

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

The effects of Student Success Skills on attendance and emotion regulation

Elizabeth Villares¹  | Hannah Bowers¹  | Greg Brigman¹  | Cheryl Bottini²

¹Department of Counselor Education, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida, USA

²Homeschool Education Program Planner, School District of Palm Beach County, Palm Beach, Florida, USA

Correspondence

Elizabeth Villares, Department of Counselor Education, Florida Atlantic University, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431, USA.

Email: evillare@fau.edu

Abstract

This study examines the effects of the Student Success Skills (SSS) intervention, an Advocating Student-within-Environment-informed intervention, on Hispanic students' ($N = 681$) school attendance and emotion regulation. The study variables reflected students' attendance, self-regulation, and test anxiety. The school counselors in the treatment group ($n = 15$) delivered the SSS program, while those in the control group ($n = 15$) did not. The results of multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) tests revealed significant differences in school attendance and test anxiety 30 weeks following the fifth SSS lesson. Statistical significance for self-regulation was found only 2 weeks after the fifth SSS lesson.

KEYWORDS

Advocating Student-within-Environment, attendance, emotion regulation, school counselors, Student Success Skills

INTRODUCTION

School counseling researchers can help practitioners by investigating the effectiveness of interventions, activities, and policies that eliminate or reduce disparities among school-aged students (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Thus, school counseling scholarship should be consistent with the conceptual foundation of the counseling profession (Kim et al., *in press*), by which student outcomes are associated with prevention, development, social justice, and wellness (Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021). However, school counseling outcome research is limited (Griffith et al., 2019), with variables that reduce students to a school-level demographic category, attendance record, academic score, or discipline referral (Bowers & Lemberger, 2016). For instance, research outcomes over the past decade show minority students experience higher rates of poor attendance, lower academic achievement (Ginsburg et al., 2014), increased dropout from school, negatively impacted career options, and lower socioeconomic status (Trusty et al., 2008). Such results ignore environmental factors affecting outcomes and inform intervention and preventative programming.

Culturally responsive approaches consider culture as an essential concept to understand and analyze social programs

and policies guided by the values of social justice and equity (Acree & Chouinard, 2020). Within school counseling research, culturally responsive interventions consider the programmatic impact on youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Similarly, responsive research uses assessments that measure students' sense of self, whether this be through self-perceptions related to social and emotional learning capacities, executive function ability, or related relationships to others in the environment (Bowers & Lemberger, 2016; Lemberger et al., 2015). Kazdin (2008) calls for researchers to include the measurement of therapeutic qualities that moderate the relationship between intervention and outcomes (Bowers & Lemberger, 2016). Collecting data in a culturally respectful way increases the visibility of racial, ethnic, and gender differences between students and helps develop programs and strategies to reduce disparities. Therefore, it is essential to include variables that measure students' sense of self and incorporate valid, reliable, and culturally inclusive modes of assessment (Wu & Zumbo, 2008). Additionally, constructing an analysis that measures the direction and strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables is critical (Wu & Zumbo, 2008). This approach will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of interventions

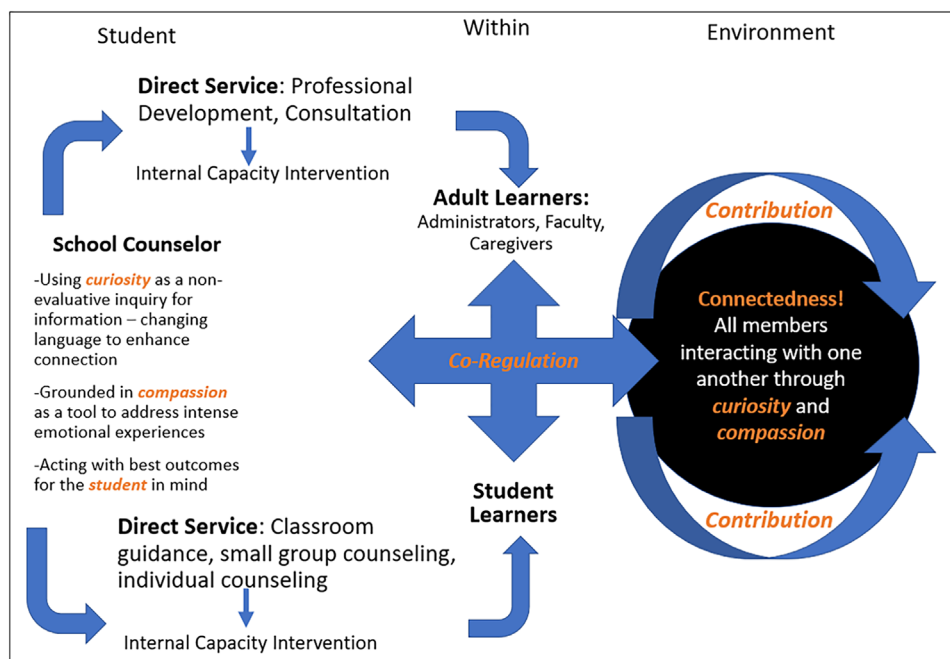


FIGURE 1 Advocating Student-within-Environment (ASE) theory systemic change process. *Note:* Adopted from Lemberger-Truelove and Bowers (2023).

and policies and their impact on students from diverse backgrounds.

This article examines data from a school district in a randomized control trial (RCT) to extend research on the Student Success Skills (SSS) classroom program. To better understand the theoretical framework and its relevance to the school environment, we offer an overview of the Advocating Student-within-Environment (ASE) and its alignment with the SSS. We then explore the data on Hispanic students' school attendance and emotion regulation to reduce disparities and promote student equity and access.

ASE and the SSS program

Most school counselors need to gain knowledge of theories that consider the unique nature of children and adolescents in their school environments (Dollarhide & Lemberger-Truelove, 2019; Kim et al., in press; Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2020). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) emphasizes the importance of school counselors having a solid theoretical foundation to guide their practice. Many counseling theories are based on traditional approaches that do not consider the school context. The ASE approach is theoretically grounded within school counseling. Figure 1 provides an overview of the ASE theory, which uses a systemic viewpoint to intervene with students and adults within the school setting and is realized through five primary tenets known as the five Cs of ASE: *Compassion*, *Curiosity*, *Connectedness*, *Co-regulation*, and *Contribution* (Lemberger & Bowers, 2023). At the root, ASE believes that school

counseling-derived practices (professional development, consultation, classroom lessons, small group, and individual counseling) are preventative and should seek to improve children's internal capacities, such as social and emotional skills and cognitive aptitudes (Lemberger & Bowers, 2019). Students and adults can better connect to the school environment by improving these internal capacities and creating a co-regulatory relationship (Bowers et al., 2020).

School counselors who adhere to ASE principles embrace traditional humanistic practices by encouraging authenticity within the student experience rather than ascribing to standards set by others within the environment (Bowers et al., 2020). For example, students' goals are self-generated within their chosen dialect. The ASE school counselor believes that the student is the expert in their own life and uses curiosity and compassion to aid them in utilizing such self-actualizing tendencies to advocate for themselves within the school environment. In sharing such goals with their peers within the classroom environment, the students can find commonalities with one another, increasing opportunities for connectivity. This practice is then co-regulated by the school counselor as they model and reinforce empathetic responses. As connectivity grows, students contribute their co-regulated curiosity and compassion back into the environment, further fueling students' connectivity (Lemberger-Truelove & Bowers, 2023). The ASE practices within school counseling encourage mindfulness-based interventions (Lemberger-Truelove & Bowers, 2023). Similarly, an ASE consultation model grounded in mindful meditation can increase teachers' awareness and decrease reported stress and student-teacher conflict (Molina et al., 2022).

The SSS classroom program is built upon previous empirical evidence that supports grade 4–12 students' acquisition of cognitive and noncognitive skills linked to improved academic achievement and well-being (Hattie et al., 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Wang et al., 1994). The SSS skills introduced through a series of classroom lessons involve (a) goal setting and progress monitoring; (b) building a community of caring, support, and encouragement; (c) building cognitive and memory skills; (d) performing under pressure and managing test anxiety; and (e) building healthy optimism (Villares et al., 2023). The SSS program is a preventative guidance curriculum. The school counselor delivers the classroom component, which consists of five guidance lessons administered weekly over 5 weeks. Interventions within the lesson include tracking health, wellness, and self-regulation strategies proven to impact academic achievement, symptoms of anxiety, attendance, social and emotional skills, cognitive abilities, and connectivity to others (Villares et al., 2012, 2023).

Considering SSS from an ASE perspective, the school counselor intervenes preventively with students to develop skillsets that aid in their ability to advocate for themselves within their respective environments. This practice is exemplified within the SSS program as students engage in weekly goal-setting activities in their health and wellness activities and their academic success skills scales. During action planning, students are first encouraged to identify their larger goal, then select specific steps to achieve goal success, followed by monitoring outcomes and celebrating improvements.

Additionally, within the SSS program, students engage in guided meditation where they visualize their calm place. After the guided meditation, students draw what they visualize, share it with a classmate, and then share it with the class. As the school counselor guides students through this practice, they use curiosity and compassion as students' creations are encouraged and openly accepted. The school counselor models empathetic responses, which encourages the development of a caring and supportive community as students engage in meaningful communication and connection with their peers through sharing with a peer then the class. Such interactions speak to the co-regulatory relationship whereby the practices of the school counselor impact those of the students, which inherently return to the school counselor, creating a cyclical environment for continuous improvement. As the students and school counselor increase feelings of connectivity through this classroom experience, their contributions evolve toward improving the larger school environment. The SSS program encourages school counselors to create a caring, supportive, and encouraging classroom environment that embraces the five Cs. Considered within the context of attendance, students who feel more connected to the environment are more likely to go to school. Figure 2 displays a crosswalk between the SSS skills and strategies and the ASE principles that foster students' internal capacities.

SSS research

There is an empirically supported need for school counseling evidence-based programs that promote academic proficiency and social and emotional skills (Domitrovich et al., 2008; Griffith et al., 2019) and are theoretically informed by school counseling theories (Kim et al., *in press*). As schools become more diverse, interventions focusing on marginalized and underrepresented populations are essential for reducing disparities and improving achievement and well-being (USDOE, 2021). The body of SSS research provides evidence that when students across settings, grade levels, regions, and with varying demographic characteristics have engaged in the SSS program, they experience increases in their academic, social-emotional, and executive functioning outcomes when compared with students who did not receive the intervention (Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Lemberger et al., 2015; Villares et al., 2012, 2023; Webb et al., 2019). By implementing the SSS programs, minority students experienced gains in social and emotional skills that lead to better behavior and academic outcomes (León et al., 2011; Urbina et al., 2017), particularly for those who are at risk (Bowers et al., 2015; Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Lemberger et al., 2015). Other SSS research has shown positive results in executive functioning, metacognitive skills, and feelings of connectedness (Lemberger & Clemens, 2012; Lemberger et al., 2015).

Earlier research on the SSS classroom program shows that its implementation positively affects the academic achievement of Hispanic populations in standardized testing. For example, León et al. (2011) and Urbina et al. (2017) studied the impact of the cultural translation of the SSS classroom program for Latina/Latino students when using standardized test measurement. In both studies, students in the treatment group reported positive improvements in reading and math scores in state standardized tests. Similarly, Lemberger-Truelove and colleagues (2018) investigated the effects of the SSS classroom curriculum on academic achievement, specifically in a predominantly Hispanic population, using culturally responsive research methods that consider moderating factors such as cognitive ability and perceptions of connectedness over time. These outcomes are critical as they provide valuable information that interventions are successful when students feel more connected to their classroom environment and use cognitive skills that enhance their ability to engage with others and academic material (USDOE, 2021).

Hispanic students and student-level outcomes

National school enrollment data reveal a steady increase in Hispanic students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), Hispanic elementary and secondary students account for the largest gains in student enrollment since 2010, with increases experienced across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Despite an 8.9% decrease in dropout status from Fall 2010 to Fall 2021, Hispanic students

<i>Advocating Student-Within-Environment Strategies for Promoting Internal Capacities</i>	SSS Learning Skills					SSS Social Skills					SSS Self-Management						
	Goal setting	Progress monitoring	Story structure	Mental practice	Boosting Memory	Social problem solving	Listening and / attending	Encouragement	Peer coaching	Empathy	Positive self-talk	Attention and Focus	Kaizen	Emotion Management	Healthy Optimism	Performing Under Pressure	Using feedback/pattern
Cognitive and Learning Skills																	
Attentional Skills	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X					
Communication skills						X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X
Time Management	X	X		X	X												
Collaboration Skills	X	X				X	X	X	X	X							X
Critical Thinking	X	X	X	X		X											X
Organization	X	X		X	X												
Memory	X	X	X	X	X												
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	X												X	X
Self- and Co-Regulatory Skills																	
Mindfulness				X							X	X		X		X	
EF: Working Memory			X	X	X												
EF: Inhibition						X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
EF: Interference Control						X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
EF: Cognitive Flexibility	X	X				X							X		X	X	X
EF: Reasoning	X					X											X
EF: Problem-Solving	X	X	X	X		X										X	X
EF: Shifting of Attention	X	X				X						X	X			X	X
EF: Planning	X	X											X				
CASEL Skills (2002)																	
Self-Awareness		X		X		X	X			X	X	X		X		X	
Self-Management		X				X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Social Awareness						X	X	X	X	X				X			X
Relationship Skills						X	X	X	X	X				X			X
Responsible Decision-Making	X	X				X		X	X	X							

FIGURE 2 Student Success Skills and Advocating Student-within-Environment strategies for promoting internal capacities crosswalk. *Note:* SSS, Student Success Skills; EF, executive functions; CASEL, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

still represent the largest race/ethnic group (7.8%) leaving school before earning their high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). However, examining more than enrollment numbers is required. Educators must also monitor students' attendance, suspensions, and course failures and investigate the underlying causes. These factors are among the most potent early warning indicators associated with adverse school outcomes (USDOE, 2021).

For Hispanic youth in the United States, research shows their education, mental health, and well-being are impacted

by accumulated disparities affecting short- and long-term outcomes with initial disadvantages attributed to parental immigration status, lower educational attainment, the language spoken at home, and limited engagement in literacy activities (Ramirez et al., 2017; Schneider et al., 2006). For instance, families that primarily speak Spanish at home are less likely to engage in at-home prekindergarten literacy activities (visiting libraries, storytelling), tend to be recent immigrants, live in disadvantaged communities, are less familiar with the US culture and education practices,

and have less income (Ramirez et al., 2017; Schneider et al., 2006). These factors negatively contribute to economic, cultural, structural, and social barriers hindering educational opportunities and stable employment.

Additionally, Schneider and colleagues (2006) reported that Hispanic youth are more likely to attend urban schools with limited resources and located in impoverished communities, have administrators employ less qualified teachers, and experience more mental health issues when compared to their White peers. Among Hispanics, female adolescents report the highest rates of suicide ideation and suicide attempts and are twice as likely to attempt suicide as compared to Hispanic males (Ramirez et al., 2017). Stress, anxiety, and depression often stem from adverse migration and acculturation experiences, exposure to violence in schools and communities, and barriers to community-based interventions, including access to quality mental health services. Barriers to access, including a lack of culturally informed approaches, contribute to lower engagement in care by Hispanic and Latino youth, who are less likely to continue treatment for severe mental illness (Ramirez et al., 2017). Therefore, school counselors are uniquely positioned to plan and coordinate preventive programs and services that support Hispanic students' needs and enhance their relationships with educators and peers. However, counselors must plan and deliver specific interventions that improve the school environment to encourage consistent and positive school engagement (Rocha et al., 2019). Research shows that students who attend schools that promote safe and encouraging environments are more actively engaged in school activities and report better achievement and discipline rates than their peers (USDOE, 2021).

School attendance and emotion regulation

From a social determinant of health viewpoint, access to education is essential for students to reduce social, occupational, economic, and health disparities (Johnson et al., 2022). School counselors must consider the multidimensional factors that affect students' absence from school and their ability to communicate with their caregivers (immigration status, generation status, fear of deportation, cultural mismatches, institutional mistrust, acculturation, and language barriers, among others) rather than reducing students to reported data (Johnson et al., 2022; Salgado de Synder et al., 2021). Student attendance can be viewed as an immediate barrier that impacts students' academic growth and development (Ginsburg et al., 2014), engagement in the social context of the school, and a sense of school connectedness to other peers and educators (Johnson et al., 2022). Furthermore, students from low-income and minority backgrounds are more likely to access mental health professionals and services while in school (USDOE, 2021). Students with unmet needs may encounter additional academic, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, further complicating their mental health needs and leading to long-term student consequences of poor attendance, decreased graduation rates and college

enrollment, limited professional and career opportunities, and continued poverty (Bushnell, 2021; USDOE, 2021). By focusing on creating positive, safe, and nurturing environments, school counselors help disrupt systemic inequities and promote targeted universal and preventative support for all students and families (Johnson et al., 2022).

Managing one's emotions, including the intensity and duration of emotional experiences, is essential to emotional well-being. Emotion regulation strategies can vary in effectiveness in preventing psychological disorders, and difficulties regulating emotions often relate to stress (Aldao et al., 2010). Still, emotion regulation must be considered within a cultural or environmental context to determine whether a strategy is adaptive or maladaptive (Joormann & D'Avanzato, 2010). Similarly, the cultural differences in emotion regulation are an important consideration. Some cultures encourage or discourage the use of strategies that can impact one's emotional well-being. Consequently, the selection and frequency of emotion regulation strategies could vary depending on students' backgrounds (Kwon et al., 2013).

In this study, the authors conceptualized emotion regulation as participants' ability to self-regulate their stress and anxiety, specifically test anxiety. These skills are related to the strategies taught in the SSS classroom program to help students improve their ability to perform under pressure. Researchers have described self-regulation as an umbrella term composed of three domains for cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functions emerging from one's ability to process events (Palacios & Bohlmann, 2020). Cognitive self-regulation encompasses planning, goal setting, motivation, organization, and self-monitoring (Fomina et al., 2020; Ohrt et al., 2014). Emotional and behavioral self-regulation skills are consistent with one's ability to maintain self-control despite external stimuli to remain on task toward achieving a goal and often run parallel to one's behaviors in a classroom (Palacios & Bohlmann, 2020).

The current study utilized a cultural response lens to research, identifying critical factors from stakeholders coupled with self-reported self-regulation and test anxiety measures. While achievement scores are valued among stakeholders, constructs related to self-efficacy are linked to positive high-stakes outcomes. Students often use self-regulation to engage in the school environment, whether to execute appropriate classroom behaviors or engage socially with peers. Bandura (1991) broadly defines self-regulation as intentionally monitoring one's beliefs. Self-regulation is often associated with increased academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011) and collegial success (Galla et al., 2019; Yahaya et al., 2020).

Students can experience test anxiety when experiencing an evaluation situation. Students may experience test anxiety through cognitive symptoms (excessive worrying, intrusive thoughts, disorganization, and tension) or physical responses (rapid heartbeat, sweats, headaches). The cognitive symptoms are often associated with performance (Holic & Cretu, 2018). From an emotion regulation perspective, students can learn to apply strategies to disrupt or reduce negative thoughts

during tests and performances (Holic & Cretu, 2018). Specifically, students can learn to preventatively manage their test anxiety by addressing their task-focused process (recognizing concrete tasks and putting energy toward tasks under the student's control), regaining task focus (consciously shifting thoughts and emotions away from the task and toward their beliefs about their performance), and emotion-focused processes—managing how they will respond to their feelings during a test and the strategies needed to reduce disruptive thoughts and regain their attention to the task at hand (Holic & Cretu, 2018). These heightened emotions and difficulty managing test anxiety can lead to lower self-esteem and avoidance of academic challenges that may result in positive postsecondary opportunities such as enrollment in Advanced Placement courses or taking and scoring well on college entrance exams. Therefore, selecting and using effective emotion regulation strategies to manage one's emotional responses to stressful situations is vital to long-term success and emotional well-being (Holic & Cretu, 2018; Kwon et al., 2013; Ohrt et al., 2014).

Purpose and research questions

This study aims to assess the impact of the SSS classroom program, led by school counselors, on the school attendance, self-regulation, and test anxiety of grade 5 Hispanic students. The study addresses the call for interventions that meet the needs of the fastest growing school-aged population (Bowers et al., 2015; Lemberger et al., 2015; León et al., 2011). The research questions (RQ) asked, what is the impact of the SSS classroom program on grade 5 Hispanic students' (RQ1) school attendance, (RQ2) self-regulation skills, and (RQ3) test anxiety? The researchers hypothesized that students taking part in the SSS classroom program would experience increased school attendance and improved self-regulation and test anxiety.

METHOD

This study used archival data from an RCT evaluating the SSS classroom program conducted in a large school district in the Southeastern state (Webb et al., 2019). Nonidentifying data were analyzed to investigate the impact of the SSS program on the attendance, self-regulation, and test anxiety of Hispanic students as a subset of the original RCT study (Webb et al., 2019). To be eligible, the school had to employ a certified school counselor, offer at least four grade 5 general education classes, and adhere to the study protocols, including allowing time for data collection and the implementation of the SSS intervention (treatment only). All fifth-grade students in classes were invited to participate in the study. The study required a total sample size of 112 students to detect an intervention effect, as estimated by the priori G-Power analysis with a 0.05 alpha, 0.80 effect size (ES), and 0.95 power (Faul et al., 2007).

TABLE 1 Sample demographics.

	Treatment (<i>n</i> = 383)	Control (<i>n</i> = 298)
Gender		
Male	187	153
Female	196	145
English language learner		
ELL student	229	147
Non-ELL student	154	151
Special education		
ESE student	55	51
Non-ESE student	328	247
Socioeconomic status		
Free/reduced lunch	299	195
No free/reduced lunch	84	103

Abbreviations: ELL, English Language Learner; ESE, Special Education.

Participants

This study involved data from 681 grade 5 Hispanic students attending 30 elementary schools in one school district. Upon enrollment in the district, parents or caregivers provided information about their primary language spoken at home and students' ethnicity. All students in the volunteer general education classes were invited to participate, regardless of their English Language Learner (ELL) and Special Education (ESE) status. The sample consisted of males (*n* = 340) and females (*n* = 341) and students who were also receiving ELL (*n* = 405) and ESE (*n* = 106) support services. The researchers did not collect data from self-contained or intensive ELL or ESE classroom students. Most students received free or reduced lunch (*n* = 494). Table 1 displays the student demographics by treatment and control group.

Procedures

The randomly assigned treatment school counselors participated in a 1-day training to learn how to deliver the SSS classroom intervention. The school counselors in the treatment group delivered five 45-min SSS classroom lessons for five consecutive weeks as part of their core curriculum during the Fall semester. In the Spring, the school counselors returned to deliver a monthly booster lesson in January, February, and March. The school counselors in the control group did not deliver the SSS intervention. As usual, students could engage in school counseling services—individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance. Students in the control group followed the same data collection timeline.

The participants completed the study measures 2 weeks before the first SSS lesson (pre), 2 weeks after the fifth SSS lesson (post1), and 30 weeks (post2) after the fifth SSS lesson. The participants affixed precoded generic labels to each

assessment, which allowed all data to remain anonymous. The surveys were read aloud to all students by trained graduate students hired to administer the student assessments in the treatment and control groups. The district reported the students' demographic data and the end-of-year attendance for three consecutive years (grades 4, 5, and 6). For the current study, students' scores at each data collection point had to be available for each analysis.

Intervention

The school counselors in the treatment group delivered the SSS classroom intervention (Brigman & Webb, 2010). The program has a detailed manual with scripts, note pages, and accompanying slide decks for each lesson to support implementation. The school counselors completed weekly logs to record any irregularities with the program delivery. Furthermore, the district coordinator visited the classrooms to observe the counselors delivering the lessons. The teachers in the treatment group also received 1-day training in the SSS program to reinforce the students' use of the SSS strategies when appropriate throughout the school year. The school counselors and teachers in the control group were not eligible to receive the SSS training until after the study ended.

Measures

This study involved school-level attendance data and two student self-report measures, the Student Engagement in School Success Skills (SESSS) Self-Regulation of Arousal subscale and the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) test anxiety subscale. The district reported the attendance data as the total number of days absent per academic for each student. Fewer days absent was more favorable.

Respondents completing the 33-item SESSS survey rate how often they engage in learning, social, and self-management strategies taught in the SSS program (Carey et al., 2014). Students reflect over the past 2 weeks and select a response on a 4-point scale (1 = *I didn't do this at all*, 2 = *I did this once*, 3 = *I did this two times*, and 4 = *I did this three or more times*). The self-regulation of arousal subscale includes three items: *I imagine being in a calm place in order to feel less stressed*; *I focus on positive thoughts so I will feel less stressed*; and *I focus on slowing my breathing so I will feel less stressed*. The SESSS survey has a Cronbach alpha of 0.90 with a coefficient reliability of 0.68 for the self-regulation of the arousal subscale (Villares et al., 2014).

The MSLQ, a 56-item self-report, uses a 5-point scale ranging from *not at all true of me* (1) to *very much true of me* (5). The test anxiety scale includes five items: *When I take a test, I think about how poorly I am doing compared to other students*; *When I take a test, I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer*; *When I take tests, I think of the con-*

sequences of failing; *I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam*; and *I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam*. The MSLQ Test Anxiety subscale has a coefficient reliability alpha of 0.75 (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990).

Data analysis

The researchers use a multivariate analysis of covariance analysis (MANCOVA) to assess differences between post1 to post2 scores for Hispanic students' attendance, self-regulation of arousal, and test anxiety. The participants' pretest scores were added as covariates to reduce type 1 and type 2 errors (Brace et al., 2016). The MANCOVA is an appropriate statistical analysis when assessing whether mean differences exist between groups across multiple continuous dependent variables while controlling for at least one continuous covariate variable (Brace et al., 2016; Griffith & Villares, 2023). A Cohen's (*d*) effect size was calculated for each measure, and its strength was interpreted using the standard benchmark of small (0–0.2), medium (0.3–0.5), and large (0.8–1). However, researchers suggest effect sizes must be considered within the context of previous related research, the study's design, and the findings' educational impact (Sink & Stroh, 2006).

RESULTS

This research used archival data from an RCT study from 2011 to 2014 (Webb et al., 2019). The quantitative data were analyzed in the SPSS 29 program (IBM Corp, 2023). Test for normality and visual inspection of histograms, *Q–Q* plots, and box plots showed that the dependent variables were approximately normally distributed. We used mean substitution for less than 1% of the cases to avoid losing data. However, a student was removed from an analysis if their post1 or post2 assessment data were unavailable. Table 2 presents each dependent variable's means and standard deviations by treatment condition.

Attendance

A MANCOVA test was conducted to determine whether grade 5 Hispanic students who received the SSS program would have fewer absences over 3 years when compared to students who did not. The participant's pretest score for attendance was used as the covariate (0.04) to control for differences between treatment and comparison groups. MANCOVA results revealed a statistical significance (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.988$, $F[2, 635] = 3.853$, $p = 0.022$, $d = 0.16$, small effect). Further analysis of univariate test shows there was not a statistically significant difference in school attendance (fewer absences) between the treatment ($n = 359$, $M = 0.04$, $SD = 0.04$) and comparison groups ($n = 280$, $M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.04$) at post1 ($F[1, 636] = 3.019$, $p = 0.083$, $d = 0.14$,

TABLE 2 Treatment and control group means and standard deviations for attendance, test anxiety, and self-regulation of arousal.

	Treatment	Post1 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Post2 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Control	Post1 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Post2 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Absences	<i>n</i> = 359	0.04 (0.04)	0.03 (0.07)	<i>n</i> = 280	0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.15)
Test anxiety	<i>n</i> = 312	9.35 (6.93)	8.65 (4.25)	<i>n</i> = 223	9.91 (4.63)	9.58 (4.62)
Self-regulation of arousal	<i>n</i> = 307	8.35 (2.71)	7.36 (2.90)	<i>n</i> = 220	7.85 (2.79)	7.80 (2.75)

Note: Post1, data collected 2 weeks after the fifth SSS lesson; Post2, data collected 30 weeks after the fifth SSS lesson.

small effect). However, there was a statistically significant difference in school attendance (fewer absences) between the Hispanic treatment ($n = 359$, $M = 0.03$, $SD = 0.07$) and comparison groups ($n = 280$, $M = 0.05$, $SD = 0.15$) in post2 scores ($F[1, 636] = 4.946$, $p = 0.027$, $d = 0.18$, small effect).

Self-regulation

Scores on the SESSS Self-Regulation of Arousal subscale were analyzed using a MANCOVA to determine whether there was a statistical difference between the treatment and control groups. The participant pretest score ($M = 8.09$) was used as the covariate to account for any group differences in self-regulation. MANCOVA results revealed no statistical significance (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.992$, $F[2, 523] = 2.034$, $p = 0.132$, $d = 0.13$, small effect). The analysis of the univariate test showed there was no statistically significant difference at post1 ($F[1, 524] = 4.021$, $p = 0.045$, $d = 0.18$) between the treatment ($n = 307$, $M = 8.35$, $SD = 2.71$) and control groups ($n = 220$, $M = 7.85$, $SD = 2.80$). Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference at post2 ($F[1, 524] = 0.480$, $p = 0.489$, $d = 0.06$, small effect). However, students in the treatment group ($n = 307$, $M = 8.00$, $SD = 2.82$) still reported a higher score than those in the control group ($n = 220$, $M = 7.80$, $SD = 2.76$).

Test anxiety

A MANCOVA test was conducted to measure differences between the treatment and control group scores on the MLSQ Test Anxiety subscale. The participants' pretest score ($M = 10.35$) was used to control differences in test anxiety perceived by students before the SSS Classroom Program intervention. Results from the MANCOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the treatment and comparison groups (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.987$, $F[2, 531] = 3.384$, $p = 0.035$, $d = 0.16$, small effect). Follow-up univariate tests showed there was no statistically significant difference between grade 5 Hispanic students in the treatment ($n = 312$, $M = 9.35$, $SD = 6.93$) and control ($n = 223$, $M = 9.91$, $SD = 4.63$) groups measured at post1 ($F[1, 532] = 1.340$, $p = 0.248$, $d = 0.10$, small effect). However, there was a statistical significance at post2 ($F[1, 532] = 6.772$, $p = 0.010$, $d = 0.23$, small effect) between the Hispanic students who participated in the program ($n = 312$, $M = 8.65$, $SD = 4.25$)

when compared to their peers in the control group ($n = 223$, $M = 9.58$, $SD = 4.62$).

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of the ASE-informed intervention, the SSS classroom program, on grade 5 Hispanic students' school attendance, self-regulation, and test anxiety. Connecting the ASE theory and the SSS intervention helps to empower the school counselor's work within the school context and prioritize the fundamental principles necessary to promote changes in students' and educators' internal capacities and success (Kim et al., in press). The first outcome explored whether there was a statistical difference in school attendance between treatment and control groups. Many factors may contribute to students not attending school, including health issues, family issues, environmental changes, social concerns, and motivation levels (Ginsburg et al., 2014). These factors can be worsened for Hispanic students, who may experience additional fears related to immigration status, institutional mistrust, cultural misunderstandings, and language barriers (Salgado de Synder et al., 2021). The current study showed that students in the treatment group attended more days of school at 30 weeks following the intervention than the control group. This is an encouraging result as more days in school predict academic achievement, dropout rates, graduation, and college completion (Ginsburg et al., 2014). The initial delay in improved attendance is similar to Lemberger and colleagues' (2018) longitudinal study of the SSS program, which found time was a mediator. This suggests that time is needed for some skill sets to be practiced and utilized, subsequently permeating the environment where lasting effects are noted. Also, this finding is consistent with the ASE premise that school counselors must implement counseling interventions that promote encouraging, safe, and nurturing climates to help build trust among students, teachers, and counselors to reduce the immediate barriers limiting students' growth (Johnson et al., 2022). Research on attendance shows absenteeism can affect all students, and understanding the barriers faced by minority students (linguistic, cultural, racial, and socioeconomic) is necessary for implementing interventions that promote positive learning environments and encourage student engagement. Further, implementing culturally responsive, evidence-based programs can reduce teacher bias, increase access to services, and elevate the hopes of students and their families. Family engagement is essential for student success. When school

counselors work collaboratively with educators, parents, and caregivers, they can help disrupt negative stereotypes, identify fractures in education systems and school settings, and challenge policies perpetuating inequities (UnidosUS, 2022).

Data investigating differences in the participants' emotional regulation were mixed. First, the treatment group's self-regulation scores following the intervention improved, but the between-group differences diminished over time. One explanation for the decline is that the survey administration occurred in late Spring, when students may have experienced heightened stress related to grades and concerns over end-of-school and summer activities. For many students, schools promote needed support for academic, social, emotional, and health services. The absence of these supports may result in student dysregulation and the potential for unstructured and isolated periods during the summer months (USDOE, 2021). School counselors can help reduce opportunity gaps by assisting students and families to connect to community-based organizations and resources that provide wraparound services. In this way, the school counselors advocate for prevention, development, wellness, and social justice practices that cultivate the internal student and external social conditions that enhance students' experiences in flexible and meaningful ways (Lemberger & Bowers, 2023). Nonetheless, further investigation is warranted as to why there was no lasting effect.

On the other hand, the data related to test anxiety showed initial group differences were not detected shortly after the intervention but were detected at post2. The results imply that students need time to increase their confidence in performing under pressure. The SSS program emphasizes that with repeated practice, students gain mastery over learning skills, resulting in positive feedback, which increases effort and confidence. These results revealed a connection between the participants' thoughts or cognitive symptoms and their perceptions about performing under pressure (Holic & Cretu, 2018). This finding encourages using programs that teach students to develop cognitive, meta-cognitive, and self-management skills to manage emotional responses effectively (Holic & Cretu, 2018; Kwon et al., 2013; Ohrt et al., 2014). Considered within the context of ASE, school counseling services must be culturally responsive to the students and adult learners within the school. By embracing individual unique circumstances, school counselors can help maximize the students' positionality and foster mutually respectful teacher–student relationships (Lemberger & Bowers, 2023). Previous SSS research showed that students with a stronger sense of belonging improved executive functions (Lemberger & Clemens, 2012) and academic performance (Bowers et al., 2015). Conversely, students who lack a bond with their teachers, peers, and schools resist their teachers' efforts at a personal and academic level. These heightened negative stereotypes and biases can contribute to Hispanic students underperforming on academic tests, resulting in an inaccurate assessment of student abilities, overrepresentation in special needs programs, and school detachment (Schneider et al., 2006).

Finally, despite detecting small (*d*) ESs for each dependent variable, these results must be interpreted within the school counseling literature and research of culturally responsive, evidence-based programs delivered to minority students. Prior SSS studies involving Hispanic students primarily produced larger ESs when exploring the SSS program's impact on standardized test scores (León et al., 2011; Urbina et al., 2017; Villares et al., 2012, 2023). While the ESs appear small in the current study, school counselors can use these results to advocate for reviewing their school and district policies, procedures, and program services to identify which efforts promote preventative, wellness, and social justice practices (e.g., at-home literacy activities, community-based mental health screenings, and school services, violence and crime reduction, and social, economic, and community engagement) that can have long-term positive consequences on Hispanic students' success.

Implications

For decades, school counseling scholars and practitioners have strived to demonstrate their contributions to student and school development (Villares & Dimmitt, 2017). Students' lives and educational systems are becoming increasingly complex. Using an evidence-based intervention consistent with the conceptual bases of professional school counseling, the authors provided outcomes that inform culturally responsive practices and the needs of contemporary students. Future research calls for school counseling scholars to conduct research that enhances the awareness of cultural differences and use their results to advocate for more culturally appropriate programs and policies that support youth development across the life span (Johnson et al., 2022).

The current study demonstrates the value of empirical practices and outcomes that best serve students and educators as interacting determinants of flourishing school environments. Data cannot be sterile symbols captured from quantitative numbers, qualitative utterances, or events. Instead, empirical practices must try to capture how children interact in school environments. Similarly, empirical practices demonstrating the authentic effects of school counseling services must evolve to support increasingly complex students and educational systems. The ASE principles infused in the SSS program help provide a framework for organizing and delivering practices that inspire collaboration and mutual respect. Practitioners can use these findings to evaluate whether their programs produce similar results and develop a sense of agency and capacity to change the status quo in favor of improving the sociocultural contexts. They must consider how resources (time, funding, training, materials) are spent and discontinue efforts not supported by evidence or do not reduce disparities among the student populations (USDOE, 2021).

Counselor educators, practitioners, and policymakers can use these outcomes to increase advocacy efforts that expand the internal capacities of their students, staff, and

communities by showing how their services prioritize well-being and reduce barriers and inequality (USDOE, 2021). Counselor educators and researchers must also consider expanding methods for including marginalized populations in studies by translating measures and recruitment materials and engaging in participatory action research. This can provide meaningful data and insight into empirical findings and bridge theory and practice. Training in how to address socio-cultural differences through theoretically informed and culturally responsive practices is necessary to prepare graduate students and practitioners to deliver programs and interventions aimed at improving students' well-being and success. Additionally, data gathered from implementing a continuum of evidence-based prevention practices can be leveraged to support the integration of preventative frameworks suited to the school context, responsive to all students' academic and mental health needs, and promote equitable implementation and outcomes (USDOE, 2021). Similarly, exploring more inclusive and creative empirical strategies that prioritize theories grounded in the school counseling practice and the school context would be beneficial to enhance the school counseling literature. From this stance, school counselors can create space and opportunity for students and educators to enhance outcomes that improve the quality of their personal and professional experiences (Kim et al., in press).

Limitations and future research

This study used archival data from one school district in the Southeast United States; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all grade 5 Hispanic students. Future studies should consider examining data from various districts, states, grades, and minority groups. In this study, the authors reference students as Hispanic based on their ancestral ties to a country where Spanish is the primary language rather than using the term Latino/a/x, which pertains to their country of origin in Latin America and the Caribbean. While these terms are often used interchangeably, information about the students' countries of origin was unavailable. Future studies should consider gathering data on the students' migration experience, county of origin, and household size to test for any potential influences between students who identify as Hispanic and Latino/a/x/ or other cultural differences. Finally, students completed two self-report measures during one academic year, which may have introduced participant bias. Future studies should consider extending the data collection period over several years and include teacher and parent instruments to compare with the students' self-observations.

CONCLUSION

Hispanic students often face unique challenges that may impact their attendance and emotional regulation in school. To address these issues, the SSS program was implemented to improve these student-level outcomes, and the results yielded

promising results in improving attendance rates and helping students better manage their emotions in the classroom. By providing students with the tools needed to succeed, the SSS program, grounded in the ASE theory, can help to promote academic success and overall well-being among Hispanic students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

ORCID

Elizabeth Villares  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1897-4335>

Hannah Bowers  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2263-2370>

Greg Brigman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8044-9718>

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