

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT (SECD) STANDARDS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

How will this help with AYP and the new Accreditation?

The research shows that schools who incorporate social, emotional and character development have improved test scores; more student engagement and motivation; decreased suspensions, disciplinary referrals, and classroom disruptions; and increased teacher morale, motivation, and retention. If you have students who are in class and motivated, being taught by motivated, inspired teachers then you have increased AYP.

With everything else, how will we fit this in?

It isn't one more thing on the plate it is the plate. We can't afford not to do this. It prevents academic and behavioral issues and creates a culture of excellence and ethics that makes teaching and learning more effective and productive. In the long run, it doesn't require more time, it saves time.

This should be taught in kindergarten, not upper grades. Shouldn't we be preparing students for college?

We want life-long learners, and SECD is a life-long process. It is a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate framework. There are different depths and levels of understanding, and learning and skills are developed along a continuum. SECD is an essential component of college and career readiness, a critical focus at the secondary level.

It's not my job to teach values. I teach math...I teach science... Why me?

Our job, as educators, is primarily to help our students be successful—research and experience confirm that SECD is essential for success. You already teach SECD. You teach students to work cooperatively in groups, turn work in on time, listen actively, and be trustworthy. SECD brings those skills and development to the forefront and develops them along an intentional continuum by integrating them into the curriculum and school activities.

Isn't SECD about teaching kids those "soft skills" (like respect and justice)? We want kids that can read and write!

While core principles remain a foundation of our culture, we must also develop the performance values such as effort, diligence, and perseverance in order to promote academic learning, foster an ethic of excellence, and develop the skills needed to act in accordance with those core principles. We want to teach students to not only "be our best" but to "do our best" in all areas of life. Schools are key in teaching our students these qualities and in providing opportunities where they can be applied and practiced.

What gives teachers the expertise to teach SECD?

Teachers are already expected to model good character as classroom leaders. These standards give us an intentional, systemic way of assuring that teachers are meeting the social, emotional and character development needs of our students. Further, as a part of teachers' training, they take several courses that focus on students' needs and cognitive level. This, coupled with their personal knowledge of the student, makes them not only qualified, but also essential to teaching this topic.

Whose values will be taught?

We are talking about things that are universal, you can call them values, traits, principles, but they transcend culture, religion, and ethnicity. Social, emotional and character development skills improve school and community culture and allow individuals to be successful in school, work, relationships, and life.

Isn't this the family's responsibility?

Yes, families have the primary responsibility to teach social, emotional and character development skills. But schools also have a shared responsibility with families. Students come to us at different developmental levels academically and behaviorally. Social, emotional and character development is no different. We must meet them where they are and extend their skills. Our mission is to create productive, responsible, and prepared citizens. These skills are essential to being successful in school and in life. If a student is responsible then they will turn in their homework and study for the test. If a student is respectful then they will listen in class, they will support their fellow students, and they will take care of school property. It is essential that these skills are taught, expected, and supported at school.

How will we know when a student has character?

All students have character, the question is what type of character do we want to help them achieve? As character is a life-long process, it is difficult to know for sure the future outcome. Various qualitative data can be used to track school culture, including discipline referrals, occurrences of cheating or stealing, school attendance, and so on. On an individual level, we can assess if students can identify their core principles, have the social and emotional skills needed to live those core principles, and how their behavior aligns with the community norms. These standards will create a way of clarifying and understanding those skills and give students the ability to align their actions with their identified principles.

We did this 10 years ago and it didn't work. Why now?

Because efforts didn't work previously, we are now approaching the topic in a different way. It is now a state and nationally supported initiative, which will provide a strong framework and ongoing support and resources. Why now? Our world has changed. Unfortunately, today we see many public examples that highlight the need for social and emotional learning and character development. At the same time, AYP has narrowed the focus in schools and reduced the emphasis on SECD. Research, particularly input from businesses and employers, indicates the need for 21st century skills, which have a strong SECD component, and SECD is always relevant. This approach is not a program that we're adding on, but an intentional integrated approach.

What resources will we need to implement these standards?

Once the standards are adopted, professional development will be made available to schools throughout the state. Other resources (curriculum, books, website, etc) will be identified and suggested. Some schools may choose to adopt a specific program, and others may develop their own plans.

How much will all this cost?

How much does it cost us as a society if we DON'T do it? SECD programming is about a vision and collective action and not a program or costly curriculum. A time cost will be the main investment when it comes to the implementation of SECD standards. Local decisions will determine any material cost for the implementation of these standards.

For more information about the SECD Standards please contact:

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