

Schools of Character Application



Program Information

Character.org's 11 Principles of Effective Character Education are the cornerstone of Character.org's philosophy on effective character education. Each principle outlines vital aspects of character education. The Schools of Character program is not a competition—but rather an opportunity to receive feedback as well as recognition for growth and excellence in character education. State Schools of Character are selected by Character.org in collaboration with state sponsors for having reached a standard of excellence within their states in the area of character development. Their applications are forwarded to the national level for consideration. These schools become part of a network of Schools of Character that serve as models and mentors to other educators and hold their designation for 5 years.

Our application was submitted in December 2015 and selected schools will be announced in January 2016.

Our School Story

Sierra Vista Middle School has valued character education for decades. We celebrate academic success and positive behavior through monthly character rallies and monthly student recognition. Our clubs and leadership programs provide growth experiences. Many students distribute items to homeless at Skid Row in Los Angeles. Our students also visit convalescent homes and help local hospitals. Even with all these amazing pieces in place, our efforts often failed to reach their full potential. While many students participated in our activities, our goal was to include all students. We lacked a cohesive plan to tie all the amazing character-building events on campus together. Fortunately, three years ago, our decision to become an IB school served as a catalyst for change. Change comes with challenges but we gained support for character education through the transition and reevaluation of our principles. Our new administrators also worked to amplify the existing programs on campus and sought ways for them to support each other. All programs now connect together through the IB lens and the combined effect is that ALL students experience a richer, more varied character education experience. The programs added since then, such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Where Everyone Belongs (WEB), now work together, along with the old programs, in a unified plan. The result is a product that is finally greater than the sum of its parts.

What are the top three resources that have influenced the character journey at your school?

International Baccalaureate Program

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Where Everyone Belongs (WEB)



Principle 1- The School or District community promotes core ethical and performance values as the foundation of good character.

Our school mission statement reads, "Sierra Vista Middle School is committed to creating a better world through education." Our staff, however, does not believe "education" applies merely to academics. We promote systematic and varied opportunities for character education to occur in tandem with our strong scholastic expectations. SVMS fosters lifelong learning, intercultural understanding, and global awareness (above and beyond our content standards) through programs such as International Baccalaureate (IB), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Where Everybody Belongs (WEB), and other special events. Sierra Vista adopted the International Baccalaureate program in the '13-'14 school year and, along with it, ten character traits that form the IB Learner Profile. The Learner Profile encourages our students and staff to be Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced and Reflective. We model these traits through staff-generated presentations and curriculum. Students reflect on what it means to display these traits in class, at home, and various areas around campus. Our teachers also weave these traits throughout our academic IB units. In the near future we plan for this character education to culminate in a "community project" that asks our students to identify an issue in our community and generate a solution. Every 8th grader will participate and our staff will oversee the process. We also integrate our core traits into recognition programs. Each month we have a luncheon in which every staff member selects a student who exemplifies one of our traits. Additional students are also honored at rallies. Our staff members also recognize each other through use of "I caught my colleague being..." forms and "The Rock." Whenever one of our staff "catches" another staff member modeling one of our traits, they can write up a form that we read in front of the entire staff. "The Rock," a giant green stone, switches hands every staff meeting from the current owner to whomever he or she has been inspired by. All of these forms of recognition work in concert to promote a common language and culture of character that permeates the campus. We will also address WEB (which seeks to build positive connections and community), PBIS, Builders Club, our Skid Row trips, and other programs in the rest of our application. But, rest assured, character abounds at Sierra Vista!

Our mission as stated on our website, student agenda books, and promotional materials:

Sierra Vista Middle School is committed to creating a better world through education. All students engage in a well-rounded rigorous curriculum that encourages lifelong learning, intercultural understanding and global awareness in order to become caring, compassionate and contributing members of society. To achieve these goals Sierra Vista approaches learning through problem solving, critical thinking and real-world application through an inquiry-based approach.

Our SVMS PARENT BROCHURE includes our school mission statement, our International Baccalaureate mission statement, information about our International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program, MYP guiding concepts, how IB/MYP promotes interdisciplinary learning, how our curriculum in an IB/MYP school compares to other Middle School programs, the benefits of the IB/MYP program for our students, the benefits of participating in the IB Diploma program in high school, how parents can support IB/MYP at Sierra Vista Middle School, and our learner profile traits described.

Learner Profile
Our goal is to develop active, compassionate and ethical learners. The IB program emphasizes a dedication to all of education. These qualities prepare IB students to make adaptive contributions to society and beyond.

- Inquirer** - Acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning
- Knowledgeable** - Develop concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance
- Thinker** - Develop abilities to apply knowledge to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned ethical decisions
- Communicator** - Understand and express their own information confidently and confidently in front of one's audience and in a variety of contexts
- Principled** - Act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the rights of the individual, groups and communities
- Open-minded** - Understand and appreciate their own culture and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities
- Caring** - Show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others
- Risk-taker** - Approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and ingenuity, and have the independence of spirit to explore new ideas, roles and settings
- Balanced** - Understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance in achieving personal well-being for themselves and others
- Reflective** - Give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experiences


What can parents do to support IB/MYP at Sierra Vista Middle School?

- Support the learner profile characteristics with our students
- Provide support in various knowledge and activities of the Learner Profile
- Engage with your students about schoolwork issues and how it may impact their learning and life balance
- Join and participate in the Parent Teacher Association, attend School Site Council Meetings and be a school volunteer for campus activities
- Join about 1000 by joining the IBG website (www.ib.org) and actively contribute to making the school
- Join your student in participating in community service projects on and off campus

IB LEARNER PROFILE

THINKER
OPEN-MINDED
REFLECTIVE
RISK-TAKER
KNOWLEDGEABLE

Sierra Vista Middle School
Covina Valley Unified School District
International Baccalaureate Candidate School
Middle Years Program



777 E. Puente Ave.
Covina, CA 91723
(951) 974-7300

Principal - Danielle Travieso
Assistant Principals -
Brent Estrada, Stephanie Kearns

Sierra Vista Middle School
Middle Years Program

Our Mission
Sierra Vista Middle School (SVMS) is committed to creating a better world through education. All students engage in a well-rounded rigorous curriculum that encourages lifelong learning, intercultural understanding and global awareness in order to become caring, compassionate and contributing members of society. To achieve these goals Sierra Vista approaches learning through problem solving, critical thinking and real-world application through an inquiry-based approach.

What is the IB/MYP curriculum vision?
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Principle 2-The School or District defines "character" comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and doing.

Sierra Vista's comprehensive character plan centers on the IB Learner Profile. The ten traits can take time to discuss meaningfully. Fortunately, we included a 33-minute "Falcon Time" into our daily schedule that allows our students to fully tackle our core values by providing time for reflection, discussion, and action through a plethora of activities. Students initially work with our values through staff-made presentations. They then construct their own meaning by picking a trait and identifying a well-known person that exemplifies it (see in additional evidence). We also teach good digital citizenship during this period through a week-long curriculum focusing on safety, fairness, and knowledge. Discipline discussions also occur throughout the year that have staff and students discuss our campus rules and why they benefit our community at large. These events work to promote caring and reflection within our student body. WEB also accomplishes this by the pairing of all 6th graders with an 8th-grade mentor before school even begins. (P2 evidence). Mentors call new students, welcome them to campus, and walk them through character reflection exercises. These occur throughout the year and have been shown to reduce incidences of bullying. Our Medal of Honor Character Development Program also incorporates ideals of courage, selfless service, and responsible citizenship. Dramatic "living histories" are accompanied with instructional activities that encourage students to consider core values from their own perspective. Builders Club (BC), associated with Kiwanis, provides all students with opportunities to serve, build character and develop leadership. Their values enhance character development at SVMS through the following: Character building: BC promotes doing the right thing, even when it might be the unpopular choice. Leadership: Listening, communicating, serving and guiding others. Inclusiveness: Accepting and welcoming differences in other people. Caring: Being concerned about/interested in other people. Additional opportunities to participate in character building and service activities are available. Students volunteer at school events such as Back to School night, dances, Red Ribbon Week, and Showcase Night and also raise money for UNICEF. All students are invited to write letters to our military and donate items for our Make A Difference bi-annual trips to Skid Row or to join clubs with opportunities for character growth.

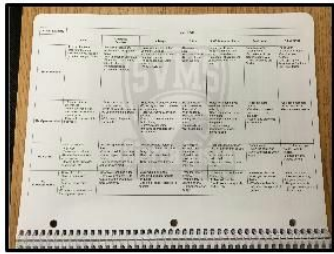


Principle 3 - The School or District uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to character development.



In our previous entries, we spoke much of our character traits, WEB, Falcon Time, and our clubs. We'd like to take this time to explain how character permeates our entire academic instruction. As an IB candidate school, our staff is called to provide "global context" to all our units of instruction. Our teachers present concepts, then routinely ask our students to apply them to the real world--near or far--to solve problems, learn tolerance, or act ethically. This idea of absorbing content to make the world better applies to all content areas. Below are some examples of the units our students study: Conflict and Heroes: students examine the idea that out of conflict heroes emerge by analyzing character traits found in the 9/11 first responders. The unit ends with students creating blankets for chronically ill children on September 11th. Genetics and Bullying: students learn that genetics make us look like we do and physical appearance often determines who gets bullied. Students explore the question, "Why is it okay to pick on someone for something that they can't change?" How to be Great: students, as they read about Jackie Robinson, examine character and the idea that perspective and point of view may be influenced by the context of one's life experiences. Character and Identity: students explore the concept that character and identity form as a result of people we meet and what life circumstances we encounter. Students read about Malala and other literary figures and write a character sketch on themselves using three IB Learner Profile attributes. Social Injustice: students examine the role that suffering and injustice have played in people's lives. Their inquiry involves analyzing the different ways people have reacted to injustice. For example, do they show anger, bitterness, grace, or forgiveness? Beyond content, our PBIS matrices ensure our classroom procedures and routines ensure respect and fairness for all. Our PBIS matrix includes four traits as part of our positive behavior program (P3 Evidence). Teachers model these traits within their classroom and recognize students who also abide by the code of conduct. All who attend SVMS are expected to uphold the same standards--not just our students. We believe that for character to truly cement itself in the hearts and minds of our students, it must occur in and outside of our classrooms, including our clubs, activities, and lessons. Character education occurs everywhere in SVMS.

School-wide PBIS Implementation
Throughout our campus you can find evidence of the PBIS framework used to improve the integration and implementation of positive behavioral practices. The matrix is based on the IB Learner Profile and was developed through student-teacher collaboration. PBIS helps to improve behavioral and academic outcomes by improving school climate, preventing problem behavior, increasing learning time, promoting positive social skills, and delivering effective behavioral interventions and supports.


SVMS MATRIX POSTED IN EVERY STUDENT AGENDA BOOK



SVMS CLASSROOM MATRICES



SVMS MATRIX POSTED IN THE OFFICE, CAFETERIA, LMC, CLASSROOMS, & RESTROOMS



Principle 4 - The School or District creates a caring community

SVMS has created an environment where students know they are cared for by the student body and faculty. When student or staff recognize the need of another student (or family), they can write an essay to have that need fulfilled at our "Make a Wish" rally. Staff also recognize students who have exceeded expectations with "Applause Forms" that send a group of student volunteers to go into their class and commend them for their exceptional efforts. Students recognizing other students builds their level of respect for each other. Our staff routinely donates supplies to those in need, even going so far as to provide housing within their own home to families of students in need. Our student body recognizes SVMS staff and other students as caring and tolerant (as measured by our Climate Survey - P11 evidence). Our staff truly has an open door by making itself available to all during and after school. Teachers host special Falcon Time sessions such as Gardening (much of the food is donated), Make a Difference, and Leadership. With the plethora of small groups available, students easily find their own niche. Staff also attends student events and often host their own--such as the annual Washington D.C. trip, Science Camps, Gate nights, and after-school tutoring. SVMS doesn't stop after the bell rings. We also bolster the sense of belonging and security through WEB's mentorship program. Our staff coaches 8th-grade leaders who, in turn, mentor their 6th-grade protégés. WEB has been statistically shown to reduce bullying and absenteeism. Anti-bullying and Kindness Weeks issue daily challenges centered on celebrating others. We also promote understanding for our deaf population on campus through Deaf Awareness Week that allows students to learn ASL and other components of deaf culture. This has improved student relations and we have had literally zero incidents of bullying between our general and deaf populations in the past two years. Admin also focus on character education in their approach to discipline. When students fail to uphold SVMS's ethical expectations, they don't simply punish students. Our discipline system focuses on contemplating the results of actions and how it affects others. Discipline comes with reflection and restoration. Students recognize admin and staff's concern for the rights of all and feel safe approaching them. All these create a warm, respectful environment. Many of our staff have served for decades. SVMS is a family that cares

WEEK OF ACTION Take the Power Out of Bullying NOVEMBER 2-6	MONDAY'S CHALLENGE:  BEING BULLIED HURTS!
TUESDAY'S CHALLENGE:  MAKE SOMEONE HAPPY!	WEDNESDAY'S CHALLENGE:  SUPPORT OTHERS!
THURSDAY'S CHALLENGE:  LIFT SOMEONE'S MOOD!	FRIDAY'S CHALLENGE:  SMALL GESTURES ARE POWERFUL!

<p>SVMS Admin shows they CARE by catering 'room service' for the teachers.</p> 	<p>SVMS students proudly hold up poster-sized bandanas they made with anti-bullying messages like, 'bullying hurts!'</p> 
<p>Our WEB students welcomed parents and students with positive messages as they entered the parking lot.</p> 	<p>Our WEB students spread positivity by 'giving out' free high fives and candy.</p> 

Principle 5 - The School or District provides students with opportunities for moral action.

Students learn expectations for moral action, conflict resolution, academic integrity and sportsmanship as delineated through PBIS school-wide behavior matrix. Lessons are reinforced regularly: students who demonstrate good character (Reflective, Open-minded, Knowledgeable, Caring) are rewarded with Falcon Dollars. Sportsmanship is reinforced in WEB, PE and after-school sports. Service learning happens in clubs and classes. During Genius Hour, for example, students chose to make play dough for a local preschool. When learning about 9/11 the entire 8th grade participated in National Day of Service by taking part in Project Linus: over 100 blankets were made and given to ill children. The responsibility of citizenship was taught in Constitution units, when students wrote books and created presentations illustrating ways to be better citizens through IB traits; the projects were personally delivered to elementary schools. WEB fosters peer mentoring and tutoring between 6th- and 8th-grade students. Leadership students are in charge of student governance, Renaissance Academic Recognition and serve a minimum 40 service hours each. Additionally, our community garden fosters respect for the environment. For 14 years, the MAD program has gathered and distributed items for homeless on Skid Row and local veterans, funded through donations from Wells Fargo and one of our teachers. Former students, now in HS, college, or postgraduate continue to be involved. The Letter Club (TLC): students write letters to military personnel worldwide through Operation Gratitude. Holiday cards are created for veterans and seniors at a local convalescent home in partnership with Builders' Club. BC, which visits the hospital weekly and forms strong bonds with seniors, joins Covina High's Interact Club to host a holiday party for the patients. BC collects socks for its annual Sox-for-Seniors program, and members maintain a reflection journal documenting service and leadership in the community. Responses are posted in the advisor's classroom; Kiwanis provides a newsletter focused on learning opportunities. SV committed to Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Pennies for Patients after a SV student was diagnosed. For 3 years the Society has recognized us as Gold Champions. Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF raised \$260 for Eliminate, a project to combat maternal-neonatal tetanus. SV is committed to service learning activities. The array of choices available to our students ensures multiple opportunities to learn through service.



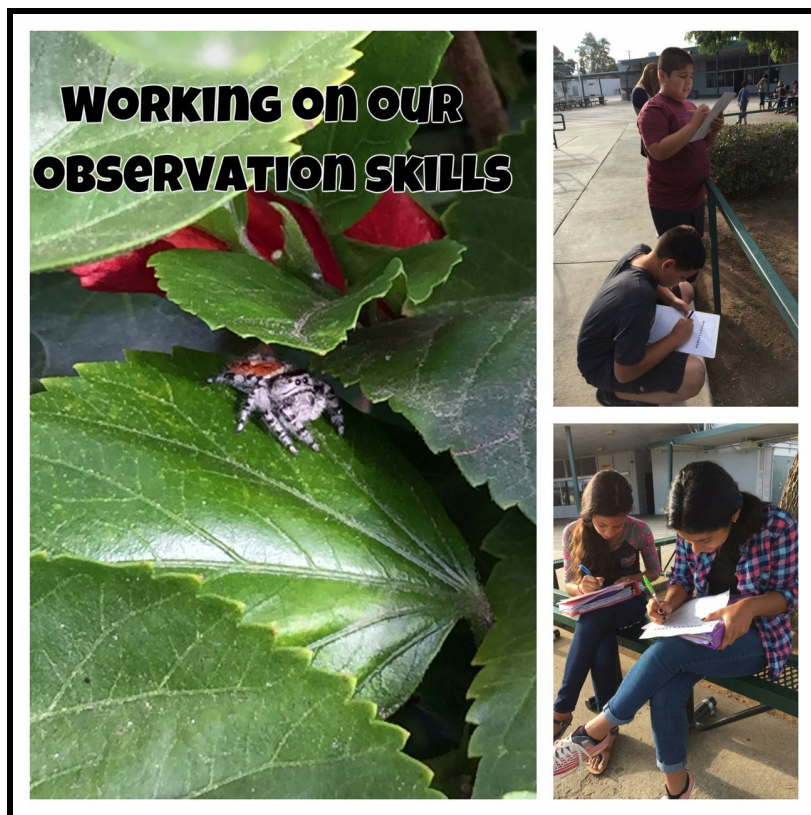
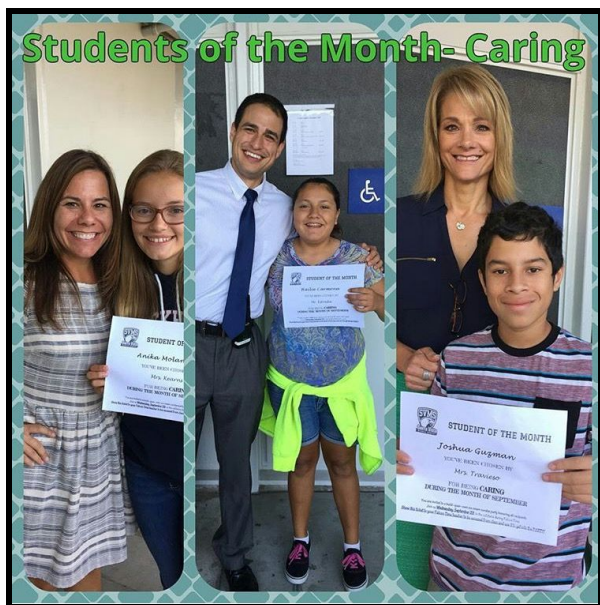
Principle 6 - The School or District offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.

Our rigorous curriculum involves differentiated instruction, holding students to high standards and promoting thinking habits leading to intellectual growth. Students set goals and reflect upon their growth. Units begin with task sheets including assessments and rubrics allowing students to self-monitor. Cooperative learning and Socratic inquiry help students communicate in a meaningful, polite manner. Following IB pedagogy, students' summative assessments are project-based. Examples of engaging experiences include: robotics infused into science classes, one-to-one iPads and Chromebooks to aid in inquiry lessons across contents and our new fitness center utilizing weights and aerobic machines. Our Student Study Team (SST) intervenes with a parent meeting to evaluate challenges, accommodations and modifications for struggling students. After the SST, students may be referred for testing or placed on a 504 plan. When a disability is identified, students are provided an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which guides instruction. The psychologist and counselor further assist to provide support. Follow-up includes quarterly progress reports, annual IEP's, and triannual testing to verify student success. 8th graders have a transition meeting with teachers and high school counselors. Annually, our SAI team presents an inservice regarding the SST process and tools for success. We attack achievement gaps using literacy and math support intervention. Based on need, students are assigned an additional literacy or math class. Parents view grades through Parent Portal, enabling stakeholders to work as a team. Through our website, parents email teachers with questions or concerns. Teachers also work with students needing home hospital study, reducing family stress by providing lessons to keep students on track. Students are invited to share their talents at our annual Open Mic show. During Deaf Awareness Week, our DHH staff teach hearing students signs so they can "talk" with DHH friends. Spanish and Chinese classes hold Culture Days, including foods and music. Annually, a Holocaust survivor/author speaks about his time in a concentration camp and signs his book for students thrilled by this unique opportunity. Staff development includes addressing student learning styles, formative assessments, character development and skill building. Assessing students throughout a unit is how mastery is achieved. Teachers are encouraged to present and share what they learn at conferences and training.



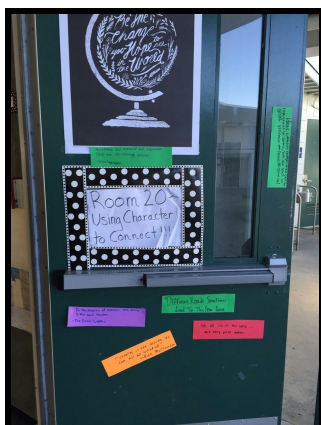
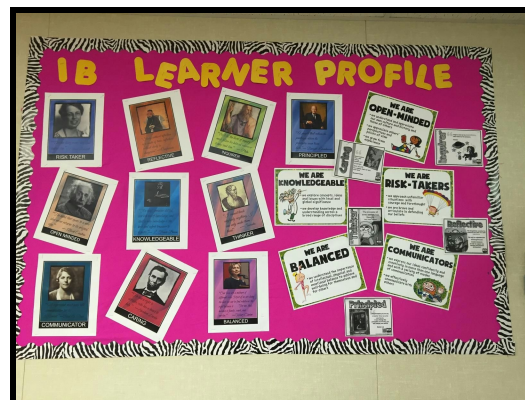
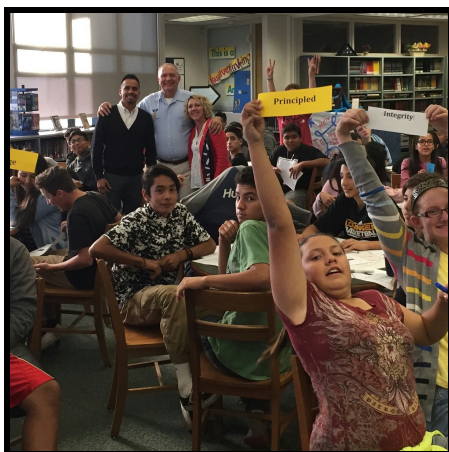
Principle 7 - The School or District fosters students' self-motivation.

SV students and staff regularly celebrate acts of character. Leadership students develop skits for rallies that speak to positive academic and social behavior. This demonstrates student ownership and self-motivation to improve our school climate and student success. School-wide lessons on IB character traits and PBIS emphasize reflection on each trait and students rate themselves on their level of mastery. Students are recognized monthly for a specific character trait they display. Engaging in supporting those who are homeless, hungry or ill is directly connected to IB traits in lessons, daily bulletins and PTA newsletters. Academic work is celebrated through our annual Showcase, talent show and Gallery Walks of student projects. Student work is celebrated publicly, imbuing a sense of pride in their efforts. Presidential Volunteer Service Awards are presented at year-end. Students are intrinsically motivated to be active members of our positive school culture. Through PBIS, clear expectations are developed for students, taught and reinforced consistently. Our guiding core values for behaviors are to be Reflective, Open-minded, Caring, and Knowledgeable. Here, at SV, we ROCK when everyone exhibits these behaviors in all settings. The result is a positive campus climate in which academic excellence and behavioral responsibility are the norm. PBIS provides an operational framework and sustainable school-wide practices for achieving positive academic and behavioral outcomes. These practices are research-based, but have been developed and implemented by our team of teachers, parents, administrators, school psychologist, counselor, and students to reflect our culture and values. PBIS establishes and maintains equitable discipline practices and behavioral interventions to promote positive social-emotional development. We prevent and respond to negative behaviors in order to re-engage students in danger of disconnection. Our students experience an integrated continuum of evidence-based behavioral practices based on their responsiveness to intervention. A three-tiered prevention logic model requires that all students receive training and support at the primary tier. If the behavior of some students is not responsive as expected, more intensive behavioral supports are provided in the form of a group contingency or highly individualized plan. Our goal for every student is to maximize academic engagement and achievement for all students through a multi-tiered system of supports for student wellness.



Principle 8 - The School or District staff is an ethical learning community that shares responsibility for character education and adheres to the same core values that guide the students.

Student responses to the Climate Survey show they feel our staff is kind and caring (included in additional evidence). It is evident that our faculty models the core values as more than 82% of the students strongly agreed/agreed that teachers are helpful and caring on the survey. Teachers across the curriculum include character development units and lessons throughout the year. Evidence has been provided for some of these units in Principle 3. In order to create a positive behavioral environment, the PBIS team attended trainings and led staff meetings to develop the matrix for how we want students to behave (R.O.C.K.-evidence in Principle 3). This intervention plan allows teachers and students to focus on positive behaviors. When an inappropriate behavior occurs, the office discipline referral (ODR) allows teachers to reflect on the intent behind the behavior which, in turn, encourages student reflection. Teachers and staff also reward positive behavior with Falcon Dollars. Teachers work together to develop character lessons taught to all students the first three months of school. Students were able to look at each of the 10 IB Learner Profile traits in detail. The lessons allowed for honest reflection and discussions to take place about what each meant and looked like in practice. There were many staff meetings devoted to how to help the students embody these character traits. IB requires each candidate school to create an Academic Honesty Policy (P11 evidence) to guide student behavior. It is the mainstay of our academic integrity. Through this document, parents, teachers and students are made aware of what constitutes malpractice (plagiarism, cheating and collusion) and the consequences if the policy is breached. Administrators, teachers and our counselor attend a combination of staff development opportunities for PBIS (5 trainings per year), WEB (2 trainings per year) and IB (multiple workshops for staff, administration and our teacher consultant). Weekly PLC's allow for regular sharing of best practices and reflection on character education at Sierra Vista. Finally, at the top of every PLC form used to record minutes there are four guiding principles: decisions are based upon what's best for kids; teachers are the frontline to student success; we should use data whenever possible to inform our decisions; and character matters and needs to be developed. The principles are considered by teachers and administrators before a decision is reached.



Principle 9 - The School or District fosters shared leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative.

After decades of work, we are now confident that character education and development is set for long-range survival and growth. The addition of 3 cornerstone programs, PBIS, WEB, and IB, has made the difference. SVMS believes that character education is a shared leadership responsibility. Our leadership structure is comprised of site administrators, teachers on the leadership team, SSC (consisting primarily of parents), and our students in ASB and WEB. The leadership groups meet at least once a month to review policies and develop on-going implementation. Administrators ensure the IB culture, including the Learner Profile, permeates our campus. The administrators are highly visible and consistently in classrooms supporting positive behaviors. When the administrators are off campus, appropriate behaviors and actions continue through the support of teachers and staff. The district supports and encourages PLC's that create character education. This year SVMS expanded teacher opportunities to meet as a school, by content and grade level. Students have a minimum day each Tuesday to allow teachers to create lessons, analyze data, and develop common assessments. This time is also used to develop ways to integrate character education and activities on campus. The district provides training and release time for teachers and administrators to be trained in PBIS, WEB and IB. Time is built in to observe other schools with these programs. SVMS staff has become leaders in each of the above programs, and nationally for our character development efforts. SVMS was featured in Parade Magazine's article, highlighting character education nationally (evidence below). A teacher serves on the Philadelphia-based Freedoms Foundations' character education committee, and another teacher and administrator have been offered scholarships for their summer Medal of Honor Legacy program. PBIS champions character education by giving students clear expectations of appropriate behaviors in various locations. A student leadership team, with the help of teachers, devised the matrix. WEB puts character development into the hands of students. Through cross age mentoring and support students are taking responsibility for our school's climate. The IB Learner Profile includes a set of traits that are supported by students, teachers, administrators, staff and parents. Falcon Time Lessons promote the IB learner profiles to help students understand what good character traits are and look like.



Principle 10 - The School or District engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.

SVMS engages the community and parents in developing the character of our students in a variety of ways. Through involvement with clubs, Instagram, Twitter and email, volunteer opportunities on campus, and our PTA-sponsored electronic newsletter, our parents and community are informed and recruited. Teachers are involved in clubs, including Kiwanis, Rotary and Soroptimist. Teachers have established connections with our parents on many levels. Aside from quarterly newsletters, school website, emails and messages via the web tool Remind, our teachers meet with parents formally and informally. For example, each week a duo of teachers meet with parents of gifted students. While the intent is to form a community and to develop strategies for challenging their children, discussions often move toward topics such as inclusiveness and empathy. The program also includes a weekly after-school program for gifted students. Every Tuesday night a teacher provides a free American Sign Language class for parents who have DHH children. There are also ALL CALLS to inform parents as to what is happening on campus. We welcome our new students, incoming 5th graders, when they attend a field trip to see what middle school is all about. New students are introduced to their new school by leadership students and our administrative staff hosts an informational night for their parents. Parent connections are established by more than just our teachers. Our counselor, administrators, and probation officer provide parent education opportunities on topics such as how to help students be successful in middle school and on college readiness. Connections to our IB traits are included in these sessions. SVMS engages the community in our character development through outreach programs. The band and choir perform at various school and community events, such as Field of Valor. A team of teachers and a senior advisor have created a new community garden that is already providing crops to those in need. Many of the supplies for our clubs/projects are obtained through community donations such as Wells Fargo (donations to Make a Difference) and teachers and community members who pay honorariums to guest speakers (Holocaust survivor and Civil War Day). Our administrators are highly accessible to parents, which results in regular feedback. Inspired by this application we initiated two parent surveys. The positive results of these efforts to involve parents and our community can be seen in Principle 11 evidence.



Principle 11 - The School or District regularly assesses its culture and climate, the functioning of its staff as character educators, and the extent to which its students manifest good character.

SVMS has four principles guiding our campus: 1) decisions must be based upon what is best for students; 2) teachers are the front line to student success; 3) use data whenever possible to inform decisions; and, 4) character matters and must be intentionally developed. These principles are on our PLC form and are asked of every teacher. Part of being an IB school is that teachers reflect on every unit during each part of the unit. Students are asked to be reflective as part of their approach to learning skills. Each IB unit has specific effective skills explicitly taught in multiple formats to help students grow beyond academic learning. This has forced our teachers to evaluate best practices and focus upon the means by which content is addressed. Integrating PBIS included behavior tracking software, which allows us to generate data regarding specific times and locations of documented behaviors. This data will be important to teachers as we plan lessons. Teachers will be able to implement new strategies during the most difficult times for students. Having only recently implemented the tracking software, we look forward to amassing data to be explored in PLC's at the end of this year. Comprehensive data will inform our decisions for the coming year. Weekly PLC time allows teachers to reflect on their teaching and students. Many teachers have a common prep period with partner teachers to facilitate common planning, student wellness discussion and data reflection. Access to attendance data, the School Accountability Report Card, and improvements in suspension/expulsion rates allows us to reflect on meeting our character goals. Assessing student progress occurs in a variety of settings. In language arts, students write a mid-year essay where they reflect on which IB Learner Profile traits they see growth and where improvement is needed. Science students are asked routinely how they displayed character traits throughout their unit (evidence P7). They are asked which they feel they need more practice with and character traits in which they excelled. Falcon Time lessons on IB traits incorporate reflective questions regarding organization, role models and their own character growth. Student reflection is included on the task lists of IB unit assessments. This application motivated us to survey parents to gauge their perception of character development taking place and the climate at SVMS. Our responses were favorable as seen in P10 evidence.

Sierra Vista Newsletter

Keeping parents informed as we transition to an International Baccalaureate school.

Spring 2015

SV Makes Lasting Local and Global Connections!

International Baccalaureate philosophy encourages both local and global connections because academic lessons that have application in the current world are powerful! Toward that end, many student activities in the last few months have created meaningful relationships, within our community and beyond!

The week of February 10th, for example, a group of students from China came to Sierra Vista to make connections with our school. They were introduced to leadership students whom they would shadow during the school day. We welcomed them to our classes, included them in all activities that week, and created friendships that reach across the globe.

Yet another example of world connections happened within TLC (The Letter Club), led by Mrs. Trebesch. Students made beautiful, empathetic cards for Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi children. Dina Faltaous and Ameer Ibrahim translated what the students had written into Arabic. These handmade cards encouraged the refugees and sent hopeful thoughts for a brighter future. Connections were formed with a war-torn country half a world away.

On a local level we have many teachers and students making an impact. Mrs. Bejarano and students from her Builder's Club go to Rowland Convalescent Hospital twice each month to visit with the ill and the elderly; they also organize fund raisers for children with cancer and send boxes of supplies to overseas children in less fortunate countries--these efforts are both local and global! Additionally, Mrs. Edward's "Make a Difference" program collects donations which she and her students deliver to the homeless population on Skid Row. Finally, our community garden is underway and when vegetables are ready to harvest, they will be donated to local food banks.

Career Day, on March 13th, was an amazing day of community involvement with guest speakers presenting college and career information! Our counselor Mrs. Razo (and her many helpers) worked to make the day successful, but it would not have happened without those in our community who chose to donate their time and make Sierra Vista students the most important priority in their busy day! We had representatives from NASA/JPL, the medical field, law enforcement, dentistry, engineering, dog training, entertainment media/stunt men, film directing, business and even a magician! Students were respectful as they learned about careers, what training was needed, and who might enjoy each particular job represented. This type of outreach gives our students real-world insight and inspires them to think about their futures.

Connections--global and local, professional and personal--help us realize that it takes all kinds of people with all kinds of talents to make our world work! Enjoy the photos of the powerful connections our students have made.

Testimonials

Cindy Agobian-Teacher, English Language Arts

Testimonial: What have been the greatest changes in your school's culture/climate since the implementation of character education?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say." With a focus on deliberate, conscious behavior at SVMS, we have implemented PBIS, WEB and IB. Students examine their character traits and become aware of how they treat others; teachers model and recognize positive behavior; reward programs highlight actions that create a positive school climate. Hosting a diverse community, SV's character education ensures that what we do speaks loudly of our shared goals.

Erin Lippert-Counselor

Testimonial: How are all staff members involved in character education at your school?

As an IB MYP school, SVMS is committed to developing creative, critical and reflective thinkers. Students regularly participate in staff-led activities to reinforce the ten IB learner traits throughout the school day. Eighth-grade students also have an opportunity to help create a welcoming environment for the sixth-grade students as a part of our WEB program led by staff members. Finally, students earn Falcon dollars for displaying positive behavior in class and around campus.

Kolby-Student Grade 8

Testimonial: What do you like best about your school?

My favorite part as a student at SVMS is our rigorous History classes. Since 6th grade, and now as an 8th grader I have always been able to express myself in my History classes. Teachers give you the opportunity to show what you are passionate about by writing free writes, current events, and connecting History events with real or historic events you want to know more about. I also enjoy the school's TLC club where students are prompted to write letters to colleges, celebrities, and veterans.

Lori Berns-PTA board member

Testimonial: What do you like best about your school?

Our four children attended Sierra Vista from 2002-present. We have truly enjoyed our years here. At SVMS students are provided a safe place to grow mentally, physically, and spiritually. They have many opportunities to participate in service-oriented clubs, such as visiting convalescent hospitals, giving to the poor on Skid Row, and fundraising for a child in need. Caring, balanced, courageous, and communicators are just some of the many traits these future leaders are learning at SVMS.

Richard Jett-Community Member-Rotary and Queen of the Valley Hospital Foundation Board

Testimonial: What is the role of the school in the community?

SVMS is a remarkable school that deserves recognition. All one must do is interact with their students to recognize this fact. I have observed classes and was inspired to hear 8th graders discuss how great the USA is, and thanks to millions of veterans, how fortunate they are to live in this country. As a Vet I can assure you such support is unique and very much appreciated. Without such quality and caring teachers, supported by an administration who care equally, this attitude would not exist.

