

Measuring Student Citizenship, Character and Life Skills

Although many districts stress the importance of student citizenship, character and life skills – in addition to academic achievement – just as many struggle with how to measure these goals. It is understandable. Far less work has been done in this area. What indicators can boards use to measure these important characteristics and abilities?

In Fargo, North Dakota, the school board has given a lot of thought to this question. Board members, with the help of district staff, have identified how to measure whether the district is successfully addressing these goals. Here's how they have done it.

Life Skills Students will have the life skills necessary to effectively meet the demands of everyday life.

Sub-goals:

- Students will be able to secure and maintain employment
- Students will make healthy lifestyle choices
- Students will avoid the use of restricted and illegal substances
- Students will maintain physical and mental health
- Students will demonstrate a strong work ethic

Indicators of Achievement:

Percentage of students reporting alcohol and substance abuse will decline each year as measured by standardized surveys.

Surveys of local employers will indicate over 85-percent satisfaction with employability characteristics and work behaviors of Fargo students and graduates.

Annual improvement in health-related fitness performance on standardized and district measures (such as the President's Physical Fitness Program).

Improvement over time in healthy nutrition choices as measured by Nutrition Service's documentation.

Citizenship Students will be citizens who participate in and contribute to the well being of their community.

Sub-goals:

- Students will participate in their community's activities
- Students will demonstrate constructive behaviors
- Students will understand and participate in the democratic process

Indicators of Achievement:

Over 90-percent of student portfolios will document involvement in some form of community service activity by 12th grade.

Each school will document, as a part of its building portfolio, ways in which students are engaged in and have the opportunity to practice in the democratic process (for example, what percentage of 18 year old students vote?).

Student attendance and student behavior indicators will document a high percentage of students engaged in positive behaviors and/or a decline each year in negative behaviors.

Each student's portfolio will contain at least one writing sample that documents the student's ability to discuss a significant societal issue.

Character Students will possess sound character and self-esteem that allows them to accept and respect themselves and others.**Sub-goals:**

Students will accept and respect the diversity of gender, cultural, and age differences

Students will be able to cooperate and collaborate to achieve common goals

Students will work independently and compete as necessary

Indicators of Achievement:

Student behavior data (discipline referrals) and survey data (school improvement surveys) will demonstrate annual decline or absence of harassment, bullying or discriminatory behaviors.

Student portfolios will contain evidence of projects accomplished through collaborative efforts.

Opportunities for involvement in, and evidence of engagement in extra-curricular activities will increase annually, with a goal of 90-percent or more of high school students engaged.

The percentage of teachers trained in collaborative learning, diversity, expectations and character education will increase annually.