



An Evidence-Based Approach

There are three levels of evidence supporting CharacterStrong social-emotional learning and character education curriculum and programming. The first level of evidence comes from a randomized controlled trial with 14 secondary schools in the Pacific Northwest ([link to full study](#) - Zhang, Cook, & Smith, 2021). This study revealed several findings supporting the effects of the CharacterStrong SEL curriculum on relevant school outcomes, including a) significantly higher student reports of academic engagement and perceived school safety, b) teachers reporting higher levels of safe behaviors, and c) school administrative data indicating fewer incidents of unexcused absences or trancies in the intervention schools compared to control schools. These findings will be used to apply for approval as a CASEL select program during the next submission window. We are also preparing a manuscript for peer-reviewed publication.

The second level of evidence comes from data we routinely gather from several partnering school systems across the country to generate practice-based evidence. This evidence demonstrates that when implemented with fidelity, CharacterStrong SEL curriculum is showing a positive impact on school-wide culture and climate alongside improvements in teacher-student relationship, student behavior, including increased prosocial behaviors and improvements in attendance and grades. Also, our teacher usability surveys indicate that they like the curriculum and find it easy to use, developmentally and culturally appropriate, and relevant and beneficial for the students they serve. Student survey findings indicate that there is equity between White and Non-White students regarding their perceptions of the relevance, benefits, and importance of the curriculum.

Third, another definition defines programs as evidence-based when they are intentionally designed to integrate common elements of effective practice that research has causally linked to improved outcomes of interest (see Sutherland et al., 2018). CharacterStrong also meets this definition of evidence-based, as the practices and content infused throughout it were carefully selected as common elements of effective practice that research has causally linked to improved social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes at schoolwide and individual student levels. CharacterStrong was built upon the premise that the delivery of evidence-based practices depends on evidence-based implementation. Considering this, CharacterStrong possesses two levels of evidentiary support: (1) Inclusion of evidence-based implementation strategies and (2) inclusion of evidence-based practices ([link here](#) for supporting evidence).