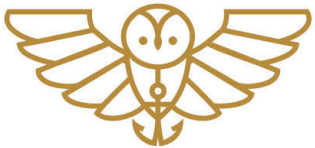


THE CLAYTON MODEL PILOT PROGRAM YEAR 3



**CHILD
CONNECTION
CENTER** A CLAYTON
MODEL PROGRAM



RUTGERS-CAMDEN

**Senator Walter Rand
Institute for Public Affairs**

CLAYTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

began development of The Clayton Model in 2009, establishing Child Connection Centers (CCC) that provide universal, trauma-informed, school-based social-emotional learning (SEL) programs provided by SEL Specialists in elementary schools in Southern New Jersey. In May 2021 the New Jersey Legislature and Governor passed P.L.2021 c.85 establishing the five-year Clayton Model Pilot Program in the New Jersey Department of Education. Since 2021, New Jersey has supported the expansion of the Clayton Model to nine elementary schools in Gloucester County. The Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs (WRI) began evaluation of the program in 2013, expanding and enhancing evaluation in 2021 with the passage of P.L.2021 c.85. This report includes information on Year 3 (2023-2024) of the evaluation including methods and key findings.

METHODS

In 2023-2024 WRI evaluation activities included process, fidelity of implementation, and student and school impact to answer to research questions:

1. How does the Clayton Model implementation affect pilot schools?
2. How does the Clayton Model implementation affect student outcomes?

To answer these questions WRI collected data across nine implementing school sites that included:

- Teacher (n=131), school staff (n=124), and SEL Specialist (8) pre- and post-school-year surveys,
- End-of-year surveys with caregivers (n=242) and students (n=128),
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers (n=12) administrators and staff (n=7), CCC staff (n=9), and caregivers (n=7).
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) surveys both pre- and post-student-engagement from teachers (n=360) and caregivers (n=249).



RESULTS

Student Impact

- Caregiver SDQ analysis indicates statistically significant reductions in emotional problems, conduct problems, and hyperactivity.
- Teacher SDQ analysis indicates statistically significant reductions in peer problems and increases in prosocial behaviors.
- Teachers and caregiver SDQ analysis both indicate statistically significant positive impacts in students overall, and a significant reduction in total social and emotional difficulties.
- Analysis of SDQ results from 2022-2024 indicate significant reductions in emotional problems, significant positive impacts overall, and significant reductions in total difficulties.
- Students involved with the CCC have fewer disciplinary interventions including behavior reports, detentions, and disciplinary actions.

Teacher Impact

- Teachers reported being able to focus more on instruction and curriculum as SEL Specialists met students' emotional behavioral and social needs.
- Teachers learned new skills and strategies to support students' in-class needs which expanded their in-class skills and resources.
- Teachers are positively impacted by student supports, professional supports and classroom management, and personal supports supporting teacher wellbeing.

School Impact

- CCC integration in schools positively affects school climate and morale.
- SEL Specialists were positively viewed as integral members of school teams.
- SEL Specialists were noted to have a positive impact on the social and emotional education of the adult staff in the buildings through resource provision, professional development, and student and staff supports.

Program Processes

- Flexible program adapts to student needs addressing anxiety, trauma, and homelife issues,
- Communicative implementation practices and effective collaboration between CCC team and existing school supports such as Intervention and Referral Services, Child Study Team, Preschool Intervention and Referral Team, school counselors, social workers, and administrators.
- SEL specialists are reported to be flexible, open and transparent with caregivers and staff.

Fidelity of Implementation

- SEL Specialists are more visible, responsive, accessible, and consistent as they become more intertwined in school systems, culture, and climate,
- Monthly professional development focused on collaboration, idea sharing, and addressing challenges between SEL Specialists.
- Greater school-wide integration and buy-in from administrators as schools integrate the CCC into their systems.

Need

Data from students, teachers, administrators, and caregivers indicate that SEL Specialists fill gaps in needed supports in schools and are a critical resource for school stakeholders.

For students, SEL Specialists:

- Help them develop ways to more appropriately interact with peers,
- Teach and help them develop problem solving and self-regulation strategies, and
- Create a caring, trustworthy, helpful place in which their concerns are taken seriously.

For teachers, SEL specialists:

- Provide trauma-informed resources, strategies, and support through lesson plans, staff professional development, classroom management, and modeling SEL strategies.
- Create space for more engagement in teaching and curriculum by addressing students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs, and
- Support their professional development and wellbeing in their schools.

For caregivers, SEL Specialists:

- Lowered and removed perceived stigma concerning mental health, and
- Increased at-home and external resources to support student wellbeing,

CONCLUSION

In Year 3 the Clayton Model became more embedded in school processes and had greater impacts on students, teachers, and caregivers than prior years of implementation. The program's flexible implementation, collaboration with school stakeholders and systems, and focus on SEL skill development contribute to its success as a needed resource to address school, student, and school-wide social, emotional, and mental wellbeing challenges. WRI will continue its evaluation on the impact of the program on schools and students.