



FALLON MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Model Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program

As a foundation to academic learning, we make it a priority to support the social and emotional needs of early adolescents as they mature and grow into young adults, providing opportunities through an **Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program** for students to develop social and emotional skills, lasting friendships, and character traits that will serve them well in all walks of life. Fallon staff, students, and parents are engaged as partners in the process of modeling and teaching students how to create a healthy lifestyle, manage emotions, set and achieve personal goals, demonstrate empathy toward others, develop positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Over the past four years this model program of **Integrated Social and Emotional Learning** has positively impacted more than 2,500 Fallon students who are growing into caring, reflective young adults who understand and value themselves, their community, and the world around them. Together, we have created a positive learning environment that supports and challenges all our children.

As part of the Dublin Unified School District Local Control and Accountability Plan, each school in our district has developed a comprehensive Response to Intervention program. A comprehensive RTI model includes intervention for both academic challenges and non-academic issues that may be adversely impacting a child's ability to learn at high levels. The DUSD LCAP specifically states, "We will provide an environment that maximizes student learning and builds resilience so that all students are engaged and supported with their social, emotional, behavioral and physical needs in a safe learning environment." While many schools have character education programs in place to complement academic programs, **Fallon Middle School is unique in its commitment to an Integrated Social and Emotional Learning model based on the premise that academic achievement is grounded in the intentional development of social and emotional skills to support high levels of learning.**

Our journey toward helping all students develop critical social and emotional competencies to support positive academic outcomes began in 2014 with the help of community partner Hume Behavioral Health and Training Center. Together, we created a school vision for social and emotional learning (SEL) and began to research evidence-based practices that would assist us in meeting our goal. Our research led us to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and an understanding that **an integrated approach that included social and emotional learning in curriculum and instruction, school wide practices and policies, and family and community partnerships would be most effective in meeting our goals.** This integrated

approach explicitly teaches social and emotional skills while immersing students in a culture of positive peer and adult role models.

Over the past five years, we have strategically allocated available funding (district and parent donations), time, and personnel to several evidence-based practices that form our integrated model. Our signature practice in the area of curriculum and instruction is the incorporation of the **Lions Quest Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum** into our course offerings. The Lions Quest curriculum uses class discussion, role-play, written reflection, and other engaging strategies to explicitly teach core social and emotional skills. It is currently implemented at Fallon as a 9-week course in the 6th-grade elective wheel, and more than 75% of 6th-grade students are enrolled in Lions Quest this year. The Lions Quest course is also available as a semester elective course for 7th and 8th graders, with a curriculum suited to these older students.

Equally important has been the development and implementation of a **counseling-enriched academic intervention program** for students struggling with math and literacy skills. In the Quest Plus class, Math Academy, Reading Workshop, and English Essentials support classes for students performing at least two years below grade level in math or literacy, a school counselor conducts weekly lessons addressing social and emotional skills that can support higher academic achievement. Specifically, the counselor and teachers work in partnership to help students set positive academic goals, develop a growth mindset, and make responsible decisions. There are currently more than 100 students enrolled in and benefitting from these classes. The counselors also conduct regular check-in meetings with each of the students in those classes and facilitate a peer mentor program to provide extra support for 6th-grade students struggling academically.

The most important school-wide practice that supports our integrated social and emotional learning program is “**Capturing Kids’ Hearts**” (CKH). CKH is a program that promotes relationship-building as a foundation for effective leadership and teaching. Its underlying premise is that by reducing fear and anxiety in the school environment, we can increase students’ academic performance. To accomplish that goal, adults greet students warmly each day, take time at the beginning of each class period to explore how students are doing, communicate caring, empower students to apply new learning, and end their time together in a meaningful way. All Fallon administrators and counselors have been trained in Capturing Kids’ Hearts, and 49 of our 69 teachers have also completed the training and are incorporating the principles into their classrooms. Our campus supervisors and office clerical staff have also been taught how to apply the principles in their interactions with students.

This commitment to caring interactions with students continues even into the arena of discipline. It is our school policy and commitment to provide positive support in conjunction with any consequences administered for misbehavior or violation of school rules. We operate on the belief that students will make good choices about behavior if they have the tools to do so, and it is our responsibility as educators to provide students with those tools when needed. Counseling, youth council, and **restorative practices**

are regularly used as alternatives to suspension. For the first time this fall we will be adding a **Peer Mediation and Education** class to our elective course offerings, training and supporting students to help create a safe and positive school environment.

Another critical component of our Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program is the use of weekly **Intervention Team (“iTeam”) meetings** to generate individualized support plans for students with social and emotional issues impacting their learning. Teachers and other adults on campus who have concerns about a particular student may refer that student to the iTeam. One of three full-time counselors on the Fallon staff then prepares a student profile to share with the team, which is made up of an administrator, school counselor, Hume counselor (our community partner), special education teacher, school psychologist, the referring teacher, and a student services secretary. The team reviews both the student’s academic and social-emotional strengths and challenges and creates a personalized intervention plan to address the child’s needs. To meet social-emotional needs, the plan might include individual counseling, small-group counseling, mentoring, or extra-curricular activities. Parents often participate with the team to help craft solutions and discuss referrals for assessment when warranted. Since its inception in 2014, the “iTeam” has developed personalized intervention plans for almost 200 students.

We know how important parents are as our partners in education, so we have also made it a priority to provide **interactive parent and teacher education events** focused on the healthy development of preadolescents. For the past four years the Fallon counseling staff has conducted a special evening of adult learning about healthy social and emotional development in preadolescents. We also regularly host popular **parenting “book club” discussions**, with copies of the book provided by our Parent Faculty Club and available for parents to check out of our school library. Book topics focus on social-emotional development and have included the titles *The Gift of Failure*, *How to Raise an Adult*, and *Unselfie*.

All stakeholders are involved in monitoring the Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program and its impact. The administrative team reviews attendance and behavior data on a weekly basis. The iTeam reviews individualized intervention plans on a quarterly basis and makes adjustments as necessary. Collaborative teams of teachers and the site Leadership Team analyze course grades on a quarterly basis and discuss the connection between grades and current SEL programs. Finally, the School Site Council monitors the action items and outcomes of the goals in our strategic plan.

The implementation of an Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program is producing promising results. Despite the rapid growth in student population and diversity, Fallon students feel safe at school and connected to their school community. Between 2014 and 2018, **Fallon’s School Climate Index on the California Healthy Kids Survey rose** from 294 to 376, with the sharpest rise in the past year. The survey results during the same time period also indicate an **increase in overall supports and engagement**, particularly with regard to school connectedness and school safety. The

same data indicates a **sharp decrease in bullying and physical/emotional victimization.**

Because teachers are using the principles of Capturing Kids' Hearts to create supportive learning environments and students are learning and actively practicing social and emotional skills, we have seen a **reduced number of students referred to the office** for misbehavior. When misbehavior does occur, alternatives to traditional punishment have resulted in a **dramatic decrease in our suspension rate**, from 7.68% in 2013 to less than 1% in 2018. In addition, Fallon has maintained an attendance rate of 98% for the past four years.

Creating a safe and supportive environment through implementation of an Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program has also resulted in **strong academic performance.** More than 86% of all students met or exceeded the state standards for English Language Arts on the most recent Smarter Balanced Assessments, with the average score being 81 points above the minimum scale score for the "Standards Met" level. Similarly, 84% of all students met or exceeded the state standards for Math, and the average score was 85 points above the minimum.

As we move forward, we will continue monitoring our Social and Emotional Learning program and will be searching for or developing additional methods for measuring the impact of social and emotional learning on individual students, particularly those who enter Fallon most at risk of academic failure. Our commitment to educating the whole child through an Integrated Social and Emotional Learning Program that teaches students the skills they will need to take ownership of their academic goals and prepare them for college and career is already paying significant dividends, and we are determined to continue refining the program until every child succeeds.