

## State K-3 Policies

### How are social and emotional development and character education emphasized in statute or regulation?

September 2020

At least 43 states have statutes or regulations defining social and emotional learning or character education, including social and emotional or character development principles in school readiness or academic standards, or otherwise encouraging the inclusion of social and emotional or character development education in the classroom.

- "Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."
- Character education encompasses many of the same inter- and intra-personal skill sets as social-emotional learning, and often includes civics and civility components.

The following information was gathered from state statutes and regulations only.

To view other data points, click [here](#).

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Alabama	<b>Character Education:</b> requires the State Board of Education and all local boards to develop and implement a comprehensive character education program for all grades.	Ala. Code § 16-6B-2
Alaska	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is a required evaluation factor in kindergarten and first grade developmental profiles.	Alaska Admin. Code tit. 4, § 06.712
Arizona	<b>Character Education:</b> allows character development instruction in K-12.	Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-719

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Arkansas	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> includes social and emotional skills development for youth ages 5-19 in the definition of positive youth development programs. Included in student growth measure as part of educator support and development rules.	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-5-902 Code Ark. R. 005.16.21-4.0
California	Not specified in statute or regulation.	
Colorado	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission recognized social-emotional development as a fundamental component of early learning and school readiness. Statute requires social and emotional development to be included in the description of school readiness.  The K-5 Social and Emotional Health Pilot Program was established, however, 2020 H.B. 20-1418 suspended the pilot for the 2020-2021 fiscal year and authorized future funding and appropriations.	Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 26-6.5-202 Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-7-1004 Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-102-101 et.seq. Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-29-101
Connecticut	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> established a social and emotional learning and school climate advisory collaborative focused primarily on fostering a positive school climate. Among other charges, requires the collaborative to direct resources to support state-wide and local initiatives on issues relating to fostering and improving positive school climates and improving access to social and emotional learning in schools. Effective July 1, 2021, the defines positive school climate as a school climate in which the norms, values, expectations and beliefs that support feelings of social, emotional and physical safety are promoted. Also defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.	Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 10-222q Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 10-222d (effective July 1, 2021)
Delaware	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is a domain measured by the common statewide kindergarten readiness tool.	Del. Code Ann. tit. 14, § 151
District of Columbia	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is included as part of the state definition of school readiness and is included as a domain in the Early Learning Standards, which include K-3. Social and emotional competency in students is part of the expansion of early childhood and school-based behavioral health programs and services.	D.C. Code § 38-271.01 D.C. Code § 2-1517.32
Florida	<b>Character Education:</b> requires a character development program to be taught in grades K-12.	Fla. Stat. Ann. § 1003.42

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Georgia	<b>Character Education:</b> requires the State Board of Education to develop a comprehensive character education program, known as the “character curriculum” for grades K-12 and the local boards of education to provide instruction in character education.	Ga Comp. R. & Regs. 160-4-2-.33 Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-145
Hawaii	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> establishes an early childhood education program to be known as the executive office on early learning public prekindergarten program. The program is required to provide access to high-quality early learning that addresses children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development.	Haw. Rev. Stat. § 302L-7
Idaho	Not specified in statute or regulation.	
Illinois	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social and emotional learning is included in the school readiness measures. Details the criteria and procedure for awarding grants to implement the social and emotional learning standards. Established an emotional intelligence and social and emotional learning task force to develop curriculum and assessment guidelines on emotional intelligence and social and emotional learning in elementary and high school.	Ill. Admin. Code tit. 23, § 1.420 Ill. Admin. Code 23-555.110 et.seq. 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. 5/27-23.12 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. 5/27-12
Indiana	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> requires the department of education, in coordination with the departments of child services and corrections, with the division of mental health and addiction, to develop a social, emotional and behavioral health plan. Requires the children's social, emotional, and behavioral health plan to recommend guidelines for incorporating social, emotional, and behavioral development into school learning standards and education programs, that social, emotional, and mental health screening be included as a part of routine examinations in schools and by health care providers, and procedures concerning the positive development of children, including social, emotional, and behavioral development.	Ind. Code Ann. § 20-19-5-1 Ind. Code Ann. § 20-19-3-12.2
Iowa	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> requires kindergarten programs to be designed to include experiences that develop healthy emotional and social habits.	Iowa Code Ann. § 256.11

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Kansas	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> the state board shall establish rigorous accountability measures in the areas of social emotional learning, kindergarten readiness, individual plans of study, graduation and postsecondary success.</p> <p><b>Character Education:</b> upon request of a school district, the state board shall assist in the development of a grade appropriate curriculum for character development programs which may be offered to students in the school district.</p>	<p>Kan. Stat. Ann. § 72-5170          Kan. Stat. Ann. § 72-3231</p>
Kentucky	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is one of the required domains that must be measured by the common kindergarten entry screener.</p> <p><b>Character Education:</b> requires the board of education to create a framework to identify teaching and assessment strategies, instructional material resources, ideas on how to incorporate the resources of the community, a directory of model teaching sites, alternative ways of using school time, and strategies to incorporate character education throughout the curriculum.</p>	<p>704 Ky. Admin. Regs. 5:070          Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 158.005          Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 158.6451</p>
Louisiana	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social and emotional competencies are expected of children that are ready to enter kindergarten. Also included in grade-level expectations for K-3. By the end of the K-4 level, students should know and be able to explain how physical, social and emotional environments influence personal health.</p> <p><b>Character Education:</b> legislative findings: while character development is a parental responsibility, the responsibility also extends to others and character education must be augmented and reinforced by public schools in order to prepare students to be productive, self-sufficient citizens who can ably assume societal responsibilities.</p>	<p>La. Admin. Code tit. 28, Pt CLIX, § 701 et.seq.          La. Admin Code. tit. 28, Pt XI, § 5903          La. Admin Code. tit. 28, Pt LIX, § 503 et.seq.          La. Admin Code. tit. 28, Pt LIX, § 701          La. Rev. Stat. § 17:282.2</p>
Maine	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> the uniform common statewide assessment program for kindergarten must be designed to measure social and emotional development.</p>	<p>Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 20-A, § 4501</p>
Maryland	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social and emotional development are included in the state definition of school readiness. Social development is one domain that may be measured by the kindergarten entry assessment.</p>	<p>Md. Code Regs. 13A.06.02.02          Md. Code Regs. 13A.08.01.02-3</p>

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Massachusetts	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> the department of elementary and secondary education is required to develop a safe and supportive schools' framework that integrates services that promote social and emotional learning.	Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 69, § 1P
Michigan	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> SEL is an area of emphasis for supports for children birth to age 8	Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 388.1632p Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 388.1704
Minnesota	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> school readiness program providers must provide program content focused on social-emotional development to prepare children for the transition to kindergarten. Districts and schools are required to establish strategies for using social-emotional learning to prevent and reduce discrimination and create a positive school climate.	Minn. Stat. Ann. § 124D.15 Minn. Stat. Ann. § 121A.031
Mississippi	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional competence is included as a goal for kindergarten education.	Code Miss. R. 7-7
Missouri	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is included as a standard for high-quality early childhood education.	Mo. Ann. Stat. § 161.213
Montana	Not specified in statute or regulation.	
Nebraska	Not specified in statute or regulation.	
Nevada	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> a course in academic, career and personal and social development is required for students in kindergarten through grade 12.	Nev. Admin. Code 389.187
New Hampshire	<b>Character Education:</b> requires the local school board to adopt and implement written polices and procedures relative to character and citizenship. Requires the policy relative to character and citizenship development to include elements to be incorporated in courses of study or instilled, by example, in caring educational environment. This may include self-discipline, self-respect, and self-control, among other examples.	N.H. Admin. R. Ed 306.04 (a) & (i)
New Jersey	Not specified in statute or regulation.	

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
New Mexico	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> requires public schools providing full-day kindergarten programs, utilizing state funding, to include child-centered programs based on developmentally appropriate teaching practices that support the growth of social and emotional competence. Defines social and emotional well-being, within the school district wellness context, as services provided to maintain or improve students' mental, emotional, behavioral, and social health.	N.M. Admin. Code 6.30.5 N.M. Admin. Code 6.12.6
New York	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> allows school districts to incorporate social and emotional learning into educational programs.	N.Y. Educ. Law § 305
North Carolina	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is identified as one of the five domains of school readiness in the kindergarten entry assessment.  <b>Character Education:</b> each local board of education shall develop and implement character education instruction with input from the local community.	N.C. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 115C-83.5 N.C. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 115C-81.60
North Dakota	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social and emotional readiness is included in the exceptions to enrolling students in kindergarten or first grade prior to the specified school age.	N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-06-01
Ohio	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> the kindergarten through third grade learning standards include a domain on social emotional development.	Ohio Admin. Code 3301-37-03 Ohio Admin. Code 3301-32-01
Oklahoma	<b>Character Education:</b> the board of education of every school district in this state may develop and implement a comprehensive program for character education in any single grade or combination of grades, prekindergarten through twelfth.	Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 70, § 1210.229-6
Oregon	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is assessed in the kindergarten entry assessment as a measure of school readiness.  <b>Character Education:</b> character education is included in the standard education for Oregon students.	Or. Admin. R. 581-022-2130 Or. Admin. R. 581-021-0200
Pennsylvania	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> school districts must recognize different rates of social and emotional development in students in their elementary education programs.  <b>Character Education:</b> the board of school directors of a school district may establish and implement a character education program in its schools.	22 Pa. Code § 4.21 Pa. Stat. tit. 24, § 15-1501-E et.seq.

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Rhode Island	Not specified in statute or regulation.	
South Carolina	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional development is included in the kindergarten readiness assessment and the definition of school readiness.	S.C. Code Ann. § 59-155-150 S.C. Code Ann. § 59-152-25
South Dakota	<b>Character Education:</b> character development instruction shall be given in all public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools in the state.	S.D. Codified Laws § 13-33-6.1
Tennessee	<b>Character Education:</b> the course of instruction in all public schools shall include character education to help each student develop positive values and improve student conduct as students learn to act in harmony with their positive values and learn to become good citizens in their school, community and society.	Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1007
Texas	<b>Character Education:</b> the State Board of Education shall integrate positive character traits into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for kindergarten through grade 12.  <b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social skills are included in the definition of school readiness.  <b>Positive Behavior Program:</b> each school district and open-enrollment charter school may develop and implement a program as a disciplinary alternative. Social and emotional learning is one of the behavior management strategies included in the program.	Tex. Educ. Code § 29.906 Tex. Educ. Code § 37.0013 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 102.1002
Utah	<b>Character Education:</b> requires character education to be integrated with curriculum.	Utah Code Ann. § 53G-10-204
Vermont	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social and emotional learning in one of the positive behavioral practices used in the tiered system of supports that must be developed and maintained by each public school.	Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 16, § 2902
Virginia	<b>Character Education:</b> each school board shall establish, within its existing programs or as a separate program, a character education program in its schools, which may occur during the regular school year, during the summer in a youth development academy offered by the school division, or both.	Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-208.01

STATE ▲	HOW ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER EDUCATION EMPHASIZED IN STATUTE OR REGULATION?	CITATION
Washington	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social-emotional skills are emphasized as skills a kindergarten student should develop to successfully participate in learning activities. The development of these skills is a requirement for funded kindergarten programs to provide to their students. Established a social-emotional learning committee to develop the social-emotional standards and benchmarks as well as social-emotional learning resources for districts.</p>	<p>Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.150.315  Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28.300.477  Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.300.478  Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.300.479</p>
West Virginia	<p><b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> social and emotional learning is emphasized in the school readiness development process.</p> <p><b>Character Education:</b> the state board shall establish a comprehensive approach to integrate character education into all aspects of school culture, school functions and existing curriculum.</p>	<p>W. Va. Code R. 126-28-3  W. Va. Code § 18-2-13</p>
Wisconsin	Not specified in statute or regulation.	
Wyoming	Not specified in statute or regulation.	