

# AN EVALUATION OF THE MAKING RIGHT CHOICES PROGRAM



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
MAKING RIGHT CHOICES.....	1
METHODS.....	2
FINDINGS.....	3
SUMMARY.....	10
FUTURE EVALUATIONS.....	11
APPENDIX.....	12

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

An estimated 10% of K-12 students are susceptible to school employee sexual misconduct, the abuse of a child (contact or non-contact) by a school employee (teacher, coach, administrator, volunteer, classified staff member, or non-contract employee) while the child is in the employee's care in a school setting. Yet, school employees are often unaware of school employee sexual misconduct policies and reporting requirements (Grant et al., 2017) and feel unprepared to recognize signs of abuse or make a report (Crenshaw, Crenshaw, & Lichtenberg, 1995). When school employees lack awareness about sexual misconduct they may fail to recognize and report cases to child welfare or law enforcement agencies (Jennings & Tharp, 2003; Kenny, 2001; Shakeshaft, 2004, 2013; Shoop, 2004; Willmsen & O'Hagen, 2003).

There has been limited research on the effectiveness of prevention and risk reduction programs that cover school employee sexual misconduct (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, and Kracke, 2009). Studies that examine these trainings are needed to better understand their impact and, ultimately, better protect students from sexual misconduct. To address the need for more evidence-based prevention programs, the *Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, Vision of Hope* fund granted Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct and Exploitation (S.E.S.A.M.E.), a nation leading non-profit prevention and support organization, funds to support the implementation and evaluation of Making Right Choices, a promising school employee sexual misconduct prevention program, in three U.S. school districts during the 2017/18 school year.

## MAKING RIGHT CHOICES

Making Right Choices, a school employee sexual misconduct prevention program, was developed in 2007 in response to three episodes of sexual misconduct with students during a five-year period at a charter school. The training development involved meeting with stakeholder groups who were concerned about safe schools including parents, students, counselors, clergy, school resource officers, contract employees, teachers, administrators and union representatives for both classified and certified employee groups. The product, Making Right Choices, provides school employees with an engaging sexual misconduct prevention program through both online and face-to-face training. Making Right Choices customizable and interactive courses introduce participants to preventive measures and best practices that promote a healthy learning environment for students and those who serve them. Preliminary data from 11,000 participants since 2007 revealed that a large majority of participants' report increasing their knowledge and awareness of school employee sexual misconduct as a result of their participation in the Making Right Choices training.

The goal of the 90-minute Making Right Choices course, which is presented online or in-person, is to increase participants' ability to identify behaviors and risks related to school employee sexual misconduct. After completing the course, participants should be able to 1) recognize when they or others are at risk of crossing the line into abusive or potentially abusive behavior;

2) understand what factors make children more likely to become victims; 3) recognize the different types of perpetrators; 4) better understand the consequences of abuse; 5) recall the steps to fulfill reporting responsibilities; 6) recognize their responsibility as mandated reporters; 7) identify how to protect themselves and students from harm; 8) increase their understanding of the education codes, regulations, ethics, and laws governing behavior and defining sexual misconduct; 9) practice strategies for healthy decision making. See Table 1 for an overview of the four sections of the Making Right Choices program.

**Table 1. Making Right Choices Outline**

Section	Content
1. Engagement and Relevance	Research on the scope of problem
2. Recognition	Risk factors, victim impact, grooming
3. Response	Prevention, self-care, review of specific situations
4. Reporting	Necessity, responsibilities, protections

## METHODS

### *SAMPLE*

For this study, *Making Right Choices* was implemented in 3 school districts located in California. The prior course survey was administered to 219 participants prior to completing the course between September 2017 and May 2018. The number of those that completed the survey versus those that completed course was not directly calculated. Participants were asked to self-report their type of employment. The inclusion of different employee groups is of value because the goal of the course was to deliver material that would reach all school employees. Overall, the sample included 75.8% contract teachers, 2.7% non-contract classified employees (i.e., substitute teachers, coaches, volunteers, hourly employees), 14.2% contract classified and 7.3% administrators. These participants were quite experienced in their field with 76.7% of the participants having 10 or more years served in education. The participants were made up of a variety of age ranges: 6% were in their twenties, 21% were in their thirties, 34% were in their forties, 30% were in their fifties, 7% were in their sixties, and 2% were under 20 or 70+. Additionally, the sample included a majority of females (76%), Caucasians (70%), Hispanics (11%), and Asians (8%). Of these participants, about 63% of them had some prior training on sexual misconduct. The survey was confidential, and participants were not asked to name the district or school where they worked. As a result, data is not separated by district.

### *ASSESSMENTS*

Measures for this study included pre and post surveys and feedback surveys. The surveys took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete, included a combination of qualitative and quantitative items, and included questions regarding school employee knowledge, awareness of vulnerability,

risk and protective factors, as well as ascertaining their confidence to report. Following the course, participants were asked to complete a 32-item survey regarding their knowledge and awareness of school employee sexual misconduct and their perceptions of the training. The Preventing Sexual Misconduct survey consists of 26 five-point Likert questions (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) regarding participant knowledge, skills, and awareness; 6 additional questions about the overall usefulness and quality of the training and an open response section. The feedback survey included 10 open-ended questions that asked participants to reflect on the strengths of the course, the format, and provide recommendations for improvement.

### *DATA ANALYSIS*

This project included both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis of data from the surveys included the calculation of percentages, means, and standard deviations and paired samples t-tests. Qualitative data was analyzed using the process of analytic induction.

## FINDINGS

This section of the report provides the results for the pre and post knowledge and awareness surveys and the final feedback survey.

Prior to taking the course, participants were asked to describe what they would like to learn from the training. Participants suggested the following:

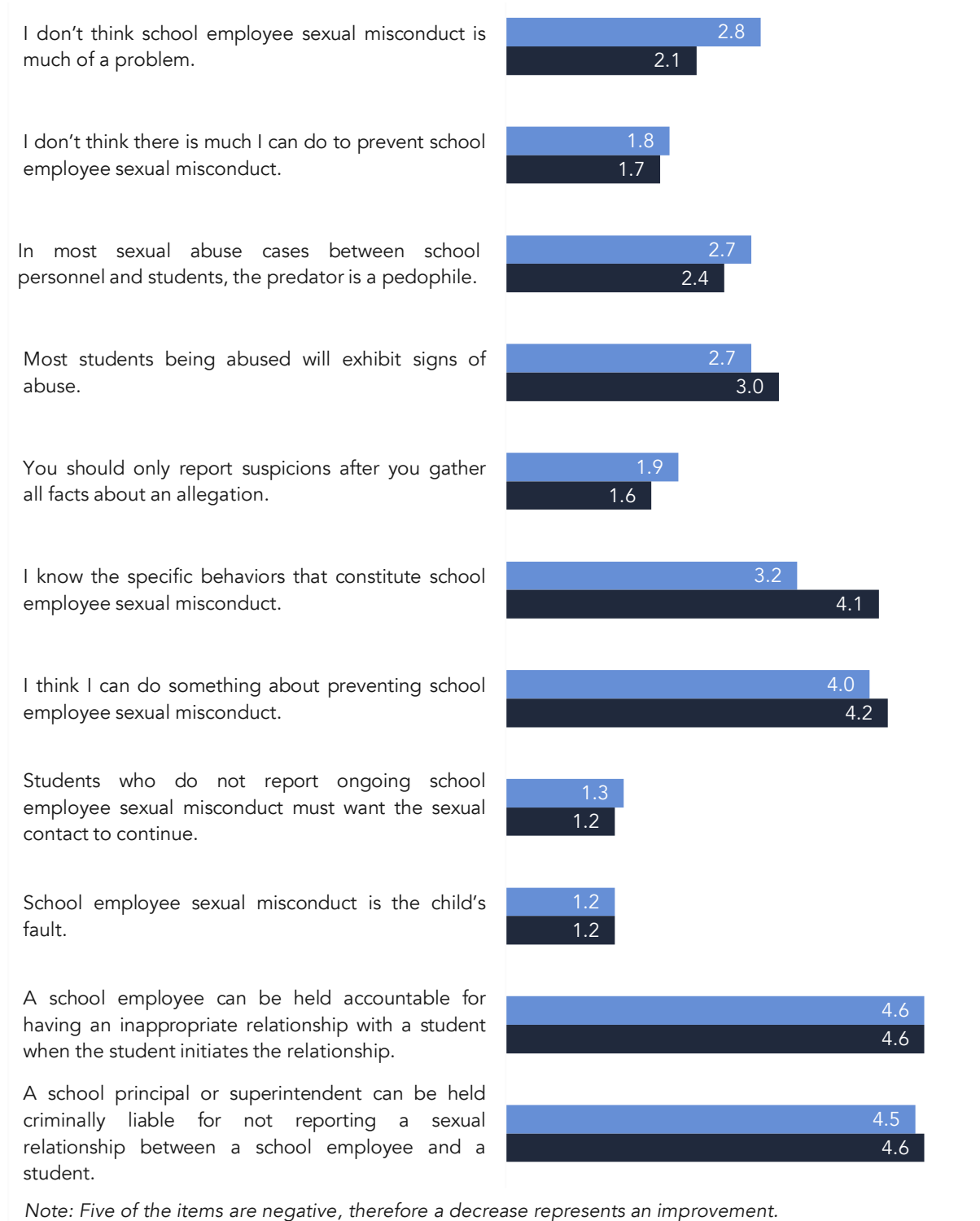
- Become more proficient in recognizing and reporting sexual misconduct
- Review rules and regulations
- Learn to do the “right and proper thing” when managing sexual misconduct
- Learn about tools to support students and employees
- Learn what is safe for male teachers to interact with all students
- Boundaries – what to do and what not to do
- Reminder of what to report and how
- How to help a student when an issue arises

### *KNOWLEDGE*

Participants were then asked to rate 11-likert style questions about their knowledge of school employee sexual misconduct using a five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). For all 11 questions, participant ratings stayed the same or improved from pretest to posttest (see Figure 1). Five of the items are negative, therefore a decrease represents an improvement.

**After participating in the Making Right Choices Training school employees improved their knowledge of school employee sexual misconduct.**

**Figure 1. Average Participant Agreement with Knowledge and Awareness Questions at Pre and Posttest**



To examine whether the differences from pre to posttest were statistically significant, paired samples t-tests were calculated for each of the 11 items. Seven of the differences were statistically significant and correspond to 10% or more improvement and effects sizes of .25 or greater (see Table 2).

**After participating in the Making Right Choices Training knowledge improvements were statistically significant for seven of the eleven survey items.**

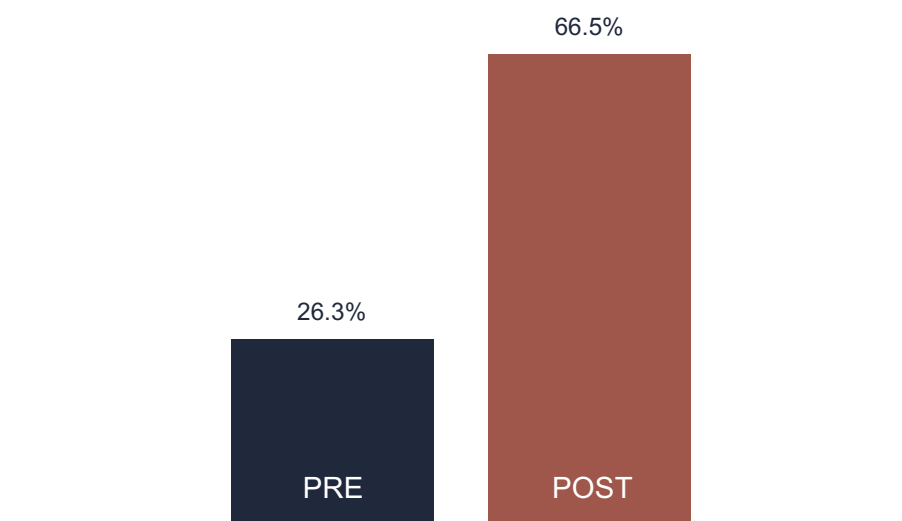
**Table 2. Paired Samples T-Tests for Participant Scores Before and After Participation in the Making Right Choices Training**

Outcome Measure	N	Pre-Post Mean Difference	Standard Deviation	t-value	df	p value	Effect Size	% Improvement
I don't think school employee sexual misconduct is much of a problem.	133	-.96	1.19	-9.28	132	<.01**	-.77	34%
I don't think there is much I can do to prevent school employee sexual misconduct.	134	-.19	.75	-2.89	133	<.01**	.28	11%
In most sexual abuse cases between school personnel and students, the predator is a pedophile.	133	-.41	1.26	-3.71	132	<.01**	.38	15%
Most students being abused will exhibit signs of abuse.	132	.27	1.21	2.52	131	.01**	.25	10%
You should only report suspicions after you gather all facts about an allegation.	134	.34	.88	4.44	133	<.01**	.35	18%
I know the specific behaviors that constitute school employee sexual misconduct.	133	1.02	1.07	10.98	132	<.01**	1.07	32%
I think I can do something about preventing school employee sexual misconduct.	134	.28	.79	4.05	133	<.01**	.43	7%
Students who do not report ongoing school employee sexual misconduct must want the sexual contact to continue.	133	-.10	.66	-1.71	132	.09	.15	8%
School employee sexual misconduct is the child's fault.	133	-.02	.30	-.58	132	.57	.05	2%
A school employee can be held accountable for having an inappropriate relationship with a student when the student initiates the relationship.	134	.02	.99	-.26	133	.79	.02	0%
A school principal or superintendent can be held criminally liable for not reporting a sexual relationship between a school employee and a student.	133	.08	1.01	.86	132	.39	.10	2%

\*\* Statistically significant

Participants were also asked to estimate the number of students who experience school employee sexual misconduct. Based on the literature, 1 in 10 students will experience school employee sexual misconduct (Shakeshaft, 2004). Prior to taking the course 26.3% of participants selected the correct answer and 66.5% of participants selected the correct answer after taking the course (see Figure 2).

**After participating in the Making Right Choices Training more school employees correctly identified the number of students who experienced school employee sexual misconduct.**



**Figure 2. Percent of Participants who Correctly Identified the Prevalence of School Employee Sexual Misconduct Before and After Participation in the Making Right Choices Training**

After completion of the Making Right Choices training, participants were asked to complete some outcome only questions about their knowledge and awareness of sexual misconduct issues. For all 12 items, the majority of participants agreed or strongly agree that the Making Right Choices training improved their knowledge and awareness of school employee sexual misconduct (see Table 3).

**The majority of participants *agreed or strongly agreed* that Making Right Choices Training improved their knowledge and awareness of school employee sexual misconduct issues.**



**Table 3. Average Participant Agreement with Knowledge and Awareness Questions**

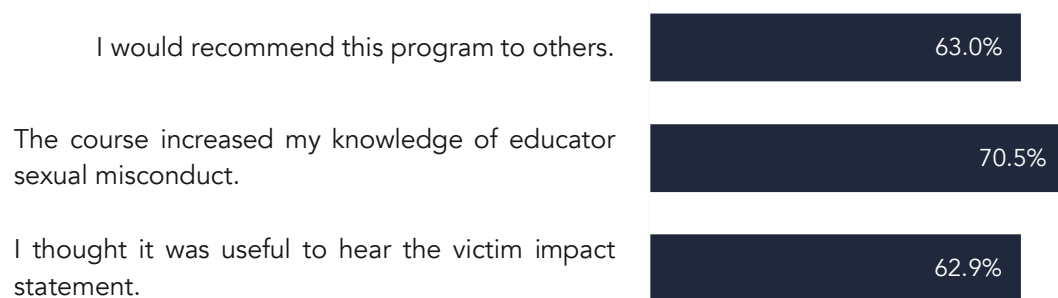
Item	Strongly Disagree (n)	Disagree (n)	Neutral (n)	Agree (n)	Strongly Agree (n)
...I believe that sexual misconduct occurs more frequently than I did before.	1.0% (n=2)	7.1% (n=14)	16.7% (n=33)	52.5% (n=104)	22.7% (n=45)
...I am more aware of risk factors that increase the chance that a student will become a victim.	1.5% (n=3)	7.1% (n=14)	10.6% (n=21)	52.0% (n=103)	28.8% (n=57)
...I am more aware of risk factors that make employees more likely to cross a line with a student	1.0% (n=2)	4.5% (n=9)	8.1% (n=16)	55.6% (n=110)	30.8% (n=61)
...I better understand how to report.	3.0% (n=6)	10.1% (n=20)	14.1% (n=28)	41.9% (n=83)	30.8% (n=61)
...I am more likely to report if I suspect Sexual Misconduct.	1.0% (n=2)	7.1% (n=14)	15.7% (n=31)	39.9% (n=79)	36.4% (n=72)
...I am more aware of the damage students suffer from sexual misconduct.	1.5% (n=3)	8.6% (n=17)	13.6% (n=27)	41.9% (n=83)	34.3% (n=68)
...I am more aware of the consequences employees face from sexual misconduct.	3.0% (n=6)	9.1% (n=18)	13.1% (n=26)	42.4% (n=84)	32.3% (n=64)
...I am less likely to try to "rescue" a student.	3.5% (n=7)	5.6% (n=11)	16.2% (n=32)	40.4% (n=80)	34.3% (n=68)
...I better understand how a balanced life helps me to make right choices.	2.0% (n=4)	5.1% (n=10)	15.2% (n=30)	46.0% (n=91)	31.8% (n=63)
...I have a better understanding of my reporting obligations.	2.5% (n=5)	7.6% (n=15)	11.6% (n=23)	43.9% (n=87)	34.3% (n=68)
...I have a better able to recognize behavior that crosses the line.	2.0% (n=4)	6.1% (n=12)	16.7% (n=33)	41.9% (n=83)	33.3% (n=66)
...I better understand the district policy.	4.6% (n=9)	9.1% (n=18)	14.7% (n=29)	37.6% (n=74)	34.0% (n=67)

## PERCEPTIONS

On the post assessment participants were also asked some questions about their satisfaction with the Making Right Choices training. More than 70% of participants said the course increased their knowledge of educator sexual misconduct and 63% thought it was useful to hear the victim impact statement and would recommend the training to others (see Figure 3).

**On average, Making Right Choices participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the training.**

Figure 3. Average Percentage Positive Ratings (satisfied or very satisfied)



**The majority of participants said the quality of the training was good or excellent.**

After completion of the course, a longer perception survey was administered to gather participant feedback about the training. Participants were asked to respond to questions about the strengths of the program and provide suggestions for improvement.

## Participants said the Making Right Choices Training had **great information** and **improved awareness**.

First participants were asked “what do you see as the strengths of the Making Right Choices training?” Participants said it had a lot of “great information” and increased their “awareness.” Others said the training was “clear” and “easy.”

“The quality of the information was easy to understand and relate to.”  
- Study Participant

“The strengths of the program are that it makes people more aware of potential issues they might encounter in the workplace and how to deal with those issues.”  
- Study Participant

## Participants liked the organization and format of the training.

Participants were also asked to describe their perceptions of the format of the Making Right Choices Training program. Participant perceptions of the length of the training were mixed, with some participants reporting that the training was “too long” and others reporting it was “just right.”

Participants were also asked to describe the impact the training has had on their knowledge of sexual misconduct issues and their confidence to report misconduct. For example:

“It makes me a lot more aware of what's going on around me and also things that I need to watch with regard to my professional relationship with students.”  
- Study Participant

“It has made me extra aware of gray areas; to always be cautious in protecting both myself and my students. I feel more responsibility to report problems, and I am also more aware of what sorts of issues to report.”  
- Study Participant

Most participants **increased their awareness and confidence** to identify misconduct or make a report.



*"I feel I know better when and what to report and what to do or don't do to when I am unsure."*

*- Study Participant*



*"I am much more aware of what is considered to be misconduct at this point and know who to speak to if a report ever needed to be made."*

*- Study Participant*

### *SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT*

Participants offered multiple suggestions to improve the training including:

- Reducing the length of the training
- Improving the quality of the videos
- Hosting the training in a small group setting
- Including more stories and sample cases
- Removing repetitive content
- Condensing sections/be less "wordy"
- Hosting a follow up/refresher

### **SUMMARY**

This study evaluated the impact of Making Right Choices, a school employee sexual misconduct professional development program, in three California School Districts during the 2017-18 school year. Participants improved their knowledge and awareness of school employee sexual misconduct for 11 items, and that improvement was statistically significant for seven of the 11 items. Participants were also very positive about the training and agreed or strongly agreed with statements regarding improvements to their knowledge and awareness. Participants appreciated the information provided during the trainings and reported increased awareness and confidence regarding boundary violations and reporting requirements.

## FUTURE EVALUATIONS

To better assess program outcomes in the future, it is recommended that Making Right Choices continue to incorporate evaluation activities into their trainings. Specifically, evaluators recommend the following:

- develop subscale and overall scoring for the measures,
- conduct reliability testing on the measures,
- deliver the program to a larger sample,
- assess long-term impacts by tracking program and participant progress over time, and
- collect data from a comparison group to measure changes between groups.

## APPENDIX

**Table A1. Average Participant Awareness and Knowledge Agreement ratings Pre and Post Training**

	Strongly Disagree (n)		Disagree (n)		Neutral (n)		Agree(n)		Strongly Agree (n)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
I don't think school employee sexual misconduct is much of a problem.	15.3% (n=33)	39.1% (n=79)	29.8% (n=64)	31.7% (n=64)	23.3% (n=50)	15.3% (n=31)	24.7% (n=53)	11.4% (n=23)	7.0% (n=15)	2.5% (n=5)
I don't think there is much I can do to prevent school employee sexual misconduct.	32.9% (n=71)	47.8% (n=97)	54.6% (n=118)	40.4% (n=82)	10.6% (n=23)	7.4% (n=15)	1.9% (n=4)	2.5% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	2.0% (n=4)
In most sexual abuse cases between school personnel and students, the predator is a pedophile.	10.0% (n=21)	26.6% (n=54)	40.3% (n=85)	40.4% (n=82)	23.2% (n=49)	10.8% (n=22)	20.9% (n=44)	14.8% (n=30)	5.7% (n=12)	7.4% (n=15)
Most students being abused will exhibit signs of abuse.	6.1% (n=13)	12.9% (n=26)	47.0% (n=100)	28.9% (n=58)	16.9% (n=36)	12.4% (n=25)	26.3% (n=56)	35.3% (n=71)	3.8% (n=8)	10.4% (n=21)
You should only report suspicions after you gather all facts about an allegation.	34.1% (n=73)	53.7% (n=109)	51.9% (n=111)	36.9% (n=75)	6.1% (n=13)	3.9% (n=8)	6.5% (n=14)	3.9% (n=8)	1.4% (n=3)	1.5% (n=3)
I know the specific behaviors that constitute school employee sexual misconduct.	4.3% (n=9)	2.5% (n=5)	25.1% (n=53)	3.9% (n=8)	24.2% (n=51)	10.8% (n=22)	43.1% (n=91)	48.8% (n=99)	3.3% (n=7)	34.0% (n=69)
I think I can do something about preventing school employee sexual misconduct.	0.9% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	1.9% (n=4)	3.0% (n=6)	11.3% (n=24)	10.3% (n=21)	68.1% (n=145)	49.8% (n=101)	17.8% (n=38)	36.9% (n=75)
Students who do not report ongoing school employee sexual misconduct must want the sexual contact to continue.	79.3% (n=169)	82.7% (n=167)	17.4% (n=37)	15.8% (n=32)	1.9% (n=4)	0.5% (n=1)	0.4% (n=1)	0.5% (n=1)	0.9% (n=2)	0.5% (n=1)
School employee sexual misconduct is the child's fault.	86.3% (n=183)	88.7% (n=180)	11.8% (n=25)	8.9% (n=18)	1.4% (n=3)	0.5% (n=1)	0.4% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	2.0% (n=4)
A school employee can be held accountable for having an inappropriate relationship with a student when the student initiates the relationship.	3.3% (n=7)	3.0% (n=6)	0.9% (n=2)	2.0% (n=4)	0.9% (n=2)	0.5% (n=1)	23.9% (n=51)	20.7% (n=42)	70.9% (n=151)	73.9% (n=150)

	Strongly Disagree (n)		Disagree (n)		Neutral (n)		Agree(n)		Strongly Agree (n)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
A school principal or superintendent can be held criminally liable for not reporting a sexual relationship between a school employee and a student.	1.9% (n=4)	1.5% (n=3)	0.9% (n=2)	1.5% (n=3)	3.8% (n=8)	2.5% (n=5)	30.7% (n=65)	28.1% (n=57)	62.7% (n=133)	66.5% (n=135)

**Table A2. Average Participant Knowledge of the Prevalence of School Employee Sexual Misconduct Pre and Post Training**

	4		10		20		100		1000	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Approximately one in _____ students report having experienced school employee sexual misconduct.	14.1% (n=29)	7.4% (n=15)	26.3% (n=54)	66.5% (n=135)	22.0% (n=45)	10.8% (n=22)	28.8% (n=59)	11.3% (n=23)	8.98% (n=18)	3.9% (n=8)

**Table A3. Average Participant Agreement with Quality Statements Post Training**

Item	Strongly Disagree (n)	Disagree (n)	Neutral (n)	Agree(n)	Strongly Agree (n)
I would recommend this program to others.	9.6% (n=19)	10.7% (n=21)	16.8% (n=33)	38.6% (n=76)	24.4% (n=48)
The course increased my knowledge of educator sexual misconduct.	6.1% (n=12)	9.6% (n=19)	13.7% (n=27)	42.6% (n=84)	27.9% (n=55)
I thought it was useful to hear the victim impact statement.	6.1% (n=12)	7.6% (n=15)	23.4% (n=46)	36.5% (n=72)	26.4% (n=52)