A Framework for Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) Walk-Throughs
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Some educators use walk-throughs to identify the extent and depth of presence of social-emotional character development (SECD) in a school building. These walk-throughs focus on artifacts and behaviors that specifically evidence a concentration on SECD and its connection to school climate, safety, civility, and academic learning. Information should primarily be obtained by observing what's visible to the senses as you walk through the school. You may need to look at newsletters and meeting minutes that are not on display. And, of course, you also should talk to adults and students.

I have compiled items that I have used and seen in walk-throughs based on the experience of the Developing Safe and Civil Schools project and school leaders Larry Leverett, Janet Patti, and Marcia Knoll. Feel free to use these as the basis for your own protocol. You can use a rating system like this:

1. Not seen or appropriately demonstrated (i.e., shown in ways and/or to the extent reasonably expected for that particular category or item).
2. Can be seen or appropriately demonstrated on occasion but not commonplace.
3. Regularly and visibly seen, present in a significant way, and/or appropriately demonstrated by a meaningful subgroup.
4. Almost always appropriately seen and/or appropriately demonstrated; this rating should be used for something that is a pervasive presence in the school.

After you have identified the strengths and challenges within each climate area, make a plan to improve one item in each area that's rated a 1 or a 2, if any. Then, conduct guided inquiry, focusing on the areas you wish to address and use walk-throughs to monitor progress.

Physical Appearance

- The school has a clean, cared-for appearance. There are student displays of work and bulletin boards that reflect students' activities, interests, backgrounds, thoughts, and feelings.
- Topics of bulletin boards reflect student activities, interests and SECD aspects of academic learning.

Building Tone

- People's warmth, smiles, and caring expressions and actions are obvious.
- Celebrations and events reflect community culture, values, and interests.
- Students demonstrate caring, respectful behavior, in group areas and hall-passing times.

- Adults meet and greet students warmly at the start of the day and send them home at the end of the day in a caring manner.
- The school office staff is welcoming and helpful to children and adults.
- In the teachers' lounge, there's a pervasive tone of caring and respectful conversation about adults and children.

School-Wide SECD

- Norms and core values are prominently posted or otherwise communicated. Staff and students can articulate school-wide and classroom norms of behavior and positive character and/or core values.
- Students are involved in mentoring other students.
- Adults and students can state procedures for resolving conflict among students and addressing potential bullying.
- Discipline is firm, fair, and consistent; there's no disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline, and minimal use of that strategy.
- Opportunities exist for widespread positive recognition of meaningful numbers of students (i.e., beyond limited single student of the month, etc., or visible high-level student performers)
- School-wide decisions that concern students include their representation.

Classroom Management and Instruction:

- Teachers demonstrate positive and caring behaviors even when corrective.
- Instruction involves multiple modalities, and students are consistently engaged.
- Teachers foster students' self-directed learning and decision-making.
- Students work in groups that are diverse by race, gender, physical/emotional ability/disability.
- Young people are regularly learning such social-emotional learning skills as self-awareness, emotional competencies, social skills for working individually and in groups, relationship management, and responsible decision-making and problem-solving.
- There's evidence of thematic connections to core values and SEL in classroom instruction.
- Questioning without fear of mistakes is encouraged by the teachers' tone, including empathy and humor.
- SECD pedagogy is integrated with academic content in lesson instruction.
- Differentiated instruction methods are used to meet the needs of diverse learners such as English Language Learners, intellectually or behaviorally challenged and intellectually gifted youngsters.
- Teachers ask students to reflect on learning and behavior via discussion, dialogue, journaling, blogging, other writing, or role play.
- Feedback is used as a positive, growth-enhancing mode in teaching and learning.
- Service learning takes place within or outside of the school.

Adult Relationships

- Adult words and behaviors demonstrate collegial respect.
- Administrators, teachers, and parents work and plan together amiably.
- There is mutual respect between support staff members and teaching staff.
- Welcoming, engaged learning communities exist for adults to dialogue about practice.
- Inclusive education is implemented in respectful and supportive ways.
- Adults regularly participate in professional development or have dialogue related to equity issues, including implicit bias and structural inequalities.
- Parents and other guardians are invited to respectful school-home listening sessions/dialogue/ discussion on equity issues in the school and community.

Adult-Student Relationships

- Adults are positive around and supportive of students.
- Students can be seen talking with and working with adults beyond classroom requirements.
- Adults ask students for their ideas and opinions and participation when making class and school-wide decisions.
- Adults invite students into dialogues about behavior and other student concerns.
- Staff members serve in formal or informal mentoring roles with students.
- There's a visible and active student government that involves more than just the elected officers.

Student-to-Student Relationships

- Students demonstrate caring behavior and cooperation with one another.
- Students display non-aggressive behavior and the use of language to express needs and wants.
- Ethnic and culturally based cliques are minimal.
- Cross-cultural collaboration in learning and in recreation is evident.
- Students seek out opportunities to offer helping behaviors to diverse others.
- Student role models are those who demonstrate positive behaviors and leadership.
- Many students are involved in "buddying" activities to help classmates with character and academics.

Lunchroom/Recess

- Adult staff members are engaged positively with students; there's no yelling.

- Students are welcoming of other students sitting at their tables and activities, including newcomers to the school.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (JEDI)

- Teachers pose questions that require all students to explain their thinking or reasoning.
- Teachers post all students' work with meaningful feedback that redirects and pushes students to the next level.
- All students actively participate in small-group conversations, whole-class mini lessons, individual conferences, or independent subject area work.
- Students work in groups that are diverse by race, gender, physical/emotional ability/disability.
- Diverse students are represented in participation in leadership roles, school governance, extracurricular activities.
- Recognition of the cultures and traditions represented by students and their families as well as staff.
- All students are given clear and non-stigmatizing opportunities and vehicles to express uncertainties, anxieties, and the need for help with specific content areas.

School Name:

_____

Principal's Name:

_____

Date of Observation:

_____

Observer/Consultant:

_____

Please circle the position of each observer/participant in the walk-through and the number of individuals present in each category:

Teacher _____
Administrator _____
Support Staff _____
Parent_____
Student _____