

Character Strong Implementation Handout- Middle School

What is Character Strong?

Character Strong is a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Character Trait Curriculum that SKUSD is implementing. SKUSD chose this program due to its easy to use format, flexibility for how individual school sites can choose to implement, and grade-specific lessons from Pre-K to 12th grade.

What are the benefits of teaching an SEL Curriculum?

- 1) Students who are taught an SEL curriculum show increased academic achievement. A meta-analysis of 213 studies involving k-12 students shows an 11% point increase in academic achievement (Durlak et. al., 2011), while another meta-analysis of 82 studies also involving k-12 students shows a 13% increase in academic achievement 6-18 months after the intervention was implemented (Taylor et. al., 2017).
- 2) Students who are taught an SEL curriculum show improved behavior, including increased prosocial behaviors and decreased disruptive and inappropriate behaviors (Durlak et. al., 2011; Taylor et. al., 2017; Cipriano et. al., 2023).
- 3) Students with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) experience protective factors against poor outcomes (e.g. school drop out, incarceration, homelessness, substance abuse, etc.) when taught SEL skills (Greenberg et. al., 2003).

What evidence is there that Character Strong is an effective SEL Curriculum?

Research showed that the delivery of the MS & HS Curricula was associated with several significant effects on student outcomes, when compared to classrooms that did not implement the curricula, including:

- Improved student perceptions of school safety
- Increased teacher perceptions of safe behavior exhibited by students
- Improved student engagement during class
- Reduced student absenteeism and truancy
- Improved student self-management of learning processes in class
- Increased student experiences of self-efficacy
- Improved student display of life skills, social competencies, and character traits

(Merle et al., 2023; Zhang, Cook, & Smith, 2021)

Which Character Traits and Social and Emotional Skills are taught?

The Character Strong curriculum supports 3 essential outcomes:

- 1) Well-Being
- 2) Belonging
- 3) Engagement

A sample of the individual skills that are taught throughout the 6th-8th grade curriculum include:

- Creating Goals
- Dealing with Emotions
- Working on a Team
- Listening Skills
- Perspective Taking
- Conflict Resolution
- Time Management

SKUSD Character Trait Monthly Focus

Month	Character Trait
August/September	Respect
October	Responsibility
November	Gratitude
December	Empathy
January	Perseverance
February	Honesty
March	Cooperation
April	Courage
May	Creativity

- Weekly lesson time is approximately 40-60 minutes
- There are 5 components to each lesson: Welcome, Connection, Content, Character Dare, and Closure

How do I login?

Once you receive an invitation e-mail from Character Strong, follow the prompts in order to set up your account.

Website Address: <https://characterstrong.com>

What can I do if I need help?

- Sample Overview/Getting Started Links:
 - o Middle School: <https://curriculum.characterstrong.com/secondary/ms-getting-started>
 - o View On Demand Professional Development on Character Strong Website
- Contact Ruth Saucedo, School Psychologist
 - o E-Mail: rsaucedo@skusd.k12.ca.us
 - o Phone Number: (661)256-5000 ext. 1224
- TMS Contacts:
 - o Deborah Keys- Principal
 - o Joshua Konegni- Assistant Principal
 - o Andy Banahan- Assistant Principal
 - o Teri Guimara- Mental Health Therapist
 - o Luka Yang School Psychologist

Character Strong Schedule- Tropico Middle School

Note: The 7th grade curriculum will be used for the 2025-2026 school year.

Week	Session	*Structure
August 13-15	Tropico Specific Core Values	Provided by TMS Administration
August 18-22	S3: Developing Community Agreements/Social Contract	M- Welcome T- Connection** W- Content Th- Content F- Closure
August 25-29	S1: Welcome	M- Slides 2-5 T- Slides 6-11 W- Slides 12-18 Th- Slides 19-23 F- Slides 24-46
September 2-5	S2: Building Connections	T- Welcome & Connection W- Content Th- Content F- Closure
September 8-12	S4: From Bystander to Advocate	M- Welcome T- Content W- Content Th- Content F- Closure
September 15-19	S5: The Character Dare	5-Day
September 22-26	S6: Values in Action	5-Day
September 29- Oct. 3	S7: Developing Character Habits	5-Day
October 6-10	S8: Values as Guides	5-Day
October 13-17	S0: Bullying 101	M- Slides 2-8 T- Slides 9-13 W- Slides 14-21 Th- 22-31 F- Slides 32-35 and review TMS specific rules on bullying
October 20-22	S0: Bullying 101	M- Slides 36-37 (Go through slides for Belief #1 and #2) T- Slide 37 (Go through slides for Belief #3 and #4) W- Slides 54-55
October 27-31	S9: Understanding Emotions	5-Day

November 3-7	S10: Expanding Emotion Vocabulary	5-Day
November 12-14	S11: Practicing Emotion Regulation	3-Day
November 17-21	S12: Real Life Respect: Defining Respect	5-Day
November 24-28	No School	No School
December 1-5	S13: Real Life Respect: Creating Caring Environments	5-Day
December 8-12	S14: Understanding Stress	5-Day
December 15-19	S15: Stress Coping Strategies	5-Day
December 22-26	No School	No School
December 29-Jan. 2	No School	No School
January 5-9	No School	No School
January 12-16	S16: Real Life Respect: The Power of Language	5-Day
January 20-23	S17: Building Social Awareness	4-Day
January 26-30	S18: Understanding Effective Empathy (Choosing to Care)	5-Day
February 2-6	S19: Acting with Empathy	5-Day
February 9-13	S20: Practicing Effective Empathy	5-Day
February 17-20	S21: Understanding Mental Health & Well-Being	4-Day
February 23-27	S22: Exercising Well-Being	5-Day
March 2-6	S23: Well-Being In Practice	5-Day
March 9-13	S24: Developing Well-Being Habits	5-Day
March 16-20	S25: Communicating with Assertiveness	5-Day
March 23-27	S26: Practicing Assertiveness	5-Day
March 30-April 3	No School	No School
April 6-10	S27: Learning to Compromise	5-Day
April 13-17	S28: Handling Conflict	5-Day
April 20-24	S29: Reflecting on Conflict	5-Day
April 27- May 1	S30: Growth Mindset	5-Day
May 4-8	S31: Exploring Emotions	5-Day

May 11-15	S32: Identifying Emotions	5-Day
May 18-22	S33: Promoting Honesty, pt 1	5-Day
May 26-29	S34: Promoting Honesty, pt 2	4-Day
June 1-5	S35: Final Reflections	5-Day

* The structure column is provided as a guide in order to split the lesson into fairly equal pieces throughout the week. However, if you complete slightly more or less on some days, that is fine.

The suggested weekly schedule for most weeks is as follows:

5-Day Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Lesson Components	Welcome & Connection	Content (1 st half)	Content (2 nd half)	Character Dare	Closure

4-Day Schedule

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Lesson Components	Welcome & Connection	Content (1 st half)	Content (2 nd half)	Character Dare & Closure

Some weeks do not follow the typical Character Strong structure. The structure guide details for these lessons are described in the Structure Column

** After you are finished with the connection game, you can click the “Back” arrow button in the upper left-hand corner of the screen to exit the connection game section. If you do not do this, and instead click the arrows in the lower left-hand corner, you will go through every possible item for the game.