



A Game on Life

Making Social and Emotional Learning Adaptive and Accessible

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Background

- Skills taught in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) lead to better academic achievement, mental health and behavioral outcomes¹
- Traditional SEL curriculums require significant investments and expertise from schools, and use scripted and rigid delivery²
- *52 Essential Conversations* is a portable SEL card game that engages family, peer, community—in addition to classroom, in supporting youth's social and emotional development
- *52 Essential Conversations* empowers children and adults to learn and practice CASEL-aligned skills through everyday activities while strengthening relationships

Research Questions

RQ1: [Adaptability] What is the relationship between who is using *52 Essential Conversations* and how it is being used?

RQ2: [Accessibility] In what settings and contexts is *52 Essential Conversations* used?

Participants & Methods

Participants: 74 users of *52 Essential Conversations*

- 35 parents, 15 educators, 24 educators who are also parents
- Across 47 Elementary, 35 Middle Schools, 31 High Schools
- **US:** CA, MA, HI, NC, RI, WA, IL, WI, CT, FL, CO, VA, PA, NV, OR, MO, MD, SC
- **International:** CA, CL, GR, CH, NL, ROU, NZ, AU, KOR, SG

Measures:

- **Who** "What age(s) or grade(s) do you support?"
- **What** "In what settings do you use it?"
- **Why** "Why are you using this SEL game?"
- **How** "Describe how you use *52 Essential Conversations*."

Coding & Analysis:

- Iterative process in multi-level qualitative pattern coding
- Quantitative descriptive analysis

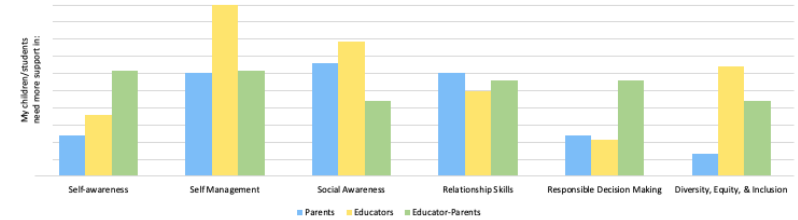
Results

RQ1: Adaptability

Descriptive Statistics by Roles and Settings

	Parents	Educators	Educator-Parents
Age Group			
Preschool	31%	7%	15%
Elementary	45%	20%	22%
Middle School	12%	29%	22%
High School	12%	24%	19%
Higher Education	0%	20%	22%
School Type			
Public	60%	48%	67%
Private	31%	30%	33%
Homeschool	10%	22%	0%
Geography			
Within US	66%	60%	83%
Outside of US	34%	40%	17%
Observations	35	15	24

Purpose of Use: Targeted Areas for Skill Building



User Frequency and Duration Varies Based on Needs

	Parents	Educators	Educator-Parents
Use Frequency	1-3 times a month	Daily to every other day	3-4 times a month
Duration per Use	20-30 minutes	5-10 minutes	10-20 minutes
Duration per SEL Topic	3-5 minutes	2-3 minutes	Varies greatly

RQ2: Accessibility

Professional Development	"At work, I provide PD, model lessons, after school workshops and family engagement events. I've also brought the cards to six year old pajama party." – District SEL Coordinator and Parent
Orientation or Ice Breaker	"To build positive relationships between myself and my student and between my students, to build community in my classroom." – Middle School History Teacher
Class-Based Discussion	"Each child will respond differently, based on the circumstances, moment, personality and social environment, and relationship with the person "holding" or distributing the cards. Giving them "control" of the cards is powerful." – Elementary Substitute Teacher
Small Group Discussion	"I have used it in small group campfire discussions at camp, as icebreaker activities to begin meetings, and around the dinner table with my own children." – Camp Director and Parent
Individual Student Discussion	"The questions are great, and it's nice to have a bank of questions that I didn't come up with myself - I wouldn't have thought of many of them. The fact that each card has two related questions is also very helpful - often only one of them will really spark a deep conversation, but usually at least one of them does." – Homeschool Parent
Counseling	"I have used them in small group setting of social groups that I run on campus. Also with individual students as a way to generate conversation and perspective." – Middle School Counselor
Advisory	"We've used some of the essential conversations in our grade 9 advisory classes. It has helped us put some social-emotional learning into our advisory course." – High School Teacher
New Teacher Training	"The cards are already done for me. I didn't need to create anything." – 7th Grade Teacher
After-school programming	"Using them as launching points to "break through" to the kids and get them to give more than a "yes/no" answer to things and get them to open up." – Youth Sports Coach
Tutoring/Coaching	"...not simply a set of how-to-behave lessons: it's about getting my child to ask questions...It's about showing, not telling, how to get better." – Parent of Elementary Student
In Between Activities	"My son and I use the cards if we have a few minutes between activities. We just grab three cards at a time and answer them." – Parent of Middle Schooler
Bonding with children	"The cards provide a springboard for other discussions and one card can lead to hours of discussions in other areas. It really helps us as parents find a door to communicating with our children. Likewise, it also provides an avenue for our children to feel safe and comfortable to communicate with us." – Parent of Elementary and Middle School Students
Family Time	"It is not intimidating and anybody can do it...I am learning as are the other adults involved with utilizing these cards. There is an opportunity to model without feeling rehearsed. It is very authentic dialogue." – Instructional Resource and Professional Development Director and Parent
Mealtime	"At dinner every evening we go over a few of the cards together as a family (mom, dad and three kids)." – Parent of Preschool and Elementary children
Speech	"as conversation starters during assessments of students I am testing in the areas of pragmatics and...during therapy to engage students in thoughtful conversations." – Speech Language Pathologist
Therapy Practice	"My son has autism and needs practice with two way conversations with multiple exchanges. I thought I would struggle more with gaining compliance and willingness to practice...it's totally viable to build on just about every card in the deck with ease." – Parent of High School Student with Special Needs
Patient Care	"Use to help direct conversations for discussions between children and adults." – Pediatrician

Conclusion & Future Directions

- By making itself adaptive and accessible, *52 Essential Conversations* game creates a safe and user-driven environment for both children and adults that invites bitesize social emotional learning and practice.
- **Parents** use *52 Essential Conversations* to facilitate mutual understanding with their children through contextually- and culturally-relevant dialogues, storytelling, and role modeling.
- **Educators** appreciate the ready-to-use SEL discussion prompts and are surprised by the depth and variety of student responses.
- **Educator-Parents** take advantage of the portability and developmentally adaptive topics to spark in-the-moment conversations in home, school, and work settings.
- Future studies: conduct intervention studies in schools and homes.

References: [1] Durlak, J. A., Weisberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D. & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82: 405–432.
[2] Bailey, R., Stickle, L., Brion-Meisels, G. & Jones, S.M. (2019). Re-imagining social-emotional learning: Findings from a strategy-based approach. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(5), 53-58.

