

5 PUBLIC SPIRIT

Social and emotional learning is outward facing, too. There is a growing appreciation of how SEL skills affect every corner of our society. One major outcome from investing in SEL might be

the development of civic dispositions and civic skills that lead to civic action. Classrooms are major forums for fostering public spirit, where teachers bring together the emotional, cognitive, and prosocial skills students need in school and in life.



7 PUBLIC SPIRIT COMPETENCIES

1. Respect for others—the ability to see worth and value in each human life, regardless of differences. Those who respect others recognize that collective strength is derived from differences, not just similarities. Respect for others is an assertion of the rights of others.

2. Courage—persistence in the face of fear. Courage is exhibited when someone takes on a meaningful goal, despite psychological or social risk. Courageous acts include speaking up on behalf of others and making unpopular choices that are nonetheless ethical.

3. Ethical responsibility—the ability to merge one's own circumstances with those of the group. Fairness without contemplation of the impact on the group is selfishness. Ethically responsible decisions can require judgments about right and wrong and accepting responsibility for one's actions. An ethically responsible person acts in a way that is honorable and principled.

4. Civic responsibility—the mark of a participatory democracy that seeks to give voice to all, right wrongs, and contribute to the common good. Students use voting to make decisions and arrive at consensus, and they respectfully debate issues.

5. Social justice—a commitment to the human rights of all people and the pursuit of material improvements in the quality of life of others. This is a belief that the principles of justice should be applied equitably and courageously.

6. Service learning—an educational approach that melds academic learning with community well-being. Service learning is linked to the curriculum and features student-directed planning and partnerships that are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

7. Leadership—the ability to inspire others, organize and delegate responsibilities, communicate thoughtfully and honestly, and hold oneself accountable for collective work. When we build students' leadership capacity, we empower them to become more engaged and inspired learners.

INTEGRATED WAYS TO DEVELOP PUBLIC SPIRIT

- **Discuss the ethical issues present in content learning.** Unpack the decision-making dilemmas real and imaginary characters must confront as they wrestle with ethical choices.
- **Promote civic responsibility through classroom service.** Even young children can assume responsibilities that serve the common good, such as distributing materials, managing recycling, and greeting visitors. Older students might provide tech support to make sure computer carts are locked and plugged in to recharge overnight. Students of all ages can vote on book choices, assessment types, and class representatives.
- **Explore opportunities for service learning.** Service learning differs from community service, which is primarily enacted through individual volunteering. While community service does have value, it lacks the reciprocity that comes with service learning, in that students involve themselves in organizations, "working with, not for" others (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2013, p. 217). Link curriculum outcomes to projects that benefit the classroom, school, or neighborhood community.
- **Provide opportunities for student input and leadership.** Student representation on school committees; in professional development; and in planning, implementing, and evaluating school events fosters public spirit and can also provide practical solutions to real problems. Create processes to get student insight on these issues. Identify, develop, and deploy young leaders who demonstrate dispositions that lend themselves to being organizing leaders, but who might be overlooked because of academic or behavioral challenges that obscure their talents. These very same qualities, properly channeled, yield some of the very best student leaders.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

NANCY FREY is a professor of educational leadership at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High & Middle College.

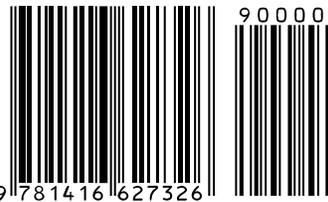
DOMINIQUE SMITH is the chief of education and student support at Health Sciences High &

Middle College, where he also serves as a culture builder and student advocate. **DOUGLAS FISHER** is a professor of educational leadership at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High & Middle College. They are the authors of *All Learning Is Social and Emotional: Helping Students Develop Essential Skills for the Classroom and Beyond*, coming in 2019 from ASCD.



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