showed significantly improved classroom behavior and reduced emotional distress compared to control groups (Durlak et al., 2011).

These programs typically incorporate modeling, reflection, and guided practice in real-life scenarios to help students internalize strategies such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, or taking breaks. Visual tools such as emotion thermometers and animated check-ins are particularly effective in early grades where verbal expression may be limited.

Educators from Powells Lane Elementary reported meaningful and significant changes in student's emotion management from a score of 3 in Winter 23-24 when they started with Schoolbeat to a score of 6.7 in Spring 23-24. No significant changes were observed from Spring 23-24 to Fall 23-24, but there was drastic improvement from 6.5 in Fall 23-24 to a score of 8 in Winter 24-25 and further improvement from 8 in Winter to 8.7 in Spring 24-25.



In this case study, the counselors used Schoolbeat’s video-based SEL platform to scaffold emotional learning through relatable, age-appropriate content. They reported that students were more comfortable talking about their feelings and using self-regulation strategies after watching videos depicting common social dilemmas. The emotion check-in feature gave counselors real-time insight into students’ emotional states, allowing them to respond proactively to students’ needs. As Deadra Faulkner noted, **“Schoolbeat helped our students feel safe in being able to share, supporting a school culture grounded in empathy, reflection, and emotional growth.”**

Together, these findings underscore the value of embedding explicit emotion regulation instruction within the daily school experience. When students have regular opportunities to practice self-awareness and coping strategies in safe, structured ways—as Schoolbeat provides—they are more likely to internalize these skills and apply them in both academic and social contexts. The consistent upward trend in emotion management scores at Powells Lane Elementary reflects more than individual progress; it points to a systemic shift in how the school community supports emotional development. By combining engaging, developmentally appropriate content with tools for monitoring and reflection, Schoolbeat enabled educators to meet students where they are and guide them toward healthier emotional habits—laying the groundwork for lifelong resilience and success.

Teaching Kids to Connect with Compassion

Developing students’ ability to engage in respectful and empathetic interactions is a key outcome of effective social-emotional learning (SEL) programs (CASEL, 2020). At Powells Lane Elementary, both school counselors, **Tameika Lovell and Brianna Shervington, reported notable improvements in students’ social behavior and peer relationships after implementing Schoolbeat.** Lovell emphasized that Schoolbeat created opportunities for students to reflect on their behavior and its impact on others, particularly through relatable, scenario-based content. *“They’re doing a lot of self-reflection,”* she explained, *“in terms of, ‘my goodness, that happened to me,’ or ‘if that happened to me, I could take a moment and step back and handle things differently.’”*

Shervington observed similar growth in her students’ empathy and perspective-taking — especially among third graders. *“As they were watching a Schoolbeat video about including friends, I really saw an empathetic side to them because they were like, ‘Wow, he was so sad... That really hurt my feelings to see somebody sad like that.’”*, she shared. She also noted that students began applying these insights to their own social decisions, such as being more inclusive at recess or choosing kinder words during group interactions. These examples illustrate Schoolbeat’s effectiveness in supporting relationship skills—one of the five core SEL competencies—as students learned to recognize and respond to the emotions of others (Zins et al., 2004).

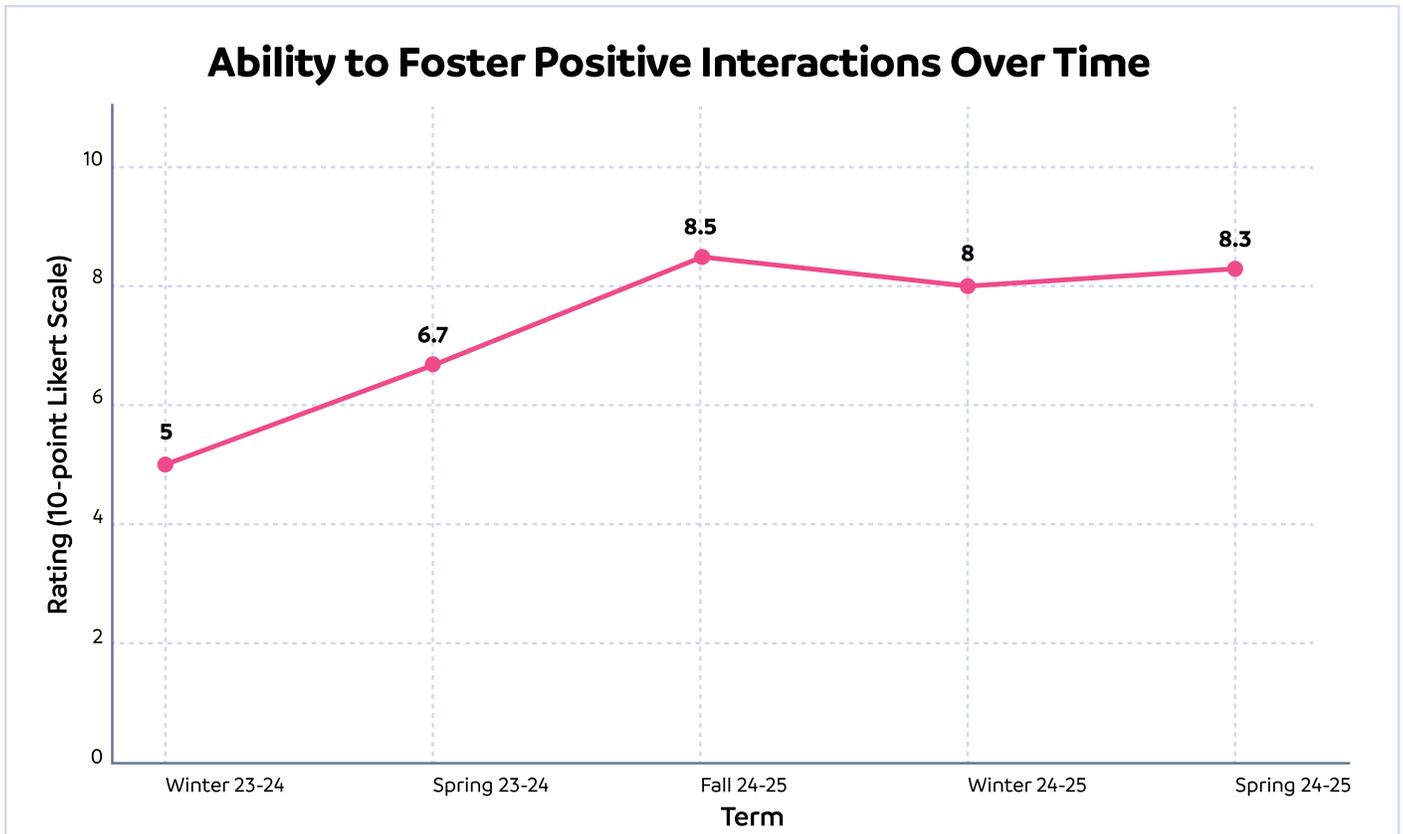


Students' ability to foster positive interactions with peers improved greatly from when Powells Lane Elementary began implementation in the Winter of 23-24. Scores rose from a score of 5 to 6.7 in the Spring 23-24. Scores again shot up in the Fall of 23-24 to 8.5 and remained at around that level (8 in Winter and 8.3 in Spring) for the remainder of the 24-25 school year. These results matter because they reflect a meaningful and sustained improvement in students' social skills, which are foundational for both academic and personal success.

In addition to Schoolbeat's multimedia content, Lovell incorporated restorative circles to foster student dialogue and accountability. "We discussed it and I'm now able to get the feedback," she said. "Some students are saying, yes, they are trying... others say, 'If someone messes with me, I'm going to have a clap back ready.'", she reported. These candid exchanges offered unique opportunities to coach students on live emotional regulation and social decision-making. Lavelle explained that Schoolbeat helped her reinforce the message that words have power and the impact of what others feel too.

Together, these counselor perspectives underscore Schoolbeat's value in building a school culture rooted in empathy, reflection, and respect. By combining interactive video lessons, journaling, and SEL check-ins, Schoolbeat gave students the language, tools, and space to process social challenges and practice more positive, mindful ways of interacting.

The ability to foster positive peer interactions is closely linked to increased classroom engagement, reduced behavioral issues, and stronger relationships with peers and adults—key indicators of a healthy school climate. The significant gains seen after implementing SEL at Powells Lane Elementary, particularly the sharp and sustained rise in scores, suggest that the program effectively equips students with tools to build empathy, communicate respectfully, and collaborate—skills that benefit them far beyond the classroom.

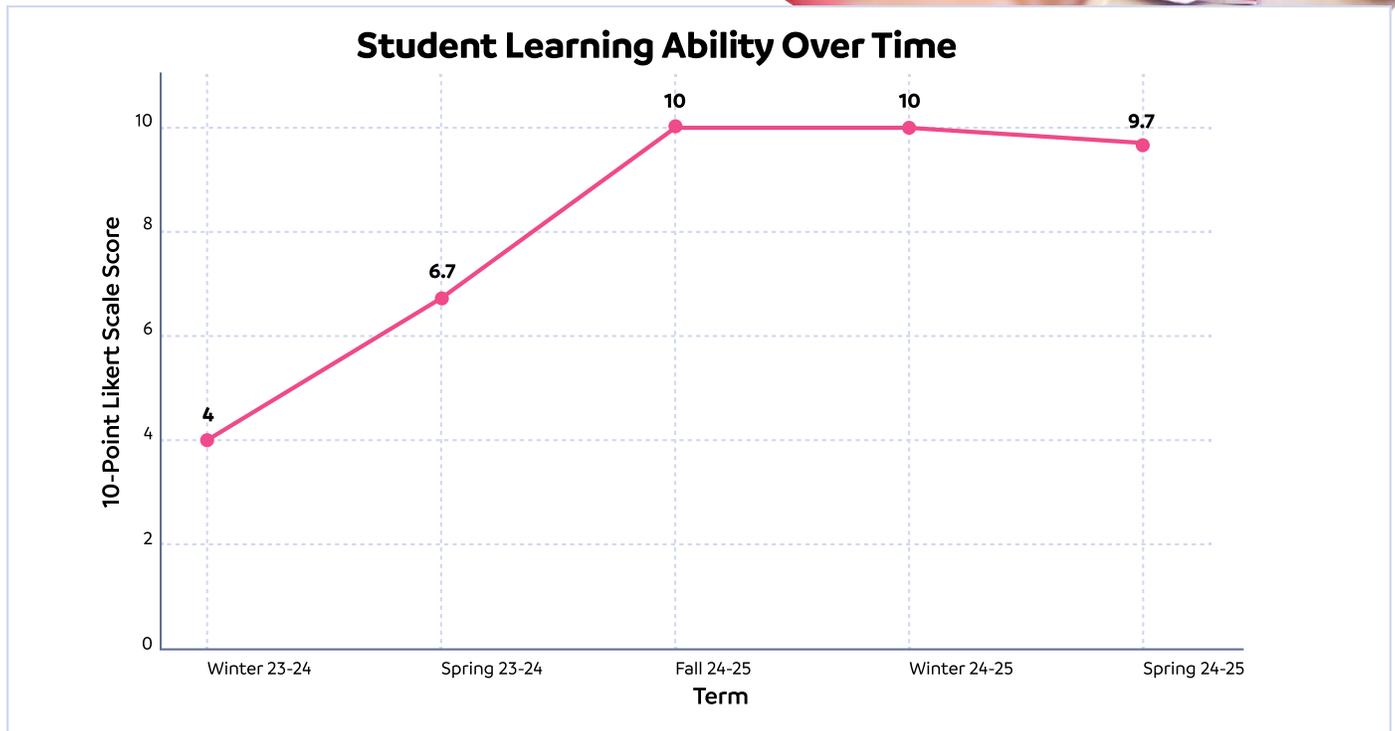


Unlocking Learning Through Emotional Readiness and SEL

Implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) programs like Schoolbeat has had a noticeable impact on student learning ability at Powells Lane Elementary, particularly by enhancing focus, emotional readiness, and engagement. Counselors and administrators noted that when students are emotionally regulated and socially supported, they are more able to access academic learning—reflecting findings from existing research on SEL’s positive impact on academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).

Students at Powells Lane Elementary demonstrated significant improvements in learning ability following the implementation of Schoolbeat. Initial scores on a 10-point Likert scale increased from 4.0 in Winter 23–24 to 6.7 by Spring 23–24, reflecting early gains in engagement and focus. These gains were sustained and further amplified in Fall 23-24, reaching a perfect score of 10. Scores remained consistently high through Winter 24–25 (10) and Spring 24–25 (9.7), indicating lasting improvements in students’ capacity to stay on task, follow instructions, and engage in their learning.

Brianna Shervington, school counselor at Powells Lane Elementary, shared that Schoolbeat provided an emotionally grounding experience for students, especially when integrated through regular classroom push-ins. *“Even this morning,”* she recalled, *“I was able to go in and see how a student was feeling. I was going to do a different lesson with them, but because I had a log of how they were feeling... I was able to better tailor my approach.”* **By using Schoolbeat’s check-in data to adapt instruction based on students’ emotional states, Shervington created the conditions for more effective learning**—validating that emotional awareness is a prerequisite for cognitive engagement.



Tameika Lovell echoed these observations, emphasizing the role of visual and interactive content in supporting students with different learning styles. **“For a lot of the students who learn in a very visual and auditory way, it’s very helpful for them,” she noted. “They’re doing a lot of self-reflection... like ‘That happened to me’ or ‘I could handle things differently.’”** The engaging video-based format, combined with opportunities for student-led participation, fostered not only self-awareness but also greater student agency and comprehension of core SEL concepts—key contributors to motivation and learning persistence (Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

Deadra Faulkner observed these benefits on a broader level. *“We saw students who were not always comfortable participating now raising their hands, sharing ideas, and relating their personal experiences to the lesson content,”* she shared. *“This shift reflected an increased sense of psychological safety and self-efficacy,”* she also said. These impacts are well-documented in the scientific literature as being critical to student success in both academic and social contexts (Bandura, 1997). She concluded by saying that **Schoolbeat’s integration of SEL into the school day helped remove emotional barriers to learning, making space for improved concentration, communication, and connection to curriculum.**

Improved student learning ability reflects the powerful role SEL can play in creating conditions for academic success. As students become more emotionally aware and better able to regulate themselves, they are more equipped to stay focused, participate actively, and retain new information. The dramatic increase in educator scores on student learning ability — from 4 at baseline to 10 in the fall after full implementation of Schoolbeat demonstrates that when schools prioritize social-emotional growth, they also create stronger, more supportive learning environments where all students can thrive. This underscores the essential connection between emotional well-being and cognitive performance.

Learning to Get Along and Build Strong Bridges

As Schoolbeat was implemented across Powells Lane Elementary, school staff reported notable improvements in students’ ability to recognize, respond to, and resolve interpersonal conflicts. Through video modeling, journal reflections, and real-time emotional check-ins, students were able to explore scenarios relevant to their own lives and practice making thoughtful, prosocial decisions.

Students’ ability to resolve conflicts showed a steady and significant upward trend following the implementation of SEL programming at Powells Lane Elementary. Initially rated at 4 on a 10-point Likert scale in Winter 23–24, scores increased to 6.7 by Spring 23–24, indicating early positive impact. Continued support and exposure to SEL strategies led to further gains in the 24–25 school year, with scores rising to 7.5 in Fall and reaching 9 by Winter, where they remained through Spring. This sustained improvement suggests that students increasingly developed the skills to navigate disagreements, manage peer tensions, and make responsible interpersonal decisions over time.

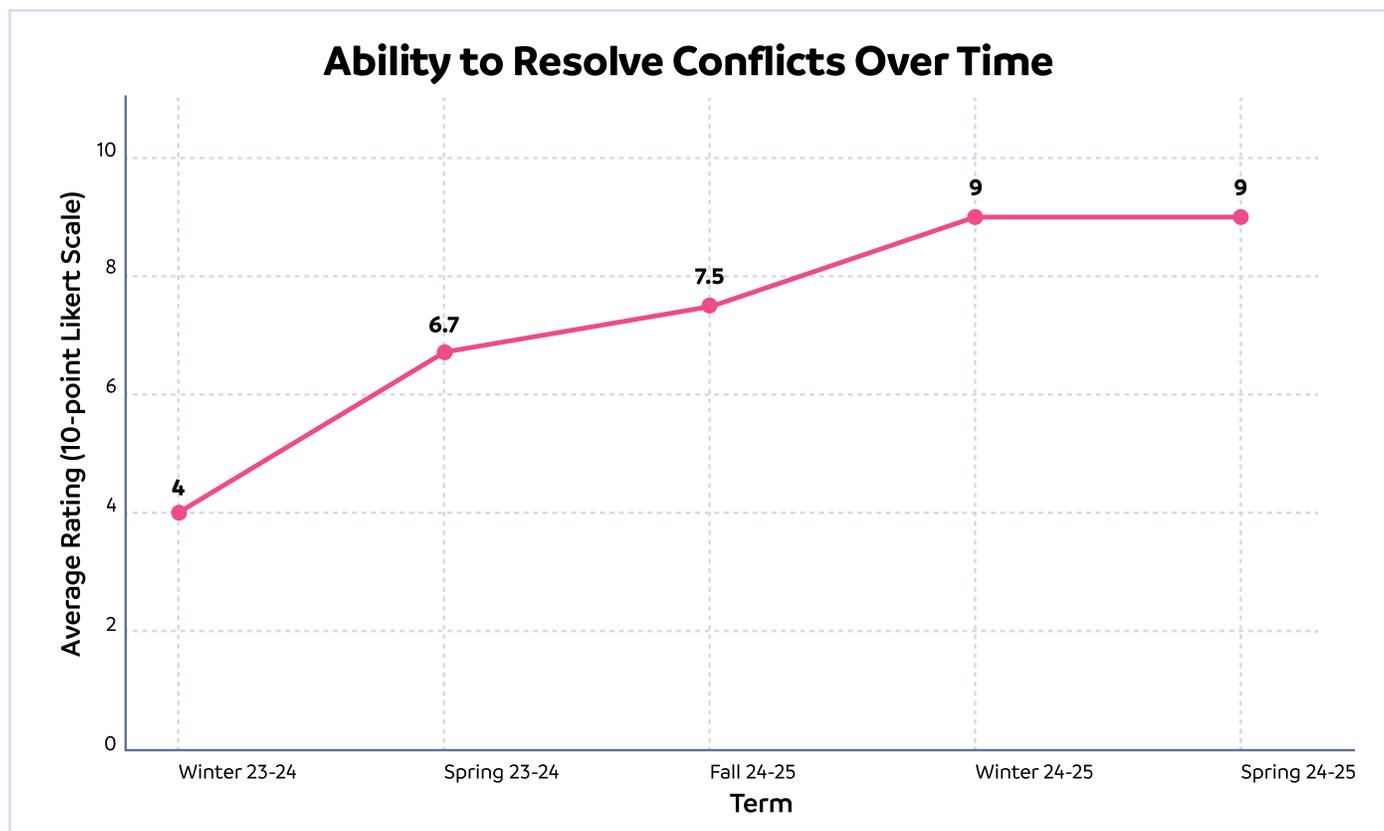
Brianna Shervington highlighted how students—particularly in the upper elementary grades—began to show more empathy and perspective-taking during conflict situations. She described a moment in which third-grade students responded to a Schoolbeat video on inclusion: *“They were like, ‘Wow, he was so sad. That really hurt my feelings to see somebody sad like that.’”* She noted that students began applying these insights during recess by being *“a little bit more careful of what [they] say and how [they] say it to people.”* This shift from reactive behavior to more thoughtful decision-making is a key indicator of SEL impact (CASEL, 2023).

Similarly, Tameika Lovell described how the program supported students in recognizing patterns in their own behavior and interactions. “Some students feel more comfortable coming to us than others, but some of them hold it in because they say they don’t want to be a snitch”, she noted. “By providing a psychologically safe outlet through journal prompts and digital check-ins, Schoolbeat enabled students to process emotions and seek support before conflicts escalated”, she added. Lavelle also implemented restorative circles, giving students space to vocalize grievances and reflect on outcomes, further reinforcing their conflict resolution skills.

Improved conflict resolution skills are a cornerstone of a healthy school climate and essential for both academic and social success. As students become better equipped to navigate disagreements, classroom disruptions decrease, peer relationships strengthen, and emotional safety increases—all

of which contribute to more engaged learning environments. These gains reflect not only individual growth but also the collective development of a more empathetic, respectful, and cooperative student community. Moreover, students who can resolve conflicts constructively are more likely to carry those skills into adulthood, benefiting their future relationships, workplaces, and civic lives.

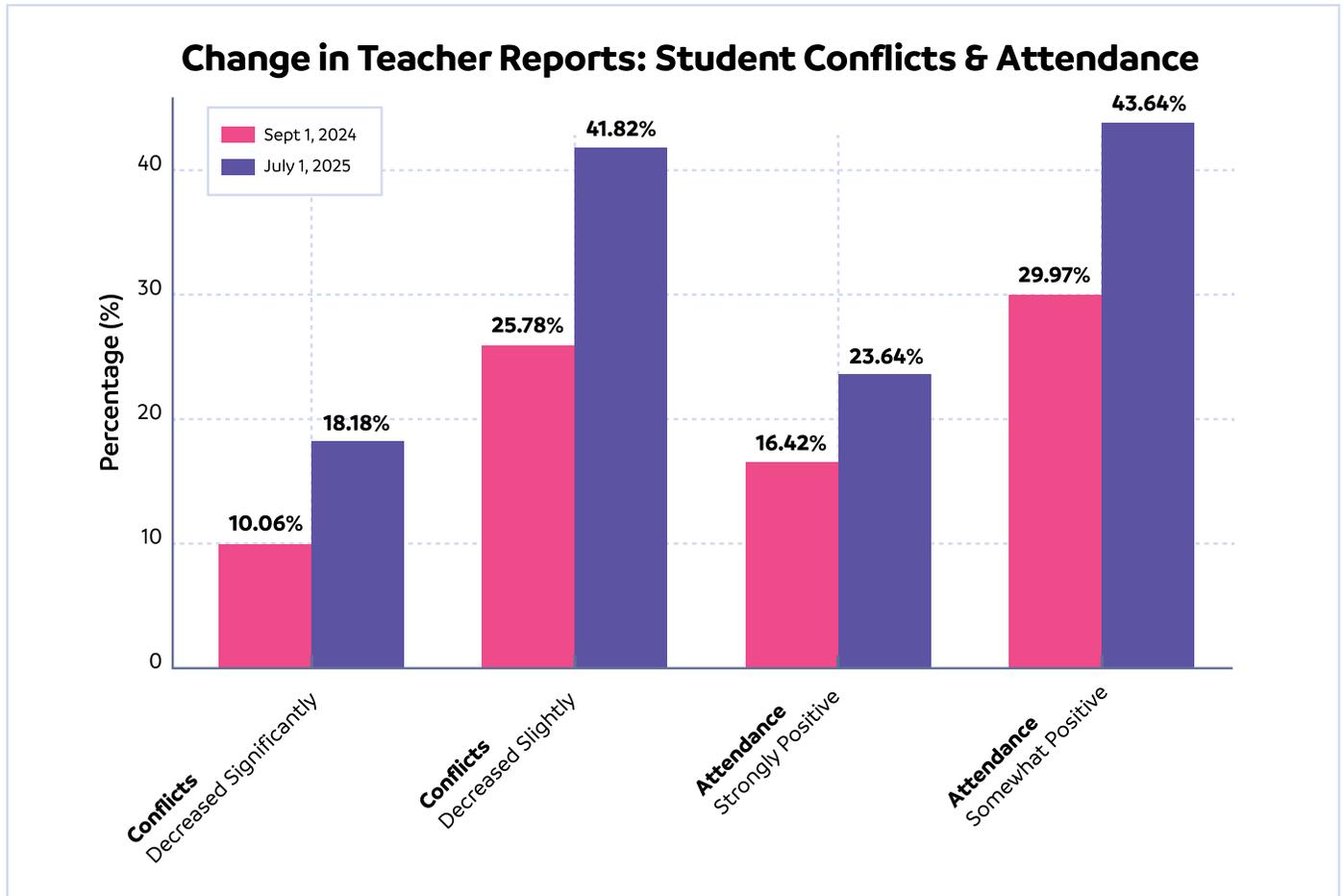
The combination of proactive SEL instruction and responsive support structures helped students shift from impulsive reactions—such as “clap backs” and exclusionary behaviors—to more mindful and collaborative responses. These outcomes align with broader research on the effectiveness of SEL interventions in reducing peer aggression and improving peer relationships (Jones et al., 2015).



Shifting the School Climate: Fewer Conflicts and Better Attendance

Notable shifts in educator reports were observed from September 2024 to June 2025 on behavior and attendance (data on these variables was not collected in the 2023-2024 school year). Reports of classroom conflicts decreased over the school year, with the percentage of educators observing conflicts decreasing significantly rising from 10.06% in September to 18.18% in July, and those noting conflicts decrease slightly increasing from 25.78% to 41.82%. At the same time, educators reported increasingly positive views of Schoolbeat's impact on student attendance. Specifically, the proportion of educators describing the impact as strongly positive grew from 16.42% in September to 23.64% in July, while those rating the impact as somewhat positive increased from 29.97% to 43.64%. Together, these findings suggest that over the course of the program, educators observed both a reduction in classroom conflicts and a growing belief that Schoolbeat positively influenced student attendance.

The findings in the graph are reinforced by what Deadra Faulkner shared about the impact of Schoolbeat on her schools. She explained that a major priority was keeping “a pulse on our students’ behavior and their social emotional well-being, which constitutes what’s happening outside of the classroom and what’s in the classroom.” **Educators reported fewer classroom conflicts over time, which Faulkner attributed to students learning “how to navigate the communication process amongst friends and peers” and to a stronger “sense of community in the classroom.”** She emphasized that students were not only avoiding conflicts but also gaining the confidence to “be a part of a solution and not just someone at the receiving end of a disciplinary issue.” At the same time, they saw more positive attitudes about attendance, which Faulkner connected to the way Schoolbeat gives students “a voice,” helping them feel motivated, safe, and engaged. As she noted, “student voice is what I would say we gather data to find out what the students think about the products and how it helps them... that is data which is rich.”



Conclusions & Future Directions

This case study of Westbury UFSD suggests that a counselor-led, video-based SEL framework (Schoolbeat) can be implemented quickly and with high fidelity while producing concurrent gains in educator experience and student outcomes. Ease of teaching rose from moderate at baseline to sustained maximal levels, indicating meaningful reductions in instructional friction and planning burden. In parallel, counselors documented large improvements in students' emotion management, peer interactions, conflict resolution, and learning readiness, with upward trends maintained across multiple terms. Teacher reports also pointed to fewer classroom conflicts and increasingly positive perceptions of the program's impact on attendance. Taken together, the evidence supports the core proposition that when SEL is embedded as part of everyday instruction—rather than as an add-on—schools can create calmer classrooms, stronger relationships, and better conditions for learning.

At the implementation level, three design features appear central to sustainability and scale: (1) plug-and-play lesson design that minimizes prep time and cognitive load; (2) counselor-led rollout with classroom push-ins, which builds teacher buy-in and shared ownership; and (3) student-centered media and check-ins that elevate student voice, improve relevance, and enable timely support. These elements jointly reduce barriers to adoption, protect educator bandwidth, and help maintain quality as the model expands across sites.

In sum, Westbury's experience demonstrates that thoughtfully designed, counselor-anchored SEL can be both sustainable and impactful—lightening the load for educators while strengthening the social, emotional, and academic foundations students need to thrive. Continued evaluation, attention to fidelity and equity, and strategic scaling will be key to sustaining these gains district-wide.

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