

EDUCATION PROGRAM



The Foundation envisions children and youth developing the knowledge, skills, and character to explore and understand the world around them, growing into caring, informed, and productive adults.

Character

Recognizing that adults – both in and out of the classroom – play a pivotal role in building character in young people, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation invests in youth-serving organizations in California and across the nation that are committed to using data to improve and sustain the character development practices of adult staff and volunteers at scale.

Goal

Work with youth development partners to identify “what works” with respect to adult practices that build youth character, and help these organizations translate this knowledge into practice through training and professional development for adult staff and volunteers.

Approach

- A** Develop knowledge of evidence-based practice for the field.
- B** Invest in systems to support effective adult staff and volunteer practice.
- C** Invest in proven models that have demonstrated impact.
- D** Support district partners in implementing, evaluating, and learning from Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives.
- E** Elevate standards, continuous improvement, and SEL programming within California after-school providers.

Intended outcomes

- ✓ Grantees understand best practices and have systems in place to inform character programs, measure adult practice, and continuously improve.
- ✓ Key national leaders and funders adopt, promote, and increase support for enhanced evidence-based practices.
- ✓ More youth have access to quality character development programs.
- ✓ California K-12 and after-school stakeholders understand and prioritize SEL; emerging learnings in California districts to inform the state/national SEL field.
- ✓ California districts implement quality SEL practices across classrooms to support whole-child education.
- ✓ Publicly-funded after-school programs in California are committed to continuous improvement and quality programming.

Progress to date

- In 2015, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, requiring that states’ school accountability systems include at least one non-academic indicator; many are looking to California’s CORE Districts for early learnings.
- *Helping Children Succeed* (author Paul Tough, published spring 2016) explores the growing body of research on youth character development.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America is implementing a five-year initiative to improve quality in its 4,200 clubs.
- Playworks is expanding its character programs to reach 3.5 million children by December 2020.

Evaluation and learning

- The Character Initiative aims to strengthen evaluation and continuous improvement systems within influential youth development organizations.
- A multi-year evaluation of the California CORE Districts by PACE at Stanford University will provide timely insight to education leaders nationwide on the implications of including measures of SEL and school culture/climate in school accountability systems.