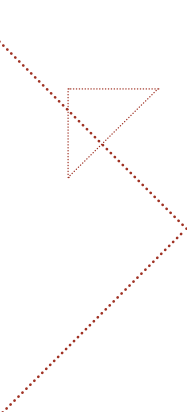


Fenway High School: Social Emotional Learning as the Foundation for Social Justice

By Elisabeth Barnett & Jennifer Kim





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Project Overview

Social Emotional Learning in Diverse High Schools Study

The psychological, social, and emotional aspects of education have enjoyed increased attention in recent years as oft-termed “non-cognitive factors” and “soft skills” have gained traction in research, policy, and practice circles as major drivers of student achievement. Despite this attention, the accountability-driven practices and policies that are the legacy of No Child Left Behind, and that still dominate the education world today, often leave them out of the picture. Further, failing to meet students’ psychological, social, and emotional needs will continue to fuel gaps in opportunity and achievement for students—in particular, low-income students and students of color—who are frequently underserved by the schools they attend. While critical to providing students with an equitable education suited to today’s world, more research is needed to better understand how schools can effectively implement and sustain practices that meet students’ social and emotional needs as well as provide them with the opportunity to learn adaptive skills and strategies to succeed both inside and outside of the classroom. The growing field of social and emotional learning aims to do just that across research, policy, and practice arenas.

Much of the existing research on social and emotional learning, however, has focused on elementary and middle schools. This is likely because fostering the development of social and emotional skills is often seen as part of the educational mission in earlier grades, social emotional initiatives have been easier to launch and implement in primary and middle school contexts, and scholarly and practical interest has centered around early intervention. As a result, little is known about what effective social emotional learning practice looks like at the high school level and throughout the later years of adolescence. Further, the intense emphasis of education policy has been on measurable academic outcomes, which has focused most high schools’ attention on delivering increasing bodies of subject matter content to students in order to boost test scores, rather than on attending to the education of the “whole child.”

There do exist some high schools, however, that have centered their work on developing young people as whole human beings who are socially and emotionally aware and skilled, who engage a growth mindset that enables them to persevere when challenged, who learn to be mindful, conscientious, and empowered, and who develop a sense of social responsibility about making positive contributions to their school community and the wider community beyond. We identified three such schools, which operate in very different contexts, and designed our study to address three open questions in research on social and emotional learning:

1. How is effective social emotional learning practiced in high schools?
In particular, what can we learn from high schools that have developed an explicit mission to prepare students to be personally and socially aware, skilled, and responsible?
2. How can social emotional learning strategies be tuned to meet the needs of students in diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic schooling contexts?
3. How does a systemic, whole school approach to social emotional learning, in contrast to an interventionist or programmatic approach, function as a model of school-wide practice?

Through in-depth case studies of three urban, socioeconomically, and racially diverse small public high schools, a student survey, and a comparison of student survey results to a national sample of students, this project investigates the ways in which these highly effective schools design, implement, and practice school-wide social emotional learning as well as how this focus on social emotional learning shapes students' educational experiences and outcomes. In particular, the schools we study—which aim to engage and empower the student communities they serve—ground their educational approach in an expanded vision of social emotional learning that incorporates a social justice education perspective as essential to their practice. This study was funded by the NoVo Foundation.



Research Questions

This case study is one of four reports—three case studies and a cross-case analysis—written by SCOPE on effective social emotional learning practice in diverse high schools. The reports investigate the following research questions, with the case studies focusing primarily on the first two questions and the cross-case report addressing all three:

1. How is social emotional learning conceptualized and implemented at these high schools? How is it informed or shaped by a social justice education perspective?
2. How do these schools practice social emotional learning to meet the needs of their respective urban, diverse student communities and with what results?
3. How does effective social emotional learning practice shape students' educational experiences and provide them with critical psychological resources that foster personal, social, and academic success?

The high schools selected to participate in this study were: Fenway High School (Boston, MA), El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice (Brooklyn, NY), and International School of the Americas (San Antonio, TX).

Research Methodology

The researchers employed a multi-method, multiple case study research design. Schools were selected using a rigorous screening procedure that involved: nomination by a panel of experts in the fields of social emotional learning and social justice education; strong academic performance and attainment outcomes (compared to each school's district); and a selection interview with school leaders and teachers to confirm an explicit, well-established, school-wide focus on social emotional learning and social justice education. These school sites we selected also represent a range of socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity among the student communities they serve, which provided us with the opportunity to investigate how these factors impact the school context and student experiences.

Qualitative data sources included: observations (e.g., of classrooms, student events, and faculty meetings), document analysis (e.g., of school websites, student handbooks, and course syllabi), and interviews and focus groups (with school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community partners). Quantitative data sources included publicly available school record data (e.g., attendance rates, graduation rates, and state achievement test performance) and a survey of current students' educational experiences (e.g., perceptions of school climate, attitudes about learning, motivation for school, and attainment goals). The majority of the student survey items were drawn from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, which enabled us to compare the data from the student sample in our study to a national sample of high school students with similar school characteristics.

Drawing on an ecological or sociocultural systems data analysis strategy, observations, interviews, focus groups, and document and artifact analyses centered on identifying how social emotional learning and social justice education were practiced

across key levels of the school context: climate and culture, features and structures, and formal and informal practices (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key Levels of Schooling Contexts

Level of school system	Definition	Examples
School climate & culture	<i>A school's physical and social environment and the norms, values, and expectations that implicitly and explicitly structure that environment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School mission and vision • Core values • Expectations of graduates
School features & structures	<i>School design features and organizational structures that shape how the school and its activities are organized.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory • Counseling and support services • Community-based partnerships
School practices	<i>Formal and informal daily practices that reflect what people do, how they teach and learn, and how they participate in the school community.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning strategies • School traditions and activities • Classroom participation practices

Notes: Definitions and examples derived from empirical and theoretical work on studying schools through an ecological, sociocultural, and/or organizational framework. See cross-case report for an extended discussion and reference list: <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/publications/pubs/1310>

Researchers also evaluated how social emotional learning and social justice education were conceptualized at each school and examined how key social emotional learning and social justice education skills and competencies prevalent in the literature both converged with and diverged from each school’s understanding and practice (see Table 2, following page).

During the 2012–2013 academic year, the research team made site visits to each school and administered the student survey. Members of the research team: conducted off-site phone interviews with school leaders and teachers; participated in intensive site visits to each school for a total of 4–6 days per site; worked closely with teachers and school leaders to collect pertinent documents, schedule interviews and focus groups with school personnel as well as students, parents, and community partners; and administered the student survey during the winter and spring of 2013. Data analysis and supplemental data collection took place during the summer of 2013 through the fall of 2014.

The case studies have been verified with key members of each of the schools for factual accuracy. Additional detail about the data collection activities for this study can be found in Appendix A. More information on the study’s background, research design, and methodology can be found in the cross-case report main text and appendices.

Table 2: Social Emotional Learning and Social Justice Education Skills and Competencies

Social Emotional Learning Skills & Competencies	Social Justice Education Skills & Competencies
<p>Self-awareness: accurately assessing one’s feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.</p>	<p>Interdependence: seeing oneself as part of community; having a sense of shared fate and common destiny with others; recognizing how collective experiences shape individual lives.</p>
<p>Self-management: regulating one’s emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately.</p>	<p>Social responsibility: understanding how one’s actions impact others; treating others with respect; acting with ethical standards; maintaining relationships and connections.</p>
<p>Social awareness: being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources.</p>	<p>Perspective-taking: taking the perspective of and empathizing with others; coordinating others’ points of view with one’s own; recognizing factors that shape multiple perspectives.</p>
<p>Relationship skills: establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed.</p>	<p>Multicultural literacy: recognizing and appreciating group similarities and differences; having a critical understanding of how identities and significant social categories of difference matter in everyday life and across social contexts; understanding experience through multicultural and equity-focused lenses; having an awareness of systems of privilege, power, and oppression.</p>
<p>Responsible decision-making: making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one’s school and community.</p>	<p>Community engagement: actively contributing to the well-being of one’s community; understanding democratic principles and values, citizenship, and civic participation; having leadership, voice, and efficacy to be change agent and organize for social action.</p>

Notes: Social emotional learning and social justice education skills and competencies. See cross-case report for an extended discussion and reference list: <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/publications/pubs/1310>

Resources

Findings from the Social Emotional Learning in Diverse High Schools Study are published in three case studies, a cross-case report, a research brief, and a technical report. Visit <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/publications/pubs/1310> to view these products.

A Look Inside Fenway: 11th-Grade Humanities Class Discussion

In an 11th-grade Humanities class at Fenway High School, we watched while students vigorously debated the question of whether Thomas Jefferson was a hero or hypocrite. Since Jefferson—American founding father, third U.S. President, and champion of democracy—owned slaves himself, as well as engaged in an intimate relationship with one of his slaves, students questioned his role as an American hero. A lively, but respectful, discussion was underway as students weighed in on both sides of the question:

I don't think he's a hero or a hypocrite. Jefferson wasn't a hypocrite because slave owners had sex with slaves. It was normal. But he raped her—she didn't consent.

He contradicted himself. He is a hypocrite.

I want to build off that. The Declaration was written for his people (White people). Moral standards have changed. You can't judge Jefferson by today's moral standards. History books never mentioned flaws because they wanted leaders viewed as heroes. He was both a hero and a hypocrite.

This discussion stood out as a clear example of the ways in which both social emotional learning and social justice education are fundamental to how Fenway High School educates its students. Students were fully engaged in a discussion of a thorny historical question that clearly resonated with them as young Americans of color. They showed an ability to exchange ideas skillfully and respectfully, building on the thoughts of those who had spoken before and acknowledging their perspectives. As Gainey, Prescott, and Kemp (2011) state in a recent Fenway accreditation report, “Fenway High School is a place where students are seen as budding intellectuals who are growing into conscientious citizens” (p. 9). Indeed, fostering students' growth and development to become “conscientious citizens” guides Fenway's approach to social emotional learning and social justice education.

School History and Context

Fenway opened in 1983 as a program for at-risk students and was housed within English High School in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston. Fenway founder, and first headmaster, Dr. Larry Myatt wanted to create a school where students were encouraged to work hard, be themselves, and experience greater educational opportunity than would often be afforded to them by their prior education and circumstances. In describing his vision for education in a 2013 interview with the National Institute for Student-Centered Education, Myatt said:

I would want and expect schools to look very different given the local context, physical and human resources, the values and goals of each community, and very permeable to the outside world, from governance to learning to developing real accountability, the kind that eludes policy makers—students showing what they know and can do to folks who know and care about them.

In 1989, the Fenway program joined the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), which had a major influence on the philosophy and development of the school. Fenway continues to closely follow the CES’s ten *Common Principles*, which are intended to create “personalized, equitable, and academically challenging” schools and was one of the coalition’s early exemplar schools.

The Coalition of Essential Schools’ Common Principles¹

1. Learning to use one’s mind well
2. Less is more, depth over coverage
3. Goals apply to all students
4. Personalization
5. Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach
6. Demonstration of mastery
7. A tone of decency and trust
8. Commitment to the entire school
9. Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
10. Democracy and equality

In 1993, the program became a free-standing school within the Boston Public Schools system² and, in 1994, was awarded pilot status by the state, giving it

¹ For additional detail on the CES *Common Principles*, see <http://essentialschools.org/common-principles/>.

² Pilot schools are part of the school district but have autonomy over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum, assessment, and the school calendar, allowing for increased flexibility to organize schools and staffing to meet the needs of students and families (<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/941>).

increased flexibility in its educational program, hiring of staff, and management. In 1995, the school established three “houses,” or cohorts of students, and each house was linked to a community partner.

Since its founding, Fenway has had several key leaders, in addition to Myatt, who have helped the school maintain its founding principles and priorities. The current principal, officially called the “Head of School,” Peggy Kemp, has led Fenway since 2003. She is clearly respected and treated with great affection by students, parents, teachers, and other administrators, as well as the wider education community. She states that her primary responsibility at the school is “to have difficult conversations when needed.” Fenway shares space with another school and occupies the second floor of an older building, located across the street from Fenway Park ballpark. They are expecting to move to a new facility in 2015.

At Fenway, students engage in a four-year course of study that includes course work, capstone projects, structured supports, and experiential education (see Figure 1):

Figure 1: Course of study by grade at Fenway High School

9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Advisory/Health & Wellness Math Science Humanities Foundations of Literacy	Advisory Math Science Humanities Spanish	Advisory Math Science Humanities Spanish Ventures	Advisory Math Science Humanities Ventures
Orientation Activities Memoir Project Science Fair	Community Service Science Fair	Junior Review Science Fair	Position Paper Science Fair Senior Internship Senior Portfolios

A key part of the Fenway experience is learning by doing, much of this with support from key partners who provide opportunities for students to experience themselves as learners in real world settings. Notable among their partners are the Boston Museum of Science, a sponsor of the Senior Science Fair and host to a variety of other school activities, and Blue Cross Blue Shield, which provides extensive support for the Ventures courses—courses for 11th and 12th graders that focus on building students’ communication and entrepreneurial skills. These partners are also well represented on the Fenway Board, which governs the school and provides it with support, encouragement, resources, and advocacy that permit it to flourish in an environment not always favorable to innovative schools.

Students must apply to be admitted to Fenway—the process, however, is designed to be inclusive and non-selective. The application process in meant to ensure that

students have thought about the unique features of the school and feel that it is a good fit for them. Students from all middle schools in Boston are eligible to apply and are required to submit two teacher recommendations and respond to three essays questions during the middle of their eighth-grade year. The essay prompts include: *What makes a good school? What makes a good student? Why do I want to come to Fenway?* These questions help provide school administrators and teachers with a sense of who students are and what they want in an education.

The school is committed to accepting a diverse class of students across skill levels (demarcated as high, medium, and low), which is built into the admissions process. Fenway also works hard to outreach to students in advance of the admissions season, working carefully with the district, families, and students to ensure that interested applicants are not disadvantaged by their admissions process. Demand, however, is high—in recent years Fenway has received more than 800 applications for 90 available spots. To admit students, school staff sort the applicants by race, gender, and skill level and select a representative number of applicants from each pile. In the spring, approximately 150 students and families are invited to attend a meeting at the school; out of this 150, between 80 and 90 are accepted.

In the 2012–13 academic year, the year of the study, there were 320 students enrolled at Fenway (see Table 3). Of these, 67% were eligible for free or reduced lunch, 12% were English Language Learners, and 17% were receiving special education services. Fenway enrolled a somewhat higher percentage of Latino students (46% vs. 40%)

and somewhat lower percentage African American students (41% vs. 45%) compared to Boston Public Schools. In addition, the ratio of teachers to students was 12:1, the same ratio as Boston Public Schools as a whole (Fenway School Report Card, 2013).

Many indicators point to the success of the school and its students (see Table 4, following page). Fenway’s students had better attendance, performed better on state exams, graduated at higher rates, and were more likely to attend college than students in the district as a whole. Over the years, Fenway has received numerous awards and accolades and is widely seen as an exemplar of how to provide low-income students and students of color with an excellent education. For

Table 3: Fenway Student Demographics

Fenway High School 2012–2013 Demographics Grades 9–12	
Enrollment	320
Race/Ethnicity	--
African American	41%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%
Latino	46%
White	6%
Other	3%
Free or Reduced-Priced Lunch	67%
English Language Learners	12%
Special Education	17%
Gender	--
Female	53%
Male	47%

Source: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

example, it was one of the original 10 New American High Schools named by the U.S. Department of Education in 1996; it was named one of the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ (NASSP) 12 Breakthrough Schools in 2004; it was honored as a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School in 2012; and was ranked as a Bronze Medal school in 2014 by the *U.S. News and World Report* and was listed as one of the country’s best high schools.

Fenway students are also successful once they go to college. In a 2005 Boston Private Industry Council study, more Fenway graduates remained in college past their first year than graduates from any other Boston high school excluding the three “exam” schools where admission is based on test scores (Fenway High School, n.d.).

Table 4: Fenway School Performance Indicators Compared to District

Performance Indicator	Fenway High School Grades 9–12				Boston Public Schools Grades 9–12			
	2008– 2009	2009– 2010	2010– 2011	2011– 2012	2008– 2009	2009– 2010	2010– 2011	2011– 2012
Attendance rate	94%	94%	94%	94%	86%	86%	85%	86%
Grade 10 ELA MCAS: Proficient	93%	75%	95%	91%	64%	60%	67%	73%
Grade 10 Mathematics MCAS: Proficient	84%	81%	84%	82%	62%	60%	62%	65%
4-year graduation rate	88%	90%	83%	88%	61%	63%	64%	66%
5-year graduation rate	92%	94%	90%	92%	67%	69%	71%	72%
Graduates attending college or university	76%	84%	77%	67%	63%	67%	66%	65%

Notes: Data represents past four years for which indicators are publicly available for all schools in the study. Enrollment for Fenway High School was 290 for 2008–09, 289 for 2009–10, 290 for 2010–11, and 322 for 2011–12. Enrollment for Boston Public Schools was 13,567 for 2008–09, 13,514 for 2009–10, 13,474 for 2010–11, and 12,548 for 2011–12 and includes all public high schools housing Grades 9–12 only. Attendance rate was calculated at the district level by averaging rates of all Boston public high schools with students in Grades 9–12 only. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) measures performance based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework learning standards for all public school students, including alternate assessments for students with disabilities (MCAS-Alt) and first-year LEP students (MCAS English Language Arts) if needed. The ELA MCAS administered in Grade 10 contains language, reading, and composition components, and the Math MCAS administered in Grade 10 contains questions on number and quantity, algebra and functions, geometry, and statistics and probability. Students must score at least 240 (on a scale of 200–280) in order to be proficient. Only students enrolled for two full years in the school or district are included in the proficiency rates. Students must pass the grade 10 ELA and Math MCAS and one of the four high school science, technology, and engineering tests in order to qualify to graduate. Graduation rates are calculated by cohort. Cohort is defined as the number of first time entering 9th graders four years earlier, less transfers out, plus transfers in. Students who earn a GED or Certificate of Attainment are not counted as graduates. Graduates attending college or university are defined as students attending either a 4-year or 2-year college. Source: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

Vision for Education: Fenway’s Approach to Social Emotional Learning and Social Justice Education

There’s a kid who’s a real community activist—talk about social justice. He was a community organizer in Fenway, outside of Fenway. He went into college in New York City and was really honest about being around kids [very different from him]... How to find your place in that? How are you going to be the change on campus? They know how to do that because of their Fenway experience.

—*School counselor*

Fenway’s approach to schooling is to “educate the whole child.” For Fenway, this means that, on par with academic preparation and success, it is necessary to provide students with social emotional skills that will empower them to successfully handle the real-life situations and challenges that accompany school, college, career, and life environments. In particular, Fenway seeks to prepare its students for the real-life situations and challenges that students of color, the majority of whom will be the first in their family to go to college, will need to navigate to do well in high school and transition to college and life after high school.

Fenway educators see the school itself as a tool for correcting injustice. The school is designed to foster academic and personal success for Fenway’s population of students, who would not typically have access to high quality, public education. Helping students succeed academically provides them with the foundation they need to build a future with greater opportunity, overcoming societal injustices that they, their families, and their communities have faced. While Fenway seeks to graduate students who are conscientious, engaged, and empowered citizens who will stand up for social justice, its educators believe that they must start with a strong social emotional foundation. Administrators and teachers at Fenway maintain that their students succeed academically because of the close and supportive relationships they have with adults in the school, and that the capacity for social justice—both among the students and for the school itself—grows from this foundation.

School Climate and Culture

Level of school system	Definition	Examples
School climate and culture	<i>A school's physical and social environment and the norms, values, and expectations that implicitly and explicitly structure that environment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School mission and vision • Core values • Relationship norms and expectations

The school climate and culture at Fenway is one way in which social emotional learning and social justice education are placed at the center of the school's enterprise. The school culture at Fenway was described in the following way by a counselor:

Our school culture—it's hard to put your finger on it. I've worked in other Boston high schools and Fenway has such a unique school culture: really respectful, open-minded; phenomenal leadership and great staff; and the students are wise and thoughtful, and just good citizens. They have a good sense of what community means in a large and small sense.

Fenway staff referenced “school culture” or “the culture of the school” regularly when talking about how social emotional learning and social justice education take place at the school. One teacher said, “To work here, you have to be part of that culture and come alive with it. I was an intern for one year, and I was able to see other teachers model that.” Fenway staff stay on, working at the school for many years, and say that they do not experience burnout because they philosophically believe in the culture of the school and feel like they are a part of something important.

While there are many aspects of Fenway's climate and culture that contribute to student success, we consider the following to be those most likely to influence one or more facets of social emotional learning and social justice education. They are framed here in terms of core values (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: How Fenway's climate and culture promote social emotional learning and social justice education

How Fenway's climate and culture promote social emotional learning	How Fenway's climate and culture promote social justice education
<p>Core values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and adults are members of a purposeful community built on respect and high expectations • The school is a space of physical and emotional safety • Supporting students should be balanced with fostering independence • There is universal responsibility for student outcomes 	<p>Core values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Fenway education is a tool to achieve social justice • Community members must act to confront injustice

Core Value #1: Students and Adults are Members of a Purposeful Community Built On Respect and High Expectations

Students feel that school is an enjoyable place. But there are also high expectations. They know they are expected to do well on tests and in college.

—Peggy Kemp, Fenway Principal

You are never really playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits, that is real joy.

—Arthur Ashe, quoted on classroom poster

At Fenway, there is a pervasive belief that all members of the community are worthy and deserving of respect. Further, the respect is accorded in part because of an assumption that everyone will work to give their best to others and aspire to the high levels of performance associated with being a Fenway staff member or student. The community also offers students and staff alike a sense of belonging—being part of an organization with an important purpose.

Mission and Motto

Fenway’s mission is to create a socially responsible and morally committed community of learners that values its students as individuals. Its goal is to encourage academic excellence and a set of key habits of mind among its students, as well as self-esteem and leadership qualities. Further, the school’s motto is to “Work Hard. Be Yourself. Do the Right Thing.” These ideas are prevalent throughout the climate and culture of the school.

Core Principles

Fenway has developed a set of Core Principles that guide the school’s goals and decision-making processes. They explicitly articulate the school’s social emotional and social justice education objectives as they apply to both students and adults in the school. The principles state that the Fenway community “persistently strives to:”

- Foster and perpetuate a strong sense of community at the school, and an understanding of Fenway’s core principles as the school grows and changes.
- Support the health and wellness of staff.
- Ensure that addressing the issues of race, class, and gender is central to Fenway life.
- Develop, communicate, and be guided by a small number of school-based priorities for each academic year.
- Ensure that students are vital participants in school decision-making.
- Ensure that faculty members are vital participants in school decision-making.

- Provide opportunities for staff and students to learn and grow together and to sustain deep intellectual and personal relationships.
- Assure that Fenway continues to be a school that offers physical, cultural, and intellectual safety and which stresses the ideas of social commitment and moral responsibility.
- Provide structures and experiences that encourage teachers to take a “whole student” approach in content teams and across disciplines.
- Ensure that every Fenway student participates in some form of physical activity.

Respectful interactions, the foundation of Fenway’s culture, were widely modeled by the school leadership and faculty, and are expected of students. In staff meetings and classrooms, we observed a willingness to actively and attentively listen to others as well as a high level of respectful, yet comfortable, interaction during classroom instruction and student work time. As one counselor said, “There are high level expectations, and high levels of empathy. That helps in that students feel respected.” Further, there are norms that are practiced as part of everyday life that express respect, high expectations, and encourage a sense of belonging. One teacher commented:

We never put down students in the teachers’ lounge. We discuss kids only to think about how to help them. We get to know the students and drop our stereotypes. Also, teachers and students [can step outside] their roles. Students know me as a person and know things about me. We are interacting as humans and that changes things.

These respectful, caring interactions begin with those between teachers and administration. Some of those interviewed suggested that the school’s pilot status allows for more fluid, trusting relationships between administration and teachers. There is a sense that everyone is generally on the same side, is part of a purposeful community, and is deeply invested in that community. Teachers and administrators expressed a belief that they trusted each other to be caring, to work hard, and to put students’ needs first, even though it is not always easy. One teacher commented:

There is respect and trust with the administration—there is a profound trust with them. I continue to strive to be a better educator. I feel valued. We can agree to disagree sometimes. Emotions can be heavy on a certain day.

The atmosphere set by the adults clearly influences the students. Students talked about feeling a part of a purposeful community. For example, when asked in the student survey to provide three words to describe the school, many said “family,” “community,” “challenging,” and “hard-working.” Many students also said “fun!” Students interviewed were very articulate about the need to work hard and take responsibility for themselves and others in the school. They were generally active in class discussions and respectful of one another in conversations and in the hallways. Teachers were observed treating students as people with knowledge and ideas worth listening to.

Being part of a purposeful community involving respect, high expectations, and a sense of belonging sets the stage for fostering students' capacities for self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making and supports social emotional growth (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997). Importantly, this process requires adults in the school to cultivate their social emotional skills and competencies and apply them to their interactions with both adults and students in the school.



Core Value #2: The School is a Space of Physical and Emotional Safety

At Fenway, safety is seen as a pre-condition for social emotional and academic learning, especially for at-risk students. Early in its history, the school developed a set of safety rules, or guidelines, to set norms and expectations for students and adults in the school.

Safety Guidelines

- **Try it on:** Listen to what someone has to say; hear them out before you respond. You don't always have to respond.
- **It's OK to disagree:** Have respect for different opinions. You don't have to agree with them.
- **No shame, blame, or attack:** Don't make others feel bad because they are honest about how they feel or what they need. No put-downs.
- **Take 100% responsibility:** Use "I" statements. Keep the focus on yourself and take 100% responsibility for what you are saying by using "I" statements. Start with "I think," "I feel," "I need." Don't say, "Other people think," or "Everyone says..."
- **Group confidentiality:** Do not take away or bring back information from the group. People can't be honest unless sessions are kept private.

According to a school administrator, the original Safety Guidelines were developed collaboratively by a group of faculty and was facilitated by a consulting group called Visions, Inc. Visions pushed the faculty to address unspoken barriers among themselves, and considered ways in which they did not recognize and value aspects of each other's identities. Clearly, the school's Safety Guidelines go beyond safety as traditionally conceptualized and emphasize safety in taking personal risks, in disagreeing, and in sharing sensitive information.

How does the school make the Safety Guidelines come alive? According to a school administrator, it is mainly a result of using and expressing them every day and across all aspects of the school and students' experiences. The guidelines are posted in most classrooms, and shape the language that is used in the school community. For example, students will say, "I feel shame-blamed" or "I feel attacked" if they feel verbally assaulted or disrespected in some way. The Safety Guidelines are emphasized more frequently with new students as they are socialized to be members of the Fenway community. They are explained and referred to in the initial student orientation, early class trips and bonding experiences, and in advisory class. Teachers also remind themselves of the guidelines and refer to them in faculty meetings and when interacting with one another.

Concern with safety is further reflected and reinforced by the school's norms and expectations. For example, staff meetings are traditionally started with a check-in allowing for "a humane entry into the meeting," as one staff member said. People might share what is going on outside of school or talk about a class that did not go well or a troubling relationship with a student. A counselor said that they encourage students to feel safe being themselves, including showing and feeling confident in how smart they are. When there is a problem involving a student, teachers and counselors investigate the issue by asking what is going on with the student rather than jumping to blame.

The safe environment at Fenway and its tools such as the Safety Guidelines are important resources that articulate and foster social emotional learning, especially in relation to social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. They can also contribute to social justice education in that they involve fostering students' sense of community, social responsibility, capacity to take others' perspectives, and multicultural literacy. A sense of safety increases the likelihood that learning will take place (Edmondson, 1999).

When surveyed about their school's climate, Fenway students strongly agreed that they were part of a caring, respectful, diverse community where teachers value students and where students feel safe and supported—frequently at a significantly higher rate than students in the comparison school sample (Table 5, following page).

Table 5: Student Perceptions of School Climate

How much do you agree with the following... (% agree)	Fenway N = 101	Comparison schools N = 521	χ^2
Students and teachers get along	97.0	74.3	25.49***
The teaching is good	98.0	80.9	17.93***
Teachers are interested in students	97.0	75.5	23.60***
There is real school spirit	91.1	68.0	22.31***
School rules are fair	93.9	51.5	61.52***
Everyone knows the school rules	96.0	80.2	14.46***
I often feel put down by other students	7.90	19.9	8.25**
I feel safe	95.0	83.0	9.59**
Students are friends with others from different racial/ethnic backgrounds	97.0	90.9	4.16*

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Responses are valid percentages; the average response rate for the Fenway sample across items was 99%. Sample size provided in the table is based on the greatest number of valid responses per sample across items. Response categories: % agree, % disagree.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors' calculations.

Fenway students also like their school and want to perform well (Table 6). While both groups of students indicated that doing well in school was very important to them, Fenway students were more likely to say that they like school “a great deal” than students in the comparison school sample.

Table 6: Extent to Which Students Like School and Want to Do Well

How much do you like school? (% response)	Fenway N = 98	Comparison schools N = 571	χ^2
Not at all	5.1	7.2	21.22***
Somewhat	40.8 ^a	62.6 ^b	
A great deal	54.1 ^a	30.2 ^b	
How important are good grades to you? (% response)	Fenway N = 98	Comparison schools N = 571	χ^2
Not at all	2.1	1.2	0.59
Somewhat	8.3	9.6	
A great deal	89.6	89.1	

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; letter superscripts indicate that simple effect is significant. Responses are valid percentages; the average response rate for the Fenway sample across items was 96%. Sample size provided in the table is based on the greatest number of valid responses per sample across items.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors' calculations.

Core Value #3: Supporting Students Should Be Balanced with Fostering Independence

Teachers and counselors seek to strike the right balance between supporting students in all that they do, yet also equipping them to be independent and empowered to navigate life after high school. Adults in the school are very conscious that students will only succeed in college and life if they are able to persevere through difficulties, especially because the majority are the first in their family to go to college and are from racial and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Fenway starts by “spoon-feeding” their ninth-grade students, according to a counselor. By 12th grade, they are more concerned with increasing students’ independence and preparing them for the future. Many of the teachers and counselors talked about how they try to be very supportive while progressively encouraging greater autonomy:

It’s hard to get the right balance. How do you recognize students’ pain and struggles and also push them to be intellectuals? Teachers have to do this every day... You’re trying to figure out what kids need. You seek the right balance—comforting and learning about Macbeth.

We want the students to be able to withstand a challenging college or work environment and follow their aspirations. Students might end up in an all-White college as a person of color. We need to teach students resilience over four years so they have choices.

What do you do about a failure in math? Do you give up or find ways to get better? You need to ask for help. Academic stamina is important.

The school culture works to continuously expose students to challenges that they can handle, celebrate when they succeed, and hold them accountable when they do not measure up. For example, new ninth graders begin the year—and their Fenway education—by going on a retreat to Thompson Island³ where they experience life outdoors and encounter a variety of physical and interpersonal challenges. One teacher talked about pushing students to work with different peers during the retreat, and later during class, to learn how to get along well with all kinds of

³Thompson Island is located in the Boston Harbor, about 4 miles offshore. The island is managed by the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, a non-profit education organization.

people. As happens in families, the school works to provide the right amount of independence and support to permit students to grow in terms of all dimensions of social emotional learning including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Core Value #4: There is Universal Responsibility for Student Outcomes

At Fenway, there is an assumption that all adults bear responsibility for student outcomes, and should be involved in both academic instruction and student support. Teachers serve as advisors; counselors encourage academic achievement. Development staff identify and bring people and funding into the school to support students' social, emotional, and academic learning. We repeatedly heard about the extent to which adults in the school work incredibly hard because they believe in the importance of the Fenway mission and because they care about the students. As a result, students are consistently surrounded by people who are committed to helping them grow socially, emotionally, and academically. Two teachers commented:

There is shared responsibility for the school. The norm is that everyone volunteers and accepts responsibility.

Everyone strives to be a great person and a great educator. [Teachers] are constantly doing homework to learn more.

As discussed in the small school's literature, having adults who are invested in students' success has a positive influence (Bloom, Thompson, & Unterman, 2010).

Core Value #5: A Fenway Education is a Tool to Achieve Social Justice

One teacher, who is also engaged in research at the school, believes that only about a third of the students at Fenway do not have a psychological or physical issue. She expressed:

There is too much going on for many kids. Academics are not at the forefront. Survival is. They get beaten up on the way home. Science fair projects can't go home. There is a huge amount of PTSD and undiagnosed depression. There are high levels of poverty—around 70%.

Fenway administrators, teachers, and counselors believe that the school itself fights against societal inequities by providing students who have experienced injustice and

constraints in opportunity a path to a better life. They explicitly acknowledge what students have been through, and they work hard to ensure that they overcome any stereotypes or biases that they may hold personally. The staff at Fenway, for example, has a history of engaging in professional development that helps them to identify and overcome race, class, or gender-based bias and prejudice. This also takes the form of holding themselves to high standards as educators, always pushing themselves to provide high quality educational experiences and support. They consistently question and check in about whether students really have what they need to succeed.

Many staff believe that connecting with students emotionally is the path to correcting injustice, and that social emotional learning makes that possible. Two staff members commented:

We understand that academics are important but social emotional learning is essential to build a relationship with the students. This is especially important considering the students' backgrounds and the misfortunes and difficulties that they face. Their environment plays an important role in their academics. Some students will be successful no matter what. A lot of others—their performance goes up because we're supporting these needs. It's about being respected, trusted, and liked—this changes their experiences and outcomes.

Some come in hungry. They may come in upset. If we get pissed off, nothing gets done. Instead we ask them how they're doing and try to meet them where they are.

Others point to the importance of advocating for the students. One counselor noted that many advantaged students from privileged backgrounds get a lot of help and support on the pathway to college. At Fenway, most students have few, if any, sources of help and advantage. School staff are able to advocate for students to get into certain colleges where they are likely to succeed, increasing the chances that they can overcome past injustices and build a good future. For students, their school's often explicit and ubiquitous commitment to social justice, engagement, and action helps model it as a value and as an end that can be achieved through hard work and passion.

Core Value #6: Community Members Must Act to Confront Injustice

According to Principal Kemp, there is “an overarching belief that at Fenway you'll stand up for social justice when needed.” This is historically a part of the fabric of the school and a part of the culture as expressed by administrators, teachers, staff, and students. This belief is expressed in the curriculum, attitudes of people in the school, and in key moments in the school's trajectory when the community has risen

up to protest an injustice. What is more, Fenway has a history of promoting student and faculty voice. While this can be uncomfortable at times, especially if it results in disagreements within the community, it is a foundational principle on which school features and practices—which will be discussed in the next two sections—are built. Specific ways that the school community has confronted injustice will be discussed later in this report. Taking action to confront injustice contributes to social justice learning by fostering a sense of social responsibility, interdependence, and community engagement.

When asked about their motivation for attending school, Fenway and comparison school sample students both agreed that school was important for their future and that their parents wanted them to succeed (Table 7). Fenway students, however, were much more likely to say that they were engaged in their schoolwork, that school was a place to see their friends, and that their teachers expect them to succeed. In a follow-up question asked of students in our student sample, Fenway students were also highly likely to say that they go to school because their social emotional needs are supported. Students feel cared for, part of a community, respected and valued, like school is relevant, and that they can learn to make a difference with their education (Table 7).

Table 7: Students’ Motivations for Attending School

I go to school because... (% agree)	Fenway N = 97	Comparison schools N = 522	χ^2
Subjects I take are interesting and challenging	90.7	65.9	23.90***
I get satisfaction from schoolwork	95.9	71.5	26.08***
It's a place to meet friends	86.6	71.6	9.56**
My teachers expect me to succeed	95.8	66.5	33.96***
My parents expect me to succeed	96.8	92.3	2.52
Education is important for getting a job later on	96.9	97.5	0.11
I'm learning skills I will need for a job	89.5	87.1	0.40
<i>Follow-up question for Fenway sample only:</i> I go to school because... (% agree)	Fenway N = 97	Comparison schools N = 522	χ^2
I feel cared for	90.5	n/a	n/a
I'm part of a community	95.8		
I'm respected and valued	96.8		
School matters to me	95.8		
I can learn to make a difference	97.9		

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Responses are valid percentages; the average response rate for the Fenway sample across items was 95%. Sample size provided in the table is based on the greatest number of valid responses per sample across items. Response categories: % agree, % disagree.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors' calculations.

School Features and Structures

Level of school system	Definition	Examples
School features and structures	<i>School design features and organizational structures that shape how the school and its activities are organized.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory system • Counseling and support services • Community-based partnerships

Fenway’s core values, described in the previous section, shape and are reinforced by the school’s features and structures. By school features and structures, we mean the design and organizational elements of the school, which organize and actualize the school’s goals and priorities for students and the whole school community.

In this section, we highlight school features and structures in which opportunities for social emotional learning and social justice education are most pronounced. Figure 3 shows the school features and structures we considered most relevant to social emotional learning and social justice education.

Small School Size

Fenway enrolls about 320 students in Grades 9–12, has a staff of approximately 35 (including administrators, teachers, and counselors), and a 12:1 student–teacher ratio. Fenway’s “smallness” helps to build school community and cultivate close-knit relationships at the school. In turn, the sense of community and relationships developed between and among the school’s adults and students creates an environment in which deep personalization and meaningful connections take shape. Fenway leadership, faculty, students, and school partners alike emphasized the importance of the school’s small size in relation to student success and developing close student–teacher relationships that make students feel valued. A Fenway administrator noted the role of the school’s small size in relation to social emotional learning and academic outcomes:

Figure 3: How Fenway’s climate and culture promote social emotional learning and social justice education

- Small school size
- House system
- Student-focused schedule
- Advisory
- Student support team
- Community partnerships
- Community service requirement
- Internship requirement
- Special education integration
- Community of practice
- Leadership structure & teacher voice

There is an explicit connection [between social emotional learning and academic outcomes] with the small numbers of students we have to each student support counselor. This is true across the board. For many students to be served, this is critical.

Fenway embodies many features of high quality small schools, such as personalization, strong relationships, adaptive pedagogy, multicultural and anti-racist teaching, collaborative planning and professional development, family and community connections, and democratic decision-making (cf. Darling-Hammond, 2002). There is closeness and familiarity among teachers and students across different grade levels. Students expressed that “all the teachers know us,” “they know our parents,” “they’re always checking in on us,” and “they even have students checking in on each other.” One student affectionately complained, “They were all in my business,” referring to how several of his teachers regularly asked about his studies and how things were going at home. Upperclassmen were particularly expressive about the personalized attention they had received at Fenway:

It’s a small school so you get one-on-one attention and they push you to be a better student and have a career.

This school is fun, engaging, and empowering. It’s small so it’s fun. Everyone knows each other and interacts; no one disrespects each other.

There’s dedication. It’s small and focused. You have to be dedicated and on top of things, so you don’t slip, but teachers will be there to help you.

A freshman drove this point home, drawing a connection between a small community and the support received from teachers.

It’s a tough school, but they’re going to push you, even if you’re struggling. The community is small, but you want the attention. Most programs after and before school, like tutoring, most schools don’t do that. I can call my teachers. This year, the end of the term was coming, and I had a C. So I called my teacher and I didn’t think they’d pick up. And we talked for 10 minutes about my grade.

House System

Faculty and students at Fenway are organized around a cohort model in which the same group of students “loop” or remain with the same cluster of teachers from Grades 9–11. Beyond the small size of the school, this structure is intended to “pro-

vide a sense of community” and “give all students a chance to be known personally by both other students and faculty.” Students in each grade are placed into one of three heterogeneous houses—Omega, Crossroads, and Phoenix—where they remain for Grades 9–11. In Grade 12, students leave the comfort of their House, and are part of the overall senior class cohort in which independence is fostered as they prepare to transition to college. Seniors, however, still meet for advisory with their House from Grades 9–11, helping to ease the transition to Grade 12. Faculty discussed how the House structure fosters close relationships with students:

The idea of cohort at Fenway is a big deal—this is your cohort for three years; these are your teachers. So we’re trying to foster community in the cohort so students can depend on each other emotionally, but also academically, holding each other accountable.

Each teacher belongs to a House, and three House teachers, one from each group, serve as House coordinators. The House coordinators sit on the school leadership team and work to facilitate communication among the Houses. The House structure fosters smaller communities within the school in which caring relationships take shape, and student–teacher and student–student relationships often deepen over time.

Students appreciate the opportunity to develop relationships with teachers over several years. One student summed this up by describing Fenway in three words, “Perseverance, motivation, and dedication,” and connected this to the value of the relationships he had developed with teachers through the years:

Like my classmate said, once you’re in senior year, you’re meeting new teachers, and that gives you a challenge because you have to build a connection with them, and how they grade, and what is their attitude. I love my senior teachers as my other teachers, even though I only know them for a few months. But I’ve seen them throughout the year, so I go back to my freshman math teacher to help me in senior year. I do that with humanities too. This school is a family.

Student-Focused Schedule

As a Boston pilot school, Fenway is able to set its own schedule, which allows the leadership to organize and structure schooling around the school’s mission. The school day begins at 8:45 a.m., later than most other Boston public schools, and is purposefully designed to accommodate adolescent sleep and learning patterns. A school administrator elaborated on this:

Studies show that most students aren't ready to engage intellectually at 7:30 a.m. Students also travel from all parts of the city. We try to [start at] a time that allows students to be engaged and to arrive on time ready to learn. This is about making students successful and not just being designed to screen out some students. This is more inclusive and addresses all kinds of students, not just early risers and good test takers.

In addition, the Fenway school day ends later than most other schools: 3:35 p.m. three days per week (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday), 2:22 p.m. on Tuesdays, and 1:05 p.m. on Fridays.

On most days, there are four 70-minute class periods, or blocks, per day; a double block period is included once per week. The longer periods are intended to provide teachers with extra time to use different modes of instruction, and target attention to struggling students. While average class sizes may be similar to those in other Boston schools, the block scheduling and course-load for Fenway faculty allow teachers to spend double the amount of time with students as do teachers at comprehensive high schools. Since teachers only teach three classes per day and an advisory three times per week, they have responsibility for fewer students and have fewer "preps" than at traditional high schools.

When the block schedule was first implemented at Fenway, a long-time faculty member recalled receiving a lot of external help to "effectively use an extended period of class time." He was encouraged to focus on kinesthetic and holistic teaching, so that the time was not spent "just lecturing, but included a lot of hands-on" features. Teachers were asked to take on the role of coach, enabling students to be "active learners."

According to a Fenway leader, there is an important school-wide message that is communicated through the structure of the school schedule:

The daily block schedule and weekly double block communicate to everyone that a few subjects are studied in-depth. The total meeting time of four hours for faculty every week communicates the value of collaboration. Meetings are divided between student issues and academic planning. Time is allotted for both so that both social/emotional and academics are valued. Time for community-building, like school-wide community days, is also scheduled into the calendar. This says that we value the time to come together and know each other. It's not just about academics.

The school day ends earlier on Tuesdays and Fridays to allow time for faculty to engage in weekly meetings and regular professional development sessions. On

Tuesdays, teachers and counselors meet for 2-hour House meetings. This is a time for faculty to meet across different content areas to discuss topics ranging from struggling students to upcoming events. Teachers “compare notes” to assess whether additional support may be needed and ensure that the “same messages are being communicated” in their advisories. Fridays are reserved for 1.5-hour Content team meetings. Teachers and counselors meet according to subject area or support area. The structure of Fenway’s weekly staff meetings, including time to meet in House and Content groups, allows teachers to discuss and strategize ways to improve their teaching and to support students both academically and socially.

Students also meet for a 65-minute advisory class three times per week. The advisory is a key feature at Fenway, designed to develop a range of social emotional skills (advisory is discussed in more detail in the next section). The schedule also includes a 25-minute Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) period two times per week and a daily lunch period.

According to teachers and students, an earlier informal start and later end time exist at Fenway, providing a safe place to receive additional academic and social support and to develop closer, trusting relationships. The library and computer labs are staffed and accessible for students, and it is “common practice” for faculty and students to be at school before school starts and after it ends.

There are always kids coming to school very early. They come because they feel safe and comfortable here. They feel trusted and respected. They are expected to behave well, and students are in rooms doing homework, or just hanging out, or talking with teachers. Teachers are open to talk all the time.

Each teacher is supposed to be here [after school] one day a week. But they’re here a lot more. I consider it self-sustaining. Everything works better in my job when I know kids well.

Similarly, students expressed the value of the before and after school time:

You can build more relations with teachers here. You can’t really stay after school in eighth grade, and you can here.

I struggled a lot. I often pick myself up, and teachers helped to pick me up. There are lots of after-school programs for us, and they welcome us to stay after until 5:30 p.m.

Advisory

At Fenway, one of the primary goals of advisory is to develop close, personal, and caring student–teacher and student–student relationships. These relationships are sustained over time since students remain with the same group of students for advisory during all four years of high school. In turn, students are supported both academically and socially. At Fenway, there is an explicit connection between social emotional support and academic success. The following quote from the Fenway Handbook, by educator Theodore Sizer, articulates this perspective, “If even one person in a school knows him/her well enough to care, a student’s chances of success go up dramatically.”

Teachers at Fenway serve as advisors to 25 students. The advisory class meets three times per week for 65 minutes and addresses a range of topics including peer relationships, health and safety, college prep, and career readiness. Key projects in students’ four-year course of study also occur through advisory (e.g., the community service requirement and Junior Review). In addition, advisors are the primary point persons in maintaining communication with students’ parents and guardians.

The advisory curriculum highlights different, progressive content areas at each grade level. The central questions that organize the focus at each grade level can be summarized as follows:

- Grade 9: *What does it mean to be a member of the Fenway community? How can I be a successful student?*
- Grade 10: *Who am I? How can I work to serve others?*
- Grade 11: *What is the nature of the world around us?*
- Grade 12: *What can we do about it?*

The questions progress from learning about personal identity and what it means to be a member of a community to reflecting on the impact that one desires to have on the world and how to act to achieve that impact.

The lower grade advisories are guided by the Fenway Tool Kit—a structured curriculum, developed by Fenway—designed around building skills to support academic and social emotional learning (e.g., study skills, stress reduction strategies, time management skills, and school safety behaviors). As newcomers to the school, the ninth graders focus on the overall transition to Fenway High. The 10th-grade advisory emphasizes “discovering who you are and then how you can serve others.” The 40-hour community service requirement for graduation, required by the school district, is introduced and explored during 10th-grade advisory as students work on building the capacity to appreciate who they are and reflect on their identity formation as well as understand and respect differences in the perspectives, cultures, and life experiences of others.

Taking a closer look at the ninth-grade advisory curriculum, we see how Fenway provides direct instruction on social emotional learning skills and competencies as well as integrates social emotional learning with a social justice perspective (see Appendix B for the curriculum). The advisory curriculum is divided into six units, listed below. For each unit, essential questions, content, skills, assessment, activities, resources, and targeted 21st century skills are mapped out (see Appendix B also for descriptions of these 21st century skills). While some units may appear to focus on social emotional learning more explicitly—e.g., community building/social development and emotional development—they all incorporate social emotional skill building as a central focus.

- Community building and social development
- Health development
- Emotional development
- Educational development
- Self development
- Cognitive development

The first unit, on community building and social development, is designed to “help students develop skills related to positive interpersonal relationships within their families, peer groups, school, and community.” Drawing on experiential team building and relationship building activities, students are given the opportunity to practice the school Safety Guidelines with fellow students and adults, interact and communicate with others in positive and meaningful ways, and experience what it takes to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships on both the individual and group levels.

In an activity like “Stranded on an Island,” for example, students are asked to identify which object they would bring with them if they were stranded on a deserted island. Participants begin by sharing why they would bring their chosen object and what they plan to do with it. After that, students work in small groups to discuss how their group would increase its chances for survival by working together and combining their objects. This activity builds: social awareness by helping students understand and appreciate why they and their peers chose certain objects; relationship skills by providing the opportunity for students to practice coordinating and cooperating with others; and responsible decision-making by thinking through the consequences of selecting and combining objects to maximize their group’s success and well-being. Students are assessed in multiple ways, from participatory activities like sharing with others and presentations to reflective activities such as self-assessments and personal journals. Fenway’s articulation of the 21st century skills that are fostered through this unit include social emotional skills such as respect, responsibility, collaboration, and self-management as well as overlapping social justice skills such as interdependence, social responsibility, and perspective-taking.

The unit on emotional development provides students with “the capabilities and skills that they need to function and survive in society as well as the world.” The essential questions in this unit highlight self-awareness and self-management: “How do I take 100% responsibility for myself?” and “How do I recognize and take ownership for my emotions?” Lesson content centers on emotional awareness and effective emotional expression, mood management and thought pattern recognition, and conflict resolution. Drawing on resources such as Ann Vernon’s *The Passport Program* and Alanna Jones’s *104 Activities That Build: Self-Esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-Discovery, and Coping Skills*, students practice techniques like “thought stopping” in which they identify stressful, negative, or damaging thoughts, issue the “Stop!” command, and redirect negative thoughts to more realistic and affirming thoughts. Students learn how to take ownership by using “I” statements, communicate their emotions effectively so that others can understand and empathize with what they are experiencing, and identify underlying issues and use this knowledge to resolve conflicts both at school and at home.

A counselor described how they teach students effective strategies to handle stress and other kinds of conflicts:

We do conflict resolution and peer mediation. One of our safety guidelines is “It’s okay to disagree.” We talk about “what does that mean?” For example, a student may say, “My mom is getting on my nerves,” and we teach them to take deep breaths, self-control strategies, that it’s okay to disagree. And kids come back and say, “I’ve used the peer mediation stuff!” They come back and communicate to us and it’s nice.

The self-development and cognitive development units combine more traditional social emotional skill development with a student empowerment and social justice education perspective. In the self-development unit, students consider the essential questions “What are my strengths, values, and responsibilities?” and “How do my thoughts and actions influence the world around me?” While building students’ sense of identity, agency, and voice, there is also a focus on knowing and learning how to understand and respect difference. Through activities such as identifying and sharing their values, writing their narrative, crafting identity poems, and drawing their identity web, students learn not only about who they are and where they come from, they also learn the same for others in their class. In the cognitive development unit, in which students consider how to balance their connections to society with developing their own voice, they also practice code switching or the ability to communicate effectively across different kinds of situational, institutional, and sociocultural contexts. These units, in particular, grow students’ skills in social awareness, perspective-taking, and multicultural literacy in addition to self-awareness. They also set the stage for what is to come, as students begin to look progressively outward and consider

the kind of impact they can have on the world around them in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

The upper grade advisories are designed to help students transition to life after Fenway, with a focus on college and career preparation. Preparation for the Junior Review capstone project is the main focus of the 11th-grade advisory, in which students reflect on their work and growth over the past two years and identify and articulate college and career goals. The Junior Review process itself will be discussed in more detail later in the report. The main goal of the 12th-grade advisory is “preparing for the future.” Students learn financial literacy skills and college transition skills such as “the realities of dorm life.” Since advisory is the only class in which the seniors return to their ninth- through 11th-grade House groups, it provides students with a familiar base during a year in which they are all members of one house for the first time and are focused on preparing for their transition from Fenway to college. It also provides a space where students can learn about what these transitions might be for students “like them”—i.e., students of color from low-income backgrounds—and develop tools and strategies to help them navigate what lies ahead. These conversations and activities help to cultivate students’ perspective-taking skills, develop multicultural literacy, and ability to straddle multiple sociocultural contexts in an authentic way. One counselor described:

The senior advisory, we talk a lot about being ready to deal with college in informal, unstructured ways. We try to talk to students, to prepare them for what to expect, especially when attending these smaller, White, liberal arts colleges. Students say the Fenway community has prepared them well, so they’re able to deal with it well. More of them have navigated these experiences of culture shock much more beautifully than I would have. A student is going to [a liberal arts college] and said, “There are White students everywhere, but I talked to some Fenway students there. I’m fine.” Our Fenway graduates are the best ambassadors for one another.

Students have provided positive feedback about advisory to school staff. One student described advisory as “a place we could go back and could check in and relax,” a sentiment echoed by her peers. Another student summed up the value and purpose of the advisory structure in a very simple but poignant way, “For the first three years, we’re in the same class with the same people. You’re really close. The whole point of the advisory is that.”

While students develop their social emotional learning skills through the various projects, discussions, and interactions in advisory, there is also a range of social justice learning opportunities for students. For example, students frequently talk about real-world current events and local community issues during advisory. This provides a regular space for rich conversations about how students

understand the world and can make an impact through their actions. One student reflected on the “empowering” nature of having others who believe in what one can do.

We talk about what’s going on in the world. We have a chance to affect those things. I asked my teacher to see if we could do a senior trip to help [people affected by super storm] Sandy. It’s empowering that someone is listening to me and lets me feel like I can do it in the real world.



Student Support Team

Fenway’s student support staff is at the heart of the school’s explicit work to promote social emotional learning. This team of three is charged with all aspects of students’ psychological well-being as well as that of the overall school community. This is accomplished in a number of ways including individual counseling, running the ninth-grade advisories, monitoring the school climate, and mediating. According to a school administrator, Fenway’s student support staff has an essential role:

This group takes the lead when students are faced with something that triggers emotions or is a challenge. The team supports students. They counsel individually or they work with a group of students; they identify what’s at the root of problems and help them process or resolve the problem. The hope is that students learn from the experience; that it’s not just about avoiding punishment. They try to help students to understand their triggers and help them develop more self-awareness.

According to the principal, the student support staff “takes the pulse of the culture of the school.” They continuously monitor what is going on with and between individual students and teachers, as well as in the school community as a whole. The support staff “go where the students are”—e.g., in the halls, involved in group activities—rather than waiting to be asked for help. They have an office centrally located on the main floor of the school. There are three desks, one for each counselor, and two doors “for easy escape” joked one staff member. There are also counseling rooms available for private talks.

Students go to the student support office when they are late, when they have been sent by a teacher because of behavioral problems, or when they just have a concern or seem to feel out of sorts. In other cases, there will be an incident in a specific grade; perhaps something “breaks the trust” among the students. The student support staff typically try to find out what is underlying the lateness, behavior problem, or other difficulty. Rather than focusing on the manifestation, they work to understand and address the deeper problem that may be involved. They often talk with students about how their actions affect the community. They ask, “What do we want for our school and this community?” They also maintain connections with external social services and contact them when necessary. Parents are frequently called to meet with the teachers. Sometimes parents will bring the counselor into a conversation with a teacher. Parents get to know the counselors well and often call on them for help or to learn more about what their child is experiencing.

The student support staff also run the ninth-grade advisory for each of the three houses. This is an opportunity to get to know students well and form connections that are sustained throughout students’ time at Fenway. The support staff also meet with each house’s teachers every Tuesday to talk about any emotional issues, which students need to be checked on, or anything that is affecting the community as a whole.

Finally, the student support staff serve as mediators. They intervene in difficulties between individuals or groups within the school, including helping students to advocate for themselves in dealing with teachers. One said:

Students might be upset about something a teacher has done. The counselors talk with both parties and offer to mediate the situation. We want both sides to learn from one another. Usually both parties will agree to participate. We try to get the problem addressed before the week’s end.

The student support staff are selected as individuals who are flexible, caring, have good counseling skills, and are comfortable talking about a range of issues with students. The school tries to create a team that blends different strengths and perspectives. Of those currently in this role, one is a former student and teacher at the

school, who has been with Fenway for 22 years. After graduating from the school, he returned a few years later to teach humanities and other elective subjects such as business-technical writing and public speaking. He has served in a student support capacity for 15 years and mentors the other support staff and teachers. Discussing his role, he smiled and said, “There is a reason I’ve stayed here this long.” The two other support coordinators are former Fenway student-teacher interns. They are a diverse group in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and prior experience and work closely together, consulting with each other frequently about difficult situations and offering each other a great deal of mutual support.

Community Partnerships

Fenway aims to “treat the city as a classroom” and develop partnerships with external organizations, focusing on those involved with local issues. The leadership emphasizes the importance of ensuring that students know “the city is theirs” and that students are “valued members of the city of Boston.” Community partnerships were described as occurring in an “ad hoc manner” and as “serendipitous.” They have typically been developed when someone affiliated with Fenway had connections to the community organization. The Fenway High School Board includes members from each of the community partnership organizations.

Boston Museum of Science

The Boston Museum of Science is Fenway’s oldest community partner, with the relationship dating back 19 years. Through this partnership, students from Fenway have broad access to the museum and participate in a wide range of activities that help to foster social emotional skills. One of the sophomore classes spends a full day once per week at the museum, attending class in one of the museum rooms. Students also experience interacting with both elementary school students and elderly persons at the same time through the museum’s Eye Opener program. Describing the program as very “multi-generational,” a Fenway administrator discussed the social emotional learning value of this experience for students:

Fenway students participate in the Eye Opener program in which they are docents and exhibit guides along with older docents. The students show second graders around the museum with older docents. Through the interaction with the elderly docents, students develop a sense of presence and self.

Fenway’s annual science fair is also held at the museum. Twenty community members, representing a wide range of industries, are invited to serve as judges for the event. During one of our site visits, we joined the judges for a breakfast and brief training at the museum on the morning of the science fair. We then had the chance to review the student displays. Preparing for and presenting at the science fair clearly promote various social emotional learning competencies such as self-awareness,

social awareness, and relationships skills. Students are expected to communicate in an effective manner with the judges and present their viewpoints to others who may be very unfamiliar to them or their topic of interest. These skills prepare students to successfully navigate and manage unfamiliar environments outside of school. A school administrator said:

Most of our students look adults in the eye, and are polite and respectful. This is not so common among teenagers. From the beginning, we had these expectations and practices (tied to the Coalition of Essential Schools) that students show mastery by talking through what they know.

A school administrator mentioned the “specialness” and “sense of community” tied to being at the museum. Another administrator emphasized the importance of high academic expectations for students and the accountability provided by community organizations and members:

There is a lot of interaction with the larger community. This provides a high level of accountability for us. For example, college professors at the science fair provide feedback on how our kids are doing. You have to address the questions of these external audiences.

The school–museum partnership also promotes increased racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity at the museum, where the majority of elderly volunteers and visitors are White and from middle- to upper-class backgrounds. The interaction between urban youth and elderly White volunteers and patrons provides a space for students to interact with people from different backgrounds, something that will become increasingly common for them as they move into college and work environments. In turn, volunteers and patrons at the museum have the chance to interact with urban youth, providing an opportunity to cross boundaries and break down stereotypes and biases. This social justice education lens is both present and intentional in the program, fostering multicultural literacy and perspective-taking for both students and the community members with whom they interact.

Blue Cross Blue Shield

Since 2007, Fenway has partnered with Blue Cross Blue Shield to enact the school’s Ventures courses. A Blue Cross representative, who sits on the Fenway board, spent a six-month, company-sponsored sabbatical at Fenway working to develop the Ventures program with the school. Students take Ventures courses in 11th and 12th grades, which focus on career exploration and developing communication and entrepreneurial skills. The Blue Cross Blue Shield representative who developed the Ventures courses with Fenway described the company’s community service ethos:

We are in the community and located close to Fenway High School. Our company has a community-focused perspective, led by our CEO. We have a corporate ethos of giving back, and community service is expected of employees.

The Blue Cross building is physically located in walking distance to the school, which helps to provide regular in-person contact between the two organizations. Blue Cross employees volunteer their time during work hours and help support the Ventures courses. The courses will be discussed in more detail in the next section on school practices.



Community Service Requirement

In addition to developing social emotional competencies, structured out-of-school experiences also help students to engage in social justice learning opportunities that foster social responsibility and community engagement by exposing students to diverse settings and people. Students at Fenway learn about volunteering and being members of a larger community beyond their school early on, and formally explore and complete their 40-hour community service requirement in 10th grade through advisory. One teacher explained that importance of completing the community service component early on: “It models for students what we think is important—the idea of giving back exists in the school.”

Students volunteer with a wide range of community organizations, typically in the Boston area, including education organizations, community centers, and service organizations. Through these experiences, students learn how to contribute to their community and the value of having an impact on others. Students at Fenway

have also taken community service further and traveled abroad to marginalized communities in the Dominican Republic and Honduras through study trips or summer opportunities.

Internship Requirement

Fenway students are also required to complete a six-week, unpaid internship for a minimum of 18 hours during their senior year. The goal of the internship program is to prepare students for life after high school. By the time students have completed their internships, the school principal wants students to know that “they are capable of moving on, that they’re prepared and trusted to enter a workplace and be independent, that they’re moving into adulthood.” Positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem and career readiness have been linked to work-based learning, and Bailey, Hughes, and Moore (2004) emphasize the importance of active engagement in authentic learning settings.

Prior to finalizing internship assignments, shadowing opportunities are made available to students so they can familiarize themselves with different options. Industry representatives visit Fenway to talk about their job, and students choose where they want to shadow. A Fenway parent who had taken part in the career fair day enthusiastically shared how special it was to see Fenway students come to school in professional attire, equipped with resumes, and ready to ask career-related questions.

As part of their senior portfolio, students make an oral presentation about their internship experience. They formally present to their peers and teachers in the assembly room, and, immediately after, the seniors break into clusters and visit classrooms to present to the underclassmen. Each presentation is followed up by a 10-minute question and answer period. As Fenway students learn to manage and navigate real-life work-based environments, they are given the opportunity to extend and apply their social emotional learning skills to novel contexts. Further, from a social justice education perspective, the internship provides another structure by which Fenway educators try to even the playing field for their students as they prepare for their transition to college and beyond.

Special Education Integration

There is a concerted effort to ensure that all students are part of the Fenway community. Understanding the importance of embracing diversity and empathizing with those who may be different is clear in the way special education is integrated at Fenway, where 17% of the students receive special education services. The staffing and organization of special education at Fenway are integrated as much as possible into the rest of the school. While some students receive the majority of their instruction in a pullout setting, all students at Fenway are mainstreamed into the general

education classes by their senior year. This movement was described as an important social justice learning experience for all students and faculty by a special education teacher:

One of the worst feelings as a special education kid is that feeling of—you're stuck and you're going to be in the same place forever. And Fenway works hard to counteract that... All of the students are mainstreamed by the fall of the senior year, some earlier than that. So kids and teachers see that movement.

Being such a small school, we can make one-on-one decisions with students when they're ready to be mainstreamed into classes. We can personalize that with kids. It helps with the relationship between special education and non-special education kids. The non-special education kids see the special education kids come in well prepared for class, seeing they can advocate for themselves, and sometimes better than general education kids, since they have to work so much harder to stay on top of things.

In addition to the special education teachers, two of the three student support coordinators are also certified in special education, as are 25% of the overall faculty and staff. The support staff play an important role in facilitating this community integration.

Community of Practice

Fenway currently houses 27 faculty members, including the student support staff, and seven administrators. The leadership and collaboration among adults in the school is an important feature that contributes to the effective implementation of the school's social emotional learning and social justice education strategies. It also prioritizes the importance of applying social emotional learning and social justice education to adults in the school as well as students. According to a school administrator, "Personal relationships and faculty are important and so most of the money goes there." The majority of the additional external funds raised for the school (i.e., 90%) is applied to "human capital." The turnover rate at Fenway is very low.

At Fenway, faculty work together using a community of practice model, which sets the foundation for shared leadership, collaboration, and social emotional support. Wenger (2002) defined a community of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). As mentioned previously, the administration and faculty formally meet and collaborate

four hours per week at content and house meetings. As a pilot school, when Fenway teachers are hired they sign on and agree to meet for extra hours, which are meant to establish teacher commitment and ownership from the start of their Fenway careers. School leaders emphasized the importance of collaboration among faculty: “Collaboration means that no one is working in isolation; teachers are able to plan and share and think, and be accountable for themselves and each other. This makes a huge difference.”

The leadership sees teacher satisfaction as closely linked to teacher retention, which in turn, provides students with stability in their learning and development. School administrators believe that it is critical to allow teachers to develop clear ownership and to encourage their sense of professionalism. The principal noted wryly:

I thought this was going to be the year where people cracked. There was a lot of complaining at the beginning. But everyone came and shared [at the faculty retreat] and it’s about really seeing that you can make a difference. This keeps everyone focused.

Administrators and faculty expressed both professional and personal satisfaction about working at Fenway, and, most importantly, the impact they were having on the academic and social emotional learning of their students:

Although pilot schools took away power from unions and took away contracts, they retained pay and pension and enable faculty to have their own say in their work. You can work beyond the school day and not feel frowned on. There’s a group of people to trust, and you feel “I’m having an impact.” Teachers feel satisfied in their work and enjoy their work.

You’ll find that all teachers feel really lucky to work here. It’s amazing and says something about the school. It’s not perfect. We’ve had our fair share of problems and ups and downs, but we handle these well. It’s not a utopia, but the overriding sense is “I am someone who makes a difference.” We know we’re making a difference.

This is the best thing and hardest thing I’ve done.

Leadership Structure and Teacher Voice

The Fenway leadership aims to ensure that faculty members are “vital participants in school decision-making.” The administrative leadership at Fenway, through hard work and care for the students and school community, garners respect from the faculty and staff; this serves as a model for school-wide interactions.

Many of the faculty repeatedly mentioned feeling valued and respected by the administration.

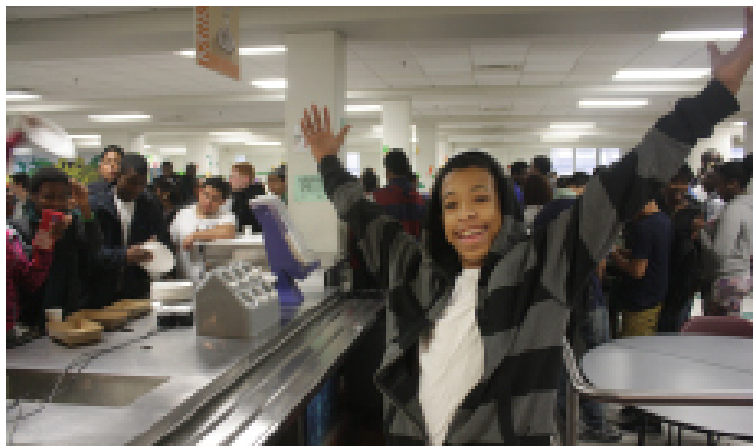
There's a public perception that teachers and management clash all the time. You wouldn't necessarily know, if you were in the room, who was on what side. [The principal] does a masterful job of maintaining that atmosphere, and so does [the assistant principal].

The school leadership team consists of eight people, including the principal, assistant principal, three House coordinators, one student support team member, the special education coordinator, and the development director. At the leadership team meeting we observed, one of the teachers facilitated the agenda items, as opposed to an administrator. Decisions, even something as minor as posting flyers about tutoring opportunities offered by a college student group, were presented by the principal to the team.

Teachers clearly have “voice” at Fenway, which grows out of the support they both give and receive. This helps them to take pride in what they do as teaching professionals, and in turn “give voice” to students in their classrooms and a sense of value in their work. This sentiment was widely shared among teachers and staff:

In a lot of places, there are divides. We don't feel that here. Teachers and administrators are on the same team. There is a community-oriented environment here.

[The principal] has an open door policy. Sometimes there are 30 plus people complaining and she listens with grace. She doesn't let things slide. She can tell you what you need to do or change without feeling reprimanded. She honors and appreciates the work we do. We're respected as people first. Our sense of peace of mind and stability play a role in how we serve the kids.



School Practices

Level of school system	Definition	Examples
School practices	<i>Formal and informal daily practices that reflect what people do, how they teach and learn, and how they participate in the school community.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaching and learning strategies

Fenway’s climate and culture, as well as its features and structures, both shape and are supported by the school’s formal and informal daily practices. In this section, we highlight school practices where opportunities for social emotional learning and social justice education are most pronounced. Figure 4 shows the practices we considered most relevant to social emotional learning and social justice education.

Figure 4: How Fenway’s practices promote social emotional learning and social justice education

- Admissions review, student orientation, and family engagement
- Teaching and learning
 - Common instructional practices
 - Foundations of literacy: Memoir project
 - Humanities classes
 - Unsung voices class
 - Spanish for native speakers
 - Ventures classes
 - Junior review
- Project week
- Student groups and clubs
- Special campaigns
- Honoring students
- Disciplinary practices

Admissions Review, Student Orientation, and Family Engagement

Fenway’s admissions review and orientation process provide additional opportunities for the school to communicate the importance of, as well as its expectations around, what it means to be a member of the Fenway community and its network of interdependent relationships. These practices serve to socialize students, and parents, to the Fenway culture and community as well as emphasize the school’s focus on social emotional learning and social justice education.

Informational orientations for eighth graders and parents interested in applying to Fenway take place during the spring prior to students' freshman year. At one such event, we observed as the coordinator opened the session by honing in on key aspects of Fenway's mission and approach:

Do you all know Maslow's hierarchy of needs? It says if you don't have the basic needs of food and shelter, you can't think about going to the next level. So, we make connections for you... so that you are engaged. How many of you want to be safe in school? We have safety guidelines here: No shame, blame, or attack. Also, are you going to get out of your comfort zone and speak up? You have to do that here. You have to do an impromptu speech on your first day here—you interview the person next to you and present it.

As mentioned earlier, Fenway's admissions application requires students to complete three essays addressing the following questions: *What makes a good school? What makes a good student? Why do I want to come to Fenway?* The school leadership and staff state that reading the essays helps them gain a better sense of who the students really are, and provides an opportunity for the students to step back and question their identity, their goals, and what they hope to achieve through a Fenway education.

During the summer, a two-day orientation is held at Fenway for incoming ninth graders. At the orientation, students are introduced to the mission and culture of the school, and, as one student support coordinator stated, "students begin to learn to reflect about themselves and how they interact with others." Thus, social emotional skill building takes place before students formally start at Fenway.

Two weeks after the start of the school year, new students participate in a community building activity, similar to an Outward Bound experience. They travel to Thompson Island for two days to camp and participate in leadership building activities. The school leaders acknowledge that students "face a lot of challenges" and encounter "novel experiences," and emphasized the importance of the trip in helping the 9th grade cohort get to know one another and their teachers.

There is also a focus on school-wide community building on the first day of school each year. Faculty groups partner to design learning exercises and collaborate with seniors to facilitate breakout discussion groups across the Houses. A theme or essential question drives the day's activities and changes from year to year. Then, throughout the school year, that question or theme is integrated into classrooms discussions across subjects (e.g., *How do you do the right thing in the face of injustice?*). The upperclassmen are charged with serving as role models to the new students, to provide explicit training on Fenway's practices and expectations. One teacher reflected on the value of the first day assembly, which kicks off the rest of the day's activities:

I like that in the beginning of year, the first day of school is like a full day assembly—it’s not a welcome back of logistics about books or classes. It’s about we’re going to talk about a topic. I get to work with kids that I may not teach. We’re having the opportunity to meet each other. It may not be related to what I teach but we’re talking about our opinions.

We spoke to a group of parents about the ways in which the school incorporates families into the Fenway community. They indicated that family engagement starts when students first apply for admission and continues to build. Parents talked about ongoing opportunities to be involved at the school, such as attending Junior Review and the quarterly honors assemblies. They also indicated that the school staff are understanding of the demands and constraints parents experience, especially considering the community population Fenway primarily serves. They felt that the school made efforts to keep them informed about their children’s progress as well as the challenges they are facing. They also highlighted the ways that teachers hold the students to high standards, including students in special education, while also providing ongoing support that nurture caring relationships.

Teaching and Learning

Common Instructional Practices

Common instructional practices are used in classrooms across Fenway to foster social emotional learning and social justice education. Like the school’s Safety Guidelines, Fenway has also developed a set of key Habits of Mind that guide the learning process of students and the pedagogical approach of teachers. In addition, like the Safety Guidelines, the Habits of Mind are also prominently displayed on posters throughout the school and in classrooms. They are:

- Perspective: What points of view are given?
- Evidence: What proof is there?
- Relevance: Why is it important?
- Connection: How are things related?
- Supposition: What if...?

“Perspective,” “connection,” and “relevance”—in particular—overlap with the skills that social emotional learning and social justice education aim to foster among students. One teacher talked about the importance of helping students see the relevance of topics studied:

The school works on the articulation of issues so kids will care and understand. They choose relevant issues—this is done well in humanities; in math, there is modeling around solar energy and simulations of pro-

cesses seen in nature. They actively try to make real world connections. Humanities is rooted in historical contexts of things—asking questions.

The school also has two rubrics, titled “21st Century Learning Expectations,” that are designed to enable educators to comprehensively assess social emotional learning and social justice education: one for “social” learning and one for “civic” learning. Examples of these rubrics are included in Appendices C and D. The social learning rubric tracks students’ skill levels in: collaboration, diversity, work ethic, respect, and responsibility/self-management. The civic learning rubric tracks students’ skill levels in: community involvement, civic responsibility, integrity, diversity, and global citizenship. Both rubrics merge social emotional learning and social justice education skills and competencies, mapping the developmental trajectory as students learn and master them.

Students are also encouraged to relate to coursework through the widespread use of relevant, engaging activities and assignments. For example, during a Humanities class we observed, students were discussing *The Odyssey*. That day’s class assignment called for students to take on the role of one of the characters in the book and confront Odysseus as if they were on a talk show. Students were asked to consider the feelings of the characters; in particular, whether they would feel disappointed or hurt by the Odysseus character. Students rehearsed with a peer who provided feedback about the presentation and evaluated one another using a rubric, emphasizing perspective-taking and relationship skills.

A 2011 Fenway High School accreditation report from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges references ways in which instructional practices at Fenway help students grow their social emotional skills and support a growth-oriented mindset (Gainey, Prescott, & Kemp, 2011):

Regular reflection projects, presentations, and a formal process at the end of the term allow Fenway High School students to look back on their success, challenges, and lessons learned in a class.

The report highlights some of the practices they observed like opportunities for students to self-assess on learning styles and engage in meta-cognitive reflection.

Foundations of Literacy: Memoir Project

The ninth-grade Foundations of Literacy class is a reading and writing workshop in which students learn to read and write for a variety of purposes as they are exposed to and study different genres, from poetry to the novel to memoir. The course incorporates relevant, culturally responsive assignments and engages students through critical perspective that challenges them to understand how power is given to and taken from individuals and groups in society. Throughout the course, for example,

students consider the following focal questions in relation to the use of language: “How are different languages and dialects positioned in our society?” and “How does language use relate to power and access?” They also explore how race, class, gender, and religion are constructed through texts as they learn the foundations of reading and writing.

A key assignment that contributes to social emotional learning and social justice education is the memoir project. Students first read *Down these Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas, a boy’s memoir about growing up in Spanish Harlem. After reading and analyzing the book, students are required to write their own memoir. Students follow a common outline, which delineates chapters that students work on each week. They are the Neighborhood Chapter, Family Chapter, Identity Testimonies Chapter, Identity Chapter, and Loss Chapter. Students work on revisions throughout the writing process, and are given the opportunity to present and share an excerpt from their memoir once the project is complete. Teachers also participate in this assignment to build trust with students.

This experience enables students to reflect on their identity and its formation; it is also a way for them to share who they are with their teacher and peers. The memoirs are kept in their portfolio for the Junior Review. A teacher noted:

Students are dealing with so many things. Some carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders. [Writing the memoir] can be therapeutic for them. And it helps them to build relationships with one another because they read them to one another. We had a few girls who lost their fathers and others didn’t know about it until they shared their writings. And so it helps them to find support in one another.



This exercise gives students a chance to grow socially and emotionally, especially with regard to self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills. Students have the opportunity to reflect on and make sense of their lives and how their experiences and identities have been shaped by key contexts, events, and sociocultural factors—insights central to both social emotional learning and social justice education.

Humanities Classes

According to Fenway’s Parent Handbook, the school’s humanities classes are designed around “the identification and exploration of central themes and patterns in human history.” The courses blend instruction in English and social studies, and students take one course per grade level. These courses concentrate content and instruction around addressing a wide range of social justice issues.

Each year, the school focuses on one of four essential questions in these classes. All have the potential to engender thinking and action related to social justice, and the question rotates each year. The questions are:

1. How do you do the right thing in the face of injustice?
2. What does it mean to be human?
3. Who built America?
4. What principles guide the way we govern ourselves?

While the questions are considered in other courses, they are highlighted in the humanities classes. During election years, for example, humanities classes address the final question and host a variety of projects and activities on the theme. One such activity is a mock presidential debate in which students engage in dialogue around key issues about which presidents typically have to make critical decisions. During the debate, students integrate their own experiences, perspectives, and opinions to enrich the discussion.

These classes help provide students with the language and lenses to understand, analyze, and take action around social justice issues, which they continue to use across their years at Fenway. One teacher said:

Every day is about how to approach the world in a way that makes it a better, more equitable place. We are always looking at the curriculum and finding points of reference that connect with the current day. We look at both historical social justice and current issues. In a unit on the foundation of the country, students address the question of whether Jefferson should be considered as a hero or a hypocrite [as seen in the opening section of the report]. Similar questions are developed for all units.

Further, students are expected not only to think and analyze from a social justice perspective, they must also learn to take action and work for social change. In past humanities classes, students have worked for change as part of their coursework on a wide range of issues. For example, students have written letters to politicians to advocate for local issues, participated in park cleanups, run public information sessions on the sex trade, and conducted research on the ethnic studies ban in Arizona. Fenway has developed its humanities curriculum through collaborations with The American Social History Project (affiliated with the City University of New York or CUNY) and Facing History and Ourselves (an organization based in Boston that provides learning resources explicitly intended to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and prejudice).

Unsung Voices Class

A teacher at Fenway developed this elective course to offer students the opportunity to learn about the diversity of LGBT history and encourage questions and reflection. This course offers a different way to look at LGBT issues, promotes understanding for Fenway's LGBT community members, and engages students in social awareness and multicultural literacy. An example of a question discussed in the class is "Why is being gay and gay marriage a 'White issue'?" On the day we visited the class, students were learning about Bayard Rustin, a gay African American who was a leader in the non-violent civil rights movement. The class viewed a film on the subject and talked about the challenges that Rustin experienced as a gay civil rights leader in the 1940s and 1950s. Other topics covered in the class include: biographies of famous LGBT people, LGBT issues in the hip hop community, sexuality norms among athletes, coming out in African American and Latino communities, marriage and family, and gay culture. While this course provides ample opportunity to engage students around this timely social justice issue, it also tailors its content to the student population by focusing on how LGBT issues importantly intersect with race and ethnicity.



Spanish for Native Speakers

Students take Spanish in 10th and 11th grades. Spanish for Native Speakers, however, is a class that provides Latino students with the opportunity to think about their own heritage and the experiences of Spanish speaking people from different regions. The course begins with Latino history prior to colonization and covers a range of topics such as the impact of the Atlantic slave trade, internalized racism in Latino community, and Hispanic vs. Latino identities. Students in the course also take part in community service trips to the Dominican Republic and Haiti where they teach in schools or help with building schools. These experiences are often described as “life-changing” for the students and serve as another example of how Fenway tailors social emotional learning and social justice education to meet the needs of its student community.

Ventures Classes

Fenway’s Ventures courses take place in 11th and 12th grade and teach students “how to interact effectively with adults in the workplace and to find the resources they need for success in college or in a chosen field of work” (<http://www.fenwayhs.org/curriculum>). These courses, required of all students, are conducted in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield, which sends volunteers to facilitate classes (as previously discussed). Students learn about basic financial and business concepts, participate in an internship, and develop a business plan. During junior year, students give their “pitch” each week as they refine it for a final presentation to a panel of judges from the local business community. In addition, seniors participate in a six-week internship in a real job setting. The course is intended to help students develop “initiative, resourcefulness, communication, problem-solving skills, respect for others, self-discipline, and self-confidence” (Conley, 2010, p.147). These learning goals overlap considerably with key social emotional learning skills and help facilitate the transition to college and career for Fenway students, many of whom are first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds.

Junior Review

The Junior Review process is an important rite of passage at Fenway, allowing students to reflect on their own progress during their first three years at the school and to request admission to the senior class. As mentioned previously, the process is managed through the 11th-grade advisory. Students develop a portfolio and presentation that review their personal learning and growth during their time at Fenway. The review includes an essay on their experiences in each subject area along with evidence of their accomplishments, such as completed papers and projects. There is also a segment in which they do research on, and then develop, future college and career plans. Essays are reviewed and rewritten until they are highly polished, sometimes as many as five times, which emphasizes the importance of revision, reflection, and a growth mindset. The culminating presentation is a time of celebration with parents, teachers, and classmates in attendance.

The table of contents for a typical Junior Review portfolio is as follows:

- Cover letter
- Professional resume
- Academic resume
- Narratives
- Transcript reflection letter
- Transcript sheet
- PSAT reflection letter
- PSAT score sheet
- Career fact sheet
- Job cover letter
- College search
- Community service essay
- College essay
- 2nd College essay
- College applications
- SAT registration form
- Foundations piece
- Humanities piece
- Math piece
- Science fair abstract
- Gym piece
- Ventures piece
- Spanish piece

Students take a great deal of pride in completing this landmark formative project. During our visits to Fenway, we had the opportunity to meet with students who had recently completed their Junior Review. They described it as a very personal, yet public, process. They talked about the growth that they had experienced by participating in Junior Review, emphasizing the social emotional learning that had taken place, especially in terms of self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making. One student summed up lessons learned:

I learned the importance of people around me. I like to work on my own but you always are going to need back up through life. People are here for me.

Project Week

Project week, an annual school-wide activity, takes place outside of the school and beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom. Regular classes are suspended and the entire school body is “out and about in the community” for an entire week.

During this period, Fenway faculty and students explore a particular topic and engage in experiential learning and activities available to them in the city. Faculty organize activities and generate topics of focus in collaboration with students. About 12 students are grouped with a faculty or staff member and students select three activities to participate in.

The primary goals of project week are to:

- Remove boundaries between students and teachers in common learning experiences.
- Expand students' geographic sense as well as their sense of place in the community.
- Connect students to business, government, non-profits, and cultural institutions in the Boston area.
- Make practical the learning that has gone on in the classroom and reinforce the connection between "school work" and "real world work." (Fenway Project Week Brochure, 2012)

The program is financially supported through private funds and is made possible by collaborations with local community organizations. Some of the topics explored in the past include food and culture, fitness, biking, animal rights, homelessness, Boston tourism, photography, and music production. A culminating final project display is prepared by each group, and shared with the entire school community on the last day of project week, which is held in an outdoor public space or at a local college. As students and faculty engage with one another and the community, they become more socially aware and develop a sense of their place in the local community. The importance of project week was driven home by the fact that the school had to briefly suspend the activity, partially because of Boston's standardized testing period in the spring. It was revived, however, as the leadership emphasized the critical learning that occurs for students and the school community as a whole, and argued that MCAS test scores could be monitored and maintained to ensure that students were adequately prepared for the exam. A school leader summarized:

We had long debate about it. We feel it's very important for students to learn in a variety of ways, and to learn about the city and the world, and experience interactions with people....Project week makes a difference because it lets kids feel they are valued, because they get to interact with adults and are learning together. If I'm allowed to think in creative ways, I'm more motivated for learning. Rather than drill, drill, drill. The attitude students feel about school—if they're valued, and it's enjoyable, then it will impact studies. We have fun stuff, but we have high expectations, and do well on the MCAS, aided by our supports program.

Student Groups and Clubs

A number of groups and clubs at Fenway—three, in particular—are specifically designed to foster students’ social emotional learning. All are gender specific and center around providing a space for young men and women of color to support one another and learn strategies to deal with issues that they are likely to confront as young adults.

- ***Boys to Men:*** This group was started in 1995 and encourages students to think about what it means to be a man. The curriculum, developed by the school counselors, focuses on team building, trust, and honest discussion. Older boys are encouraged to talk openly with the younger ones in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Participating in the club helps participants realize that they are not alone in their experiences in dealing with girlfriends, sibling rivalry, mothers, and other relationship and life challenges. The counselor said:

The older guys share strategies. Do your work first, so [your mom] doesn’t say anything. Do the dishes first so she doesn’t bother you. I say as a brother, me and my brothers struggled with dealing with mom too! So when they hear these stories, they make connections, and don’t feel alone.

- ***Sister to Sister:*** Girls meet weekly to discuss topics that affect young women in society today and that are significant in their own lives. The group is facilitated by a Humanities teacher and student support counselor. Members also get involved in a range of community-based activities such as doing public education about health and partnering with outside organizations on special projects. They have an annual out-of-state weekend retreat, which provides a chance to see and understand more of the world. The trip blends learning, time to get to know each other, and social activities such as shopping.
- ***MORE (Men Organized, Responsible, & Educated):*** This group started in 2000 and is currently run by a math teacher. This group highlights gaining maturity and learning how to deal with the world through taking on leadership roles, understanding the etiquette required to interact with diverse kinds of people in different situations, and becoming comfortable speaking in public. Students focus on going to college and the skills they will need when they are on their own, including code-switching and straddling multiple worlds. They go on college tours each year as well as hold dinners to practice how to interact in a “professional” manner. The group also helps strengthen the relationships with adults in their lives. The faculty advisor said:

It breaks down barriers too. They get to see you outside of school, so you're not just a disciplinarian or educator, but someone that's approachable. We laughed at dinner, told stories....And we support them in everything, even if they are in the wrong. If they have to go to court, we're there. We try to be consistent with them. So they know someone's on their side. We're not saying what they did is okay—just trying to be authentic with them.

Special Campaigns

There have been incidents in which the school as a whole took action to address an injustice experienced by the community. These events have allowed for a direct expression of the school's focus on social justice education and are also part of the school's shared story or collective sense of self. Two such occasions stand out to the school community and were widely discussed during our visits to Fenway.

- *Deportation of a teacher:* A beloved teacher at Fenway suddenly disappeared and no one at the school knew what had happened. According to the principal, at first the teacher did not want the students to know that he was being detained because of his undocumented status. The school leaders felt that they needed to let students know why he stopped coming to school. Once they learned the reason, students began educating adults in the school about deportation from their own personal experiences. Students then started organizing to protest the teacher's imprisonment and deportation, and conducted marches on the immigration office. Due to continuous lobbying by students and teachers, the teacher was released after four months of detention.

After the release, the teacher was scheduled to be deported. As the date approached, a group of six students and several adults went to Washington, D.C. on his behalf. Then Governor Romney and Senator John Kerry obtained a stay from Congress for two years, allowing the teacher to remain in the country and continue working at the school. The students' efforts were covered by national media outlets such as Good Morning America. The story, however, does not have a happy ending. The teacher was later deported to Ivory Coast with no warning in 2008 and the American embassy would not give him a visa to return.

This incident led the school to develop a reputation for taking a stand for justice as an organization. Interestingly, three members of that year's freshman class are currently back at Fenway in different roles (and are all college grads).

- ***Move to a new building:*** Fenway was recently informed by the district that it was scheduled to move to a new building that, as it turns out, would not meet the community’s needs. In particular, the space did not allow for the school to meet as a whole, which is at odds with many important practices and gatherings that take place throughout the year. The students decided to take action and marched on the Boston Public Schools district office to express their concerns. The student government had T-shirts and banners printed and made a presentation to the city government. The board and other friends of the school also got involved. As a result of this student action, the relocation process was delayed and the school was able to negotiate better terms, such as the addition of a cafeteria that would provide a space for the whole community to meet together.

According to school leaders, these activities and experiences send a message to students that they have a voice—a message that is all too uncommon in disenfranchised communities. They are told, “You have a right to have your voice heard; the school will support it.” Students learn that it is important to stand up for what they believe in; they also learn that action for social justice can be effective. These experiences can help them to develop a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy that contribute to their ability to be effective advocates for themselves and others in college and in life.

Honoring Students

An important part of the Fenway culture is recognizing and honoring students when they do well. An honor roll assembly, for example, is held every quarter to celebrate students who received As and Bs (honors) and those who received all As (highest honors). The assembly that we observed took place in the school’s packed auditorium, which included the whole school community and students’ families. There was a high level of excitement in the room as one of the student support counselors opened the event and worked up the crowd. Students from each House were then recognized in turn. House teachers called the students to the stage individually, often sharing a story about them or something about their personal relationship. They expressed deep pride in the students’ accomplishments, which was echoed by the community as they cheered the students on. At Fenway, it is an intentional practice to publicly celebrate students’ academic success as students learn to value their own achievements as well as those of their peers. This is clearly enhanced by their emotional connection to the school, to their peers, and to their teachers.

Disciplinary Practices

Fenway’s disciplinary practices also aim to provide students with “a voice” and “strategies and steps” to handle issues and conflicts in a productive way. Described as “primarily focused on social emotional issues” by support staff, they work to ensure that both sides of the story, including those of the student, teacher, or others



involved, are considered during the dispute resolution process. If a student is having a bad day or is being resistant, the “understood protocol” is that the student can take the initiative to leave the classroom and go talk with a student support staff. Or, the teacher may instruct the student to do so. One of the student support coordinators then meets with the student, and they work to resolve the issue by the end of day. This approach is rooted in self-efficacy and mediation processes that help to bolster students’ social emotional competencies like self-management and responsible decision-making, and is designed to be respectful and preventative.

According to the support staff, rather than being simply punitive, this type of disciplinary practice aims to promote student learning. It helps students make sense of the situation and not react before assessing what happened. Students learn to become both self-aware and socially aware as they reflect on the impact of their actions—for example, they fill out a “student perspective form” in which they are asked to describe why they are in student support and reflect on the role they played in the situation as well as what they could do differently next time. Further, by meeting with a support counselor, a third-party to the situation, and talking through the problem, students learn to practice mediation, to manage relationships, and, ultimately, they learn self-management. A counselor explained the benefits of these practices:

We want to make sure teachers and students respect each other—it’s nothing personal. We’re trying to make connections with students, try not to embarrass students, create allies with them so they can trust you. So we may focus on that in professional development sessions. For example, a new teacher tried to give candy to keep kids quiet. Candy got thrown at her when she turned around. You can’t pacify them like that. Trust is important. We advise, “Do activities with them, trying to break down barriers. Stay after school sometimes.” So it’s not us versus them in the classroom.

Conclusions, Considerations, and Challenges

Taken together, Fenway’s culture and climate, features and structures, and practices work together to support students’ social and emotional needs and empower them to become young people who can advocate for themselves and for the betterment of their community. Student survey data further suggest that Fenway empowers students with critical psychological resources that foster academic success. Fenway students, compared to students in the comparison sample schools, were more likely to feel efficacious, be resilient, and view themselves through a growth mindset than students in the comparison school sample (Table 8).

Table 8: Students’ Efficacy, Resilience, and Growth Mindset

How often do these things apply to you? (% often)	Fenway N = 94	Comparison Schools N = 346	χ^2
When I sit down to learn something really hard, I can learn it	81.7	53.4	25.12***
If I decide not to get any bad grades, I can really do it	80.6	65.4	8.01*
If I want to learn something well, I can	87.2	66.1	15.86***
When studying, I try to work as hard as possible	82.4	59.1	16.95***
When studying, I put forth my best effort	78.7	60.0	11.45***
When studying, I keep working even if the material is difficult	72.8	54.7	10.02**
When studying, I try to do my best to acquire the knowledge and skills taught	84.0	58.2	21.39***
How much do you agree with the following... (% agree)	Fenway N = 94	Comparison Schools N = 346	χ^2
When I work hard, teachers praise my effort	91.0	69.0	20.32***

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Responses are valid percentages; the average response rate for the Fenway sample across items was 96%. Sample size provided in the table is based on the greatest number of valid responses per sample across items. Response categories: % often, % sometimes, % never; % agree, % disagree.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors’ calculations.

Reflecting the school’s goal to cultivate social responsibility and inspire social justice among its students, Fenway students were also likely to highly value making a difference, helping others, and acting for social change. While they are likely to rate educational and professional values as highly important to them—to a similar extent as students in the comparison school sample—they are more likely than comparison school students to endorse helping their community, working to correct social and economic inequality, and supporting environmental causes as key life values (Table 9, following page).

Table 9: Students’ Social Justice and Community Values

How important are the following to you in your life? (% very important)	Fenway N = 96	Comparison Schools N = 494	χ^2
Helping other people in my community	66.0	49.7	8.78*
Working to correct social and economic inequality	59.6	25.7	44.23***
Being an active and informed citizen	64.9	55.9	2.89
Supporting environmental causes	44.	29.3	10.29**
Participation in volunteer or community service work during past two years (through school or outside of school; % response)	Fenway N = 96	Comparison Schools N = 494	χ^2
Yes	91.70	53.8	47.91***

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Responses are valid percentages; the average response rate for the Fenway sample across items was 93%. Sample size provided in the table is based on the greatest number of valid responses per sample across items. Response categories: % very important, % somewhat important, % not important.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors’ calculations.

Finally, a Fenway education both encourages students to have ambitious educational attainment expectations and provides them with the support they need to get there. While the majority of Fenway students aim to graduate from college, 57% expect to obtain a master’s degree or other professional advanced degree compared to 30% of the comparison schools sample (Table 10, following page). Fenway students are also likely to have received significantly more support in the college preparation process from school counselors, teachers, other school staff, and parents than students in the comparison school sample.

Accountability and Educating the Whole Student

Not surprisingly, current education policies in the United States have made it increasingly challenging for schools that seek to prepare students beyond traditional academic content areas. Fenway, however, has managed some of these tensions by adhering to its original mission and core values.

As a Boston pilot school, Fenway has more autonomy than other schools in the district. In exchange, school accountability requirements are greater. Thus there is considerable pressure for Fenway students to perform well, especially since many students enter the school below academic proficiency. Similar to other states in the U.S., Massachusetts requires students to pass standardized tests in core subject areas. High school students, in particular, are required to pass assessments in English, math, and science in Grade 10, as well as a science assessment, in order to graduate.

As mentioned earlier, Fenway students do quite well on the MCAS, Massachusetts’s high school accountability test. Interviews with school leaders, faculty, and students

Table 10: Students’ Educational Attainment Expectations and Support

As things stand now, how far in school do you think you'll get? (% response)	Fenway N = 94	Comparison Schools N = 550	χ²
High school graduation or GED only	1.1 ^a	9.5 ^b	29.91***
Some college	6.4	10.7	
Graduate from college	28.7	36.2	
Obtain a master's degree or more advanced degree	57.4 ^a	30.0 ^b	
Don't know	6.4 ^a	13.3 ^a	
If planning to go to college, where have you gone for information? (mark all that apply; % response)	Fenway N = 94	Comparison Schools N = 550	χ²
School counselor	60.9	36.0	18.67***
Teacher	78.2	36.2	51.69***
Coach	16.1	7.5	6.48*
Parent	51.7	42.4	2.57
Friend	37.9	38.6	0.01
Sibling	29.9	26.1	0.52
Other relative	25.3	26.4	0.04
How often have you discussed the following with your parents or guardians? (% often)	Fenway N = 94	Comparison Schools N = 550	χ²
Going to college	72.4	43.4	25.91***

Notes: * p < .05; ** p < .01; ***p < .001; letter superscripts indicate that simple effect is significant. Responses are valid percentages; the average response rate for the Fenway sample across items was 90%. Sample size provided in the table is based on the greatest number of valid responses per sample across items. Response categories for last question in table: % often, % sometimes, % never.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors’ calculations.

indicate that the MCAS is not seen as challenging for most students. Students described the test as “pretty easy” and said that “everyone pretty much passes.” However, teachers and students alike indicated that there were pressures to do well and take the test seriously.

Although teachers at Fenway have the autonomy to create their own curriculum, there is some pressure to incorporate standards tied to the MCAS test. Teachers do their best to make the connections “relevant.” As one teacher described:

The students can see and learn about themselves in the curriculum. They are not trapped in the Massachusetts curriculum. We have to create our own curriculum. We don’t have to meet the state standards, but we try to hit certain standards since the students

have to take the state tests (MCAS). But we work to make it feel relevant.

In order to “maintain autonomy” and “stick to” its mission and approach to educating the whole student, the leadership acknowledged that it is a priority to meet “the MCAS proficiencies.” At Fenway, students take the science assessment during their first year at the school to “get that out of the way” and create space to focus on Fenway’s curriculum.

Fenway is not alone in incorporating other non-academic skill development into their school mission. The majority of schools in Massachusetts and the state’s Department of Education itself have mission statements that emphasize other competencies such as citizenship skills and social and emotional development, in addition to cognitive development; however, the state assesses students solely on cognitive proficiency through the MCAS (Bebell & Stemler, 2004).

Social Emotional Learning and Social Justice Education at Fenway

In closing, we offer the following insights and observations on how social emotional learning and social justice education take place and interact at Fenway.

- *Close alignment exists between Fenway’s climate and culture, features and structures, and practices and key social emotional and social justice skills and competencies.* There are many aspects of Fenway’s design, both formal and informal, that promote students’ social emotional and social justice learning. Much of this stems from the extent to which Fenway’s belief in the importance of social emotional learning and social justice education has driven the school’s design at all levels, from the climate and culture, school features and structures, and practices.
- *Fenway’s climate and culture, features and structures, and practices have been cultivated and refined over time into a cohesive whole that supports social emotional learning and social justice education.* The school’s climate and culture, features and structures, and practices reflect cycles of refinement that have been carried out over time. Through active involvement of all members of the school community in making improvements as new challenges and opportunities arise, the school has developed a cohesive and unified approach. It continues to evolve as new challenges and opportunities are confronted.
- *Sustaining social emotional learning and social justice education is part of Fenway’s practice.* The school has also developed ways to sustain the improvements and adaptations that it has made over time. For example,

there are systems for hiring, orienting, and supporting new staff that have been honed to sustain Fenway's way of facilitating social emotional learning and social justice education as well as other aspects of their design.

- *At Fenway, social emotional learning is more formalized than social justice education.* Looking across Fenway's climate and culture, features and structures, and practices, the school has more aspects of its design that are explicitly oriented toward fostering social emotional learning and the intentional development of social emotional skills. While social justice education is clearly a priority, the school operates in a way such that social emotional learning lays the foundation for social justice to be both taught and achieved.
- *The relationship between social emotional learning and social justice may sometimes be complicated or in conflict.* There is a debate in the school, for example, around whether admissions should be based on a lottery system (handled through the regular Boston Public Schools system) or a more intentional, but still inclusive, review process (handled through the school and using current procedures). The disagreement is over which process is more just and sets the stage for social emotional engagement to occur. There is another debate within the school about whether tracking should be done in certain subjects or whether all classes should integrate students at different levels. Educators are questioning whether social emotional learning and social justice are enhanced when students are taught at the level of their readiness versus in classes with peers at all levels.

Appendix A: Methodology and Data Sources

The case study employs mixed methods with multiple sources of data. Table 11 summarizes the qualitative data sources for this study. They include: interviews and focus groups (with school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community partners), observations (e.g., of classrooms, student events, and faculty meetings), and document analysis (e.g., of school websites, student handbooks, and course syllabi). We interviewed the lead administrator multiple times as well as other key informants (e.g., school founders, veteran teachers); talked with diverse groups of students and parents, as well as interviewed community partners (e.g., board members or community partner organization representatives); and targeted newer and veteran teachers as well as students across grade levels. Beyond observations of instruction, professional learning, and governance we also observed key school events and activities that were concurrent with site visits.

Table 11: Qualitative Data Sources

Data sources	Description	Quantity
Interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants: students, teachers, administrators, counselors, community partners, and parents Interviews recorded Full and targeted transcription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30–90 minutes in duration 21 total sessions 43 individuals participated
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-participant observations of class periods, staff team meetings, school-wide events, a board meeting Both formal and informal events and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20–80 minutes in duration 22 total sessions Medium to large group activities
Documents and artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School documents: e.g., annual school reports, accreditation report, school handbook, school program briefs, school brochures, school schedule, school map, and school meeting agendas Classroom documents: e.g., learning assessment rubrics, syllabi, lesson plans, project plans, assignment outlines, and assignment worksheets Websites: e.g., school site, district profile, and relevant partner/program sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 print and online documents

We also surveyed a sample of 10th- and 12th-grade students (N = 101) to gauge students' attitudes about school, perceptions of school climate, motivation for attending school, attitudes about learning and achievement, life values, attainment expectations, and experiences of personal and academic support. The majority of survey items were drawn from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002), sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics, for two main reasons. First, to examine how students' experiences at this social emotional learning-focused high school compare to those of students in other high schools, members of the research team identified a national dataset that assessed constructs of interest to the current study and had publicly available data for students in the dataset. Second, using schools in the ELS: 2002 dataset, members of the research team identified a set of school-level variables to create a sample of national comparison schools with similar school characteristics to Fenway. Schools were selected to be in the national comparison sample if they met the following criteria: 1) the school was located in an urban environment; 2) the school was a public school; and 3) the school free/reduced lunch percentage matched Fenway's free/reduced lunch range percentage (i.e., the indicator was 51–75%). A total of 31 schools in the dataset met these criteria, which yielded a sample of 580 students. See See Table 12 (following page) for demographic information for both samples. Students in the Fenway sample were more likely be female and Latino and African American than students in the ELS: 2002 sample.

Students in the Fenway sample responded to 20 survey questions, most of which had multiple sub-items per question. The majority of questions were drawn from either the first administration of the ELS: 2002 student survey or the second administration of the ELS: 2002 student survey, conducted during a follow-up study in 2004. We added a small number of our own items to probe students further on their social emotional learning experiences. The survey was administered in group sessions during the school day in the spring of 2013, and was completed online using the Qualtrics online survey tool. The response rate for students in this sample was 66%. Out of 101 respondents, 48 were in 10th grade and 37 were in 12th grade; 16 participants declined to state their grade.

We compared survey responses from students in the Fenway school sample to students in the national comparison schools sample by analyzing the percentage of valid responses with a chi-square test of independence to test for equity of proportions. The valid response range for schools in the Fenway sample was 57-100% and 50-97% for schools in the national comparison sample. A Pearson's chi-square test determined whether there was a statistical difference between the two groups of respondents and we report both the chi-square value and p value in the text. A p value of < .05 indicates a statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level. When comparing items with more than two categories, a z-test of column proportions was conducted along with the chi-square to test for simple effects.

Table 12: Demographics For Fenway and National Comparison Schools Survey Samples

Demographics	Fenway	Comparison schools
Sample size	101	580
Number of schools	1	31
Gender (%)		
Female	65.1	48.8
Male	34.9	51.2
Student race/ethnicity (%)		
Latino	51.7	33.3
African American	40.0	22.1
Asian	3.5	20.5
White	2.4	18.1
Other	2.4	6.0
Mother/Female guardian education (%)		
No high school diploma	20.7	27.0
High school diploma/Some college	42.7	40.6
College degree	15.9	8.3
Advanced degree	14.6	7.3
Don't know/doesn't apply	6.1	16.8
Father/Male guardian education (%)		
No high school diploma	17.2	22.8
High school diploma/Some college	37.9	38.7
College degree	19.0	9.1
Advanced degree	1.8	6.9
Don't know/doesn't apply	24.1	22.5
Free or reduced-priced lunch* (%)	67.0	51.0–75.0

Notes: The ELS:2002 data we use for this study was collected when students were in either 10th grade (ELS:2002 first survey administration) or 12th grade (ELS:2002 second follow-up survey administration), depending on question availability. Demographics based on 10th grade survey administration. * = school-level, rather than individual-level, demographic indicator.

Sources: SEL schools sample collected by authors; comparison schools sample drawn from ELS: 2002 dataset, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002; authors' calculations.

Appendix B: Fenway Ninth-Grade Advisory Curriculum & 21st Century Social Learning Expectations

Table B-1: Community Building/Social Development

Unit/Timeframe & Essential Questions	Skills/Objectives	Assessment	Content & Activities	Resources	21st Century Skills
<p>Community Building/Social Development</p> <p>Unit Summary: This unit will help students develop skills related to positive interpersonal relationships within their families, peer groups, and school community.</p> <p>Essential Question: How do I build community?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilize the Safety Guidelines and practice them amongst their peers, faculty, and staff 2. Interact and communicate with others in a meaningful way to help sustain a safe and positive school environment 3. Foster healthy interpersonal relationships with individuals and groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom effort, participation, and class discussions • Pair share/turn and talk • Mid-year narrative assessments • Self-assessment • Personal journals • Homework • Presentations • Worksheets for lessons • Classwork 	<p>Content: Team building activities, relationship building activities, and student handbook review</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stranded on an island • Spider web • Following directions/ Peanut butter and jelly activity • Electric fence • Paper tower • Nursery rhymes • Affirmations • If you have... Come to the middle • Round robin • Fights with friends • Peers and pressures • Rational relationships • Name game • Thompson Island trip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PASSPORT Program: A Journey through Emotional, Social, Cognitive, and Self-Development” by Ann Vernon • “104 Activities that Build: Self-esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-discovery, and Coping Skills” by Alanna Jones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Diversity • Work ethic • Respect • Responsibility • Self-management

Table B-2: Health Development

Unit/Timeframe & Essential Questions	Skills/Objectives	Assessment	Content & Activities	Resources	21st Century Skills
<p>Health Development</p> <p>Unit Summary: This unit will be covered primarily by Peer Health Exchange in a series of weekly hour-long workshops on various health topics.</p> <p>Essential Questions: How do decisions that I make impact my health? What is the information that I need to take care of my own well-being?</p>	<p>1. Students will know how to make informative decisions regarding their health and relationships</p> <p>2. Students will learn what the consequences are of decisions regarding health and relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in workshops • Respectful engagement in topic discussion • Timely attendance 	<p>Content: Weekly hour-long workshops on health topics presented in an interactive and informative forum</p> <p>Activities are peer-led workshops in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making and communication • Sexual decision making • Pregnancy prevention • STIs and HIV • Healthy relationships • Abusive relationships • Rape and sexual assault • Tobacco • Alcohol • Drugs • Nutrition and physical activity • Mental health • Gender and sexuality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Health Exchange curriculum • “Addiction” – DVD • Farm to Food Initiative curriculum • “Color of Fear” – DVD (men/women) • “Killing Me Softly 3” – DVD • Annual health and wellness day • School nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Diversity • Work ethic • Respect • Responsibility • Self-management

Table B-3: Emotional Development

Unit/Timeframe & Essential Questions	Skills/Objectives	Assessment	Content & Activities	Resources	21st Century Skills
<p>Emotional Development</p> <p>Unit Summary: It will provide students with the capabilities and skills that they need to function and survive in society as well as the world.</p> <p>Essential Questions: How do I take 100% responsibility for myself? How do I recognize and take ownership for my emotions?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taking ownership by using “I” statements 2. Ability to identify and express various emotions in a productive manner so that others can understand and empathize 3. How to use stopping techniques 4. Identification of the underlying issue to resolve conflict both in school and within their personal communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom effort, participation, and class discussions • Pair share/turn and talk • Mid-year narrative assessments • Self-assessment • Personal journals • Homework • Presentations • Worksheets for lessons • Classwork 	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons on emotions and how to express them effectively • Lessons on how to identify and communicate emotions • Lessons on the concepts of a continuum of emotions, especially those that occur during adolescence • Mood management and thought stopping • Conflict resolution <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional roller coaster • Anger management • Anger Is? • Mood management • Agreeable to argumentative • Affirmations paper • Gender groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The PASSPORT Program: A Journey through Emotional, Social, Cognitive, and Self-Development” by Ann Vernon • “104 Activities that build: Self-Esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-Discovery, and Coping Skills” by Alanna Jones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Diversity • Respect • Responsibility • Self-management

Table B-4: Educational Development

Unit/Timeframe & Essential Questions	Skills/ Objectives	Assessment	Content & Activities	Resources	21st Century Skills
<p>Educational Development</p> <p>Unit Summary: This unit will focus on providing students with various tools, activities, and study skills useful for students' academic development.</p> <p>Essential Questions: What are the tools I need to become a successful student? What are the habits I need to create to realize my full potential as a student?</p>	<p>1. Utilize study skill strategies and organizational techniques in order to enhance academic performance</p> <p>2. Students will be able to advocate for themselves and ask clarifying questions when in need of extra academic support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom effort, participation, and class discussions • Pair share/turn and talk • Mid-year narrative assessments • Self-assessments • Personal journals • Homework • Presentations • Worksheets for lessons • Classwork • Attendance • Agenda check • Peer binder review • Preparedness • Teacher collaboration and consultation • Narrative report and conference 	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities to explore individual strengths and challenges regarding student approach to academics • Skills and tools applicable to academic achievement • Support for students to explore their academic needs and assets and the ability to advocate for those needs <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculate GPA • Create an agenda • Goal setting • Email etiquette • Term grade review • Resume building • Learning styles • ACCESS presentation • How to create flashcards • Create vocabulary list for the how-to paper and present • Time management • Study skills PowerPoint • Test preparation strategies • Report card reflection • Test for following directions • Peer binder reviews • Personal finance • Career development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCESS • Steppingstone curriculum • Private industry council • Massachusetts career information systems http://masscis.infocareers.org/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Diversity • Work ethic • Respect • Responsibility • Self-management

Table B-5: Self-Development

Unit/Timeframe & Essential Questions	Skills/ Objectives	Assessment	Content & Activities	Resources	21st Century Skills
<p>Self-Development</p> <p>Unit Summary: This unit will help students develop skills related to positive interpersonal relationships within their families, peer groups, school, and community.</p> <p>Essential Questions: What are my strengths, values, and responsibilities? How do my thoughts and actions influence the world around me?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will know how to build their own identity and increase their awareness about the importance of being oneself 2. Students will learn to acknowledge one's successes and challenges 3. To clarify values and beliefs 4. To learn that performance in one area is not a reflection of one's self-worth 5. Students will know and learn how to respect differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom effort, participation, and class discussions • Pair share/turn and talk • Mid-year narrative assessments • Self-assessment • Personal journals • Homework • Presentations • Worksheets for lessons • Classwork 	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons on identity development • Support for self-exploration • Communication techniques <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's important to me • Letter to yourself • Write your own narrative • Various PHE workshops • Stress management • Conflict resolution • Personality styles • Why little things are big/stereotypes • Identity poems • What do you rep paper and presentation • Communicating with parents • Gender groups • Identity web • Personal goal setting • Rank your values • Pieces of me • I'm invincible • What does it mean about me? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PASSPORT Program: A Journey through Emotional, Social, Cognitive, and Self-Development" by Ann Vernon • Thompson Island Initiative Curriculum • Peer Health Exchange curriculum • "104 Activities that build: Self-Esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-Discovery, and Coping Skills" by Alanna Jones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Diversity • Work Ethic • Respect • Responsibility • Self-management

Table B-6: Cognitive Development

Unit/Timeframe & Essential Questions	Skills/Objectives	Assessment	Content & Activities	Resources	21st Century Skills
<p>Cognitive Development</p> <p>Unit Summary: This unit will focus on how students acquire and evaluate information about their feelings and thoughts and how to make connections to their environment.</p> <p>Essential Question: How do I create equilibrium between society and myself, while developing a “voice”?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategies and techniques for expressing their needs to others 2. Ability to connect their thoughts, feelings, and actions and how to balance them in everyday life 3. To learn how to contemplate choices and make balanced decisions 4. Put problem in better perspective, identify and evaluate potential outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom effort, participation, and class discussions • Pair share/turn and talk • Mid-year narrative assessments • Self-assessment • Personal journals • Homework • Presentations • Worksheets for lessons 	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons on effective decision making • Support in using thought process to identify viable solutions to problems <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-bullying presentation • Think, feel, and do • Code-switching • PHE decision making activities • Brain teasers • Awesome outcome • Problem-solving skills • Internal safety presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PASSPORT Program: A Journey through Emotional, Social, Cognitive, and Self-Development” by Ann Vernon • Boston Public Schools anti-bullying presentation • “104 Activities that build: Self Esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-Discovery, and Coping Skills” by Alanna Jones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Diversity • Respect • Responsibility • Self-management • Work ethic

21st Century Learning Expectations: Social

Fenway High School

Collaboration: Students will demonstrate the ability to work alongside a diverse team; will make strong contributions toward the common goals of a group or organization and will assume leadership roles while working on group projects

Diversity: Students will be able to identify and understand cultural differences; will appreciate and value all persons in the community regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and disability; will apply these understandings in all school settings

Work Ethic: Students will bring enthusiasm and perseverance to all educational activities and will take responsibility for academic obligations; will act with integrity and honor all social commitments; will complete and submit homework assignments in a timely fashion

Respect: Students will demonstrate strong abilities in ethical and moral reasoning; will practice and enforce Fenway High School's Safety Guidelines in words and actions; will demonstrate respect for all persons and all properties, as well as Fenway's open campus policy and our partners in greater Boston; and will take personal responsibility for instances where Safety Guidelines are not observed

Responsibility/ Self-Management: Students will strive to make healthy and appropriate choices with regard to personal health, finances, and interpersonal and intrapersonal relations; will demonstrate strong time management abilities; and will be able to organize, prioritize, and complete tasks independent of supervision

Appendix C: Fenway Social Learning Expectations Rubric

21st Century Learning Expectations: Social

Fenway High School

	Collaboration	Diversity	Work Ethic	Respect	Responsibility/ Self-Management
Demonstrates Mastery	Shows leadership and works effectively with a team; Makes strong contributions toward the common goals of a group	Advocates for the value of diversity; Applies appreciation and understanding of diversity in social settings	Always brings enthusiasm to class activities; Always submits completed homework; Always takes responsibility for obligations and commitments	Exhibits strong abilities in ethical and moral reasoning; Always works to follow and advocate Safety Guidelines; Always shows respect for persons and property in the community	Always demonstrates commitment to healthy personal choices; Always demonstrates strong time management abilities; Always able to complete tasks independent of supervision
Demonstrates Proficiency	Works effectively with a team; Makes contributions toward the common goals of a group	Demonstrates an appreciation for diversity; Applies appreciation and understanding of diversity in social settings	Shows enthusiasm in class activities; Usually submits completed homework; Takes responsibility for obligations and commitments	Exhibits abilities in ethical and moral reasoning; Always works to follow Safety Guidelines; Shows respect for persons and property in the community	Usually demonstrates commitment to healthy personal choices; Usually demonstrates time management abilities; Usually able to complete tasks independent of supervision
Developing	Sometimes works effectively with a team; Makes contributions when working with as part of a group	Demonstrates an understanding of diversity	Sometimes shows enthusiasm in class activities; Sometimes submits completed homework; Sometimes takes responsibility for obligations and commitments	Sometimes exhibits abilities in ethical and moral reasoning; Usually follows Safety Guidelines; Usually shows respect for persons and property in the community	Sometimes demonstrates commitment to healthy personal choices; Sometimes demonstrates time management abilities; Sometimes able to complete tasks independent of supervision
Emerging	Rarely works effectively with a team; Limited contributions as part of a group	Limited understanding of the value of diversity	Limited enthusiasm in class activities; Rarely submits completed homework; Rarely takes personal responsibility for obligations	Limited abilities in ethical and moral reasoning; Rarely observes Safety Guidelines; Rarely shows respect for persons and property in the community	Limited commitment to healthy personal choices; Limited time management abilities; Rarely able to complete tasks independent of supervision

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Appendix D: Fenway Civic Learning Expectations Rubric

21st Century Learning Expectations: Civic Fenway High School

	Community Involvement	Civic Responsibility	Integrity	Diversity	Global Citizenship
<i>Demonstrates Mastery</i>	Acts as an agent of positive change in all settings; Has exceeded 40 hours of community service	Actively participates in all communities; Always engages in decision-making for betterment of all communities	Always acts with high respect for persons, property, and codes of honesty; Always applies and advocates for Safety Guidelines in all settings	Advocates for the value of diversity and multiplicity of interests; Applies respect for all individuals and the overall concept of diversity in all settings	Actively uses all 21 st century learning skill to better understand interconnectedness of modern world and need for positive change in all settings
<i>Demonstrates Proficiency</i>	Acts as an agent of positive change in most settings; Has completed 40 hours of community service	Actively participates in all communities; Usually engages in decision-making for betterment of all communities	Acts with respect for persons, property, and codes of honesty; Always applies Safety Guidelines in all settings	Demonstrates appreciation of the value of diversity and multiplicity of interests; Applies respect for all individuals and the overall concept of diversity in all settings	Uses 21 st century learning skill to better understand interconnectedness of modern world and need for positive change in all settings
<i>Developing</i>	Sometimes acts as an agent of positive change in most settings; Has completed 40 hours of community service	Sometimes participates in all communities; Sometimes engages in decision-making for betterment of all communities	Usually acts with high respect for persons, property, and codes of honesty; Usually applies Safety Guidelines in all settings	Demonstrates appreciation of the value of diversity and multiplicity of interests;	Shows some ability to understand and apply 21 st century learning skill to better understand interconnectedness of modern world and need for positive change in all settings
<i>Emerging</i>	Shows limited ability to act as an agent of positive change in any setting; Has yet to complete 40 hours of community service	Rarely participates in all communities; Rarely engages in decision-making for betterment of all communities	Shows limited demonstration of respect for persons, property, and codes of honesty; Rarely applies Safety Guidelines in all settings	Shows limited appreciation of the value of diversity and multiplicity of interests;	Shows a limited ability to understand and apply 21 st century learning skill to better understand interconnectedness of modern world and need for positive change in all settings

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