

The State Board of Education (SBOE) adopts the repeal of §120.1 and amendments to §§120.3, 120.5, 120.7, and 120.9, concerning Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for character traits. The repeal and amendments are adopted without changes to the proposed text as published in the February 25, 2022 issue of the *Texas Register* (47 TexReg 860) and will not be republished. The adopted revisions update the standards for positive character traits to align with the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 123, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021.

REASONED JUSTIFICATION: In 2019, the 86th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1026, requiring the SBOE to integrate positive character traits into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12, as appropriate. The legislation required the SBOE to include the following positive character education traits in the standards: courage; trustworthiness, including honesty, reliability, punctuality, and loyalty; integrity; respect and courtesy; responsibility, including accountability, diligence, perseverance, and self-control; fairness, including justice and freedom from prejudice; caring, including kindness, empathy, compassion, consideration, patience, generosity, and charity; good citizenship, including patriotism, concern for the common good and the community, and respect for authority and the law; school pride; and gratitude. The legislation also required school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to adopt a character education program that includes the required positive character traits. At the January 2020 SBOE meeting, a discussion item on character traits instruction was presented to the Committee of the Full Board. The committee requested that staff prepare a proposal to add essential knowledge and skills for positive character traits as a new chapter in the Texas Administrative Code. The SBOE adopted the TEKS for positive character traits effective August 1, 2021. The new TEKS were implemented beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

The 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, passed SB 123, which required the SBOE to add personal skills to the TEKS for positive character traits. The legislation added responsible decision-making skills, interpersonal skills, and self-management skills to the required topics to be addressed in the standards.

The adopted amendments to §§120.3, 120.5, 120.7, and 120.9 add the required new topics to the TEKS for positive character traits in Kindergarten-Grade 12. The changes will be implemented beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

In addition, §120.1, which contains implementation language for the subchapter, is being repealed. Implementation language is included as new subsection (a) for each course.

The SBOE approved the proposed revisions for first reading and filing authorization at its January 28, 2022 meeting and for second reading and final adoption at its April 8, 2022 meeting.

In accordance with Texas Education Code, §7.102(f), the SBOE approved the revisions for adoption by a vote of two-thirds of its members to specify an effective date earlier than the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. The earlier effective date will allow districts of innovation that begin school prior to the statutorily required start date to implement the proposed rulemaking when they begin their school year. The effective date is 20 days after filing as adopted with the Texas Register.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RESPONSES: The public comment period on the proposal began February 25, 2022, and ended at 5:00 p.m. on April 1, 2022. The SBOE also provided an opportunity for registered oral and written comments at its April 2022 meeting in accordance with the SBOE board operating policies and procedures. Following is a summary of the public comments received and responses.

Comment. The Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT) expressed support for the proposed amendments because they align with statute and allow flexibility of implementation as either direct or embedded instruction in a district's curriculum.

Response. The SBOE agrees that the standards as proposed are aligned to recent statutory changes and allow appropriate flexibility.

Comment. Texas AFT stated that the proposed standards for positive character traits support districts' ongoing efforts to support the well-being of students and to establish a foundation for 21st century workplace skills that are essential in students' future education and career endeavors.

Response. The SBOE agrees that the standards as proposed support development of positive character traits and personal skills.

Comment. Texas AFT expressed support for the emphasis on compassion, empathy, and cooperation while recognizing multiple perspectives and differences among people in the TEKS for positive character traits because they are skills that are vitally important to responsible citizenship and meaningful civic discourse.

Response. The SBOE agrees that the standards as proposed support the development of positive character traits, including responsible citizenship.

Comment. One parent expressed concern with the TEKS for positive character traits and stated that the authorizing legislation was not subject to debate.

Response. The SBOE disagrees that the standards are cause for concern. Additionally, the SBOE provides the following clarification. Texas Education Code (TEC), §29.906, requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12 and identifies specific traits and personal skills that must be addressed.

Comment. One parent expressed opposition to the TEKS for positive character traits and stated that it is a parent's duty, not the school's, to teach their children character.

Response. The SBOE agrees that parents are also responsible for teaching character. However, the SBOE disagrees that character should not be addressed in the state curriculum standards. Additionally, the SBOE provides the following clarification. TEC, §29.906, requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12 and identifies specific traits and personal skills that must be addressed.

Comment. One parent expressed opposition to the TEKS for positive character traits and stated that the SBOE should limit themselves to just teaching good manners.

Response. The SBOE disagrees and has determined that the TEKS as proposed are appropriate. Additionally, the SBOE provides the following clarification. TEC, §29.906, requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12 and identifies specific traits and personal skills that must be addressed.

Comment. One parent expressed opposition to the TEKS for positive character traits and stated that the standards were subjective and reflect beliefs that may not be shared by all.

Response. The SBOE disagrees and has determined that the standards as proposed are objective. Additionally, the SBOE provides the following clarification. TEC, §29.906, requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12 and identifies specific traits and personal skills that must be addressed.

Comment. Three parents stated that the TEKS for positive character traits were just an excuse for teaching social and emotional learning and supporting a particular vendor.

Response. The SBOE disagrees that the standards are an excuse for teaching social and emotional learning and has determined that the proposed revisions are appropriate and are not designed to support content from any specific vendor. Additionally, the SBOE provides the following clarification. TEC, §29.906, requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12 and identifies specific traits and personal skills that must be addressed.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY. The repeal is adopted under Texas Education Code (TEC), §7.102(c)(4), which requires the State Board of Education (SBOE) to establish curriculum and graduation requirements; TEC, §28.002(a), which identifies the subjects of the required curriculum; TEC, §28.002(c), which requires the SBOE to

identify by rule the essential knowledge and skills of each subject in the required curriculum that all students should be able to demonstrate and that will be used in evaluating instructional materials and addressed on the state assessment instruments; and TEC, §29.906, as amended by Senate Bill 123, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12, as appropriate.

CROSS REFERENCE TO STATUTE. The repeal implements Texas Education Code, §§7.102(c)(4); 28.002(a) and (c); and 29.906, as amended by Senate Bill 123, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021.

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§120.1. Implementation of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits.

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STATUTORY AUTHORITY. The amendments are adopted under Texas Education Code (TEC), §7.102(c)(4), which requires the State Board of Education (SBOE) to establish curriculum and graduation requirements; TEC, §28.002(a), which identifies the subjects of the required curriculum; TEC, §28.002(c), which requires the SBOE to identify by rule the essential knowledge and skills of each subject in the required curriculum that all students should be able to demonstrate and that will be used in evaluating instructional materials and addressed on the state assessment instruments; and TEC, §29.906, as amended by Senate Bill 123, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, which requires the SBOE to integrate positive character traits and personal skills into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for Kindergarten-Grade 12, as appropriate.

CROSS REFERENCE TO STATUTE. The amendments implement Texas Education Code, §§7.102(c)(4); 28.002(a) and (c); and 29.906, as amended by Senate Bill 123, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021.

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§120.3. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills, Kindergarten-Grade 2, Adopted 2020.

- (a) Implementation. The provisions of this section shall be implemented by school districts beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.
 - (1) School districts and open-enrollment charter schools are required to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills outlined in this subchapter at least once in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12.
 - (2) School districts may provide the required instruction in a variety of arrangements, including through a stand-alone course or by integrating the positive character traits standards in the essential knowledge and skills for one or more courses or subject areas at the appropriate grade levels.
- (b) Introduction.
 - (1) Character education introduces students to character traits and personal skills that empower them to be good citizens who are trustworthy, responsible, and caring. The character traits and personal skills reflect positive beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets; provide opportunities for self-reflection; and permit students to apply effective strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and behave responsibly.
 - (2) The standards for positive character traits and personal skills are comprised of four strands: trustworthiness, responsibility, caring, and citizenship. Each strand consists of the following character traits and personal skills.
 - (A) Trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, loyalty, punctuality, and reliability.
 - (B) Responsibility: accountability, diligence, perseverance, self-control, and self-management.
 - (C) Caring: interpersonal skills, including charity, compassion, consideration, cooperation, empathy, generosity, kindness, and patience.
 - (D) Good citizenship: having concern for the common good and the community; having respect for authority, law, justice, and the rights of others; being free from prejudice; having gratitude and school pride; being courteous, fair, and patriotic; and making responsible decisions.
 - (3) Students are expected to develop an awareness of self-identity as well as recognize multiple perspectives, differences, diversity, biases, and the social and cultural context in which they live.
 - (4) The knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills are organized in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12. However, due to the complexity of the concepts, student expectations and knowledge and skills statements cannot be taught, discussed, or viewed in isolation.

- (5) Statements that contain the word "including" reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase "such as" are intended as possible illustrative examples.
- (c) Knowledge and skills.
- (1) Trustworthiness. The student understands how personal skills, choices, and actions relate to character building. The student is expected to:
- (A) describe how personal choices lead to personal actions;
 - (B) explain what it means to be trustworthy; and
 - (C) identify personal actions that build trustworthiness, including being honest and punctual.
- (2) Responsibility. The student understands the concept of responsibility and how personal actions and self-management skills demonstrate responsibility. The student is expected to:
- (A) describe and give examples of how feelings and beliefs influence personal actions;
 - (B) describe how to make personal choices before speaking and acting;
 - (C) define self-control and discuss effective self-management skills, including listening to others, managing one's emotions, and setting goals; and
 - (D) identify instances in which self-management skills are important.
- (3) Caring. The student understands how personal actions and interpersonal skills demonstrate characteristics of caring. The student is expected to:
- (A) listen actively when sharing and cooperating with others;
 - (B) define patience and identify actions that demonstrate patience; and
 - (C) explain and identify examples of how actions can demonstrate kindness to others.
- (4) Good citizenship. The student understands how personal actions and responsible decision making can demonstrate good citizenship. The student is expected to:
- (A) define fairness and identify examples of fairness when making decisions in a variety of situations;
 - (B) define and identify examples of school pride and patriotism;
 - (C) explain what it means to demonstrate respect and courtesy and why it is important to demonstrate respect and courtesy to others; and
 - (D) describe ways in which individuals demonstrate respect for authority and law.

§120.5. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills, Grades 3-5, Adopted 2020.

- (a) Implementation. The provisions of this section shall be implemented by school districts beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.
- (1) School districts and open-enrollment charter schools are required to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills outlined in this subchapter at least once in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12.
 - (2) School districts may provide the required instruction in a variety of arrangements, including through a stand-alone course or by integrating the positive character traits standards in the essential knowledge and skills for one or more courses or subject areas at the appropriate grade levels.
- (b) Introduction.

- (1) Character education introduces students to character traits and personal skills that empower them to be good citizens who are trustworthy, responsible, and caring. The character traits and personal skills reflect positive beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets; provide opportunities for self-reflection; and permit students to apply effective strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and behave responsibly.
 - (2) The standards for positive character traits and personal skills are comprised of four strands: trustworthiness, responsibility, caring, and citizenship. Each strand consists of the following character traits and personal skills.
 - (A) Trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, loyalty, punctuality, and reliability.
 - (B) Responsibility: accountability, diligence, perseverance, self-control, and self-management.
 - (C) Caring: interpersonal skills, including charity, compassion, consideration, cooperation, empathy, generosity, kindness, and patience.
 - (D) Good citizenship: having concern for the common good and the community; having respect for authority, law, justice, and the rights of others; being free from prejudice; having gratitude and school pride; being courteous, fair, and patriotic; and making responsible decisions.
 - (3) Students are expected to develop an awareness of self-identity as well as recognize multiple perspectives, differences, diversity, biases, and the social and cultural context in which they live.
 - (4) The knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills are organized in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12. However, due to the complexity of the concepts, student expectations and knowledge and skills statements cannot be taught, discussed, or viewed in isolation.
 - (5) Statements that contain the word "including" reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase "such as" are intended as possible illustrative examples.
- (c) Knowledge and skills.
- (1) Trustworthiness. The student understands how personal skills, choices, and actions build trustworthiness. The student is expected to:
 - (A) identify and define traits of trustworthiness, including reliability and loyalty;
 - (B) identify and practice strategies for being honest and punctual; and
 - (C) define and identify examples of unethical behavior.
 - (2) Responsibility. The student understands how personal choices are associated with responsibility. The student is expected to:
 - (A) explain what it means to be responsible for personal decisions and actions;
 - (B) describe positive and negative consequences of personal decisions and actions;
 - (C) identify and demonstrate effective self-management skills, including acting on feedback constructively and setting and working toward goals; and
 - (D) describe the relationship between being responsible and being accountable.
 - (3) Caring. The student understands how personal actions and interpersonal skills demonstrate characteristics of caring. The student is expected to:
 - (A) describe how feelings impact decision making and behaviors;
 - (B) identify and practice interpersonal skills, including showing consideration and compassion through listening, sharing, and cooperating with others; and
 - (C) define empathy and discuss the connection between empathy and charity.

- (4) Good citizenship. The student understands that personal responsibility and responsible decision making are associated with good citizenship. The student is expected to:
 - (A) describe the differences and similarities among gratitude, respect, and courtesy;
 - (B) compare fairness and justice;
 - (C) demonstrate responsibility and courage when making decisions for the common good of the classroom and community; and
 - (D) discuss the importance of obeying laws and rules.

§120.7. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills, Grades 6-8, Adopted 2020.

- (a) Implementation. The provisions of this section shall be implemented by school districts beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.
 - (1) School districts and open-enrollment charter schools are required to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills outlined in this subchapter at least once in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12.
 - (2) School districts may provide the required instruction in a variety of arrangements, including through a stand-alone course or by integrating the positive character traits standards in the essential knowledge and skills for one or more courses or subject areas at the appropriate grade levels.
- (b) Introduction.
 - (1) Character education introduces students to character traits and personal skills that empower them to be good citizens who are trustworthy, responsible, and caring. The character traits and personal skills reflect positive beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets; provide opportunities for self-reflection; and permit students to apply effective strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and behave responsibly.
 - (2) The standards for positive character traits and personal skills are comprised of four strands: trustworthiness, responsibility, caring, and citizenship. Each strand consists of the following character traits and personal skills.
 - (A) Trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, loyalty, punctuality, and reliability.
 - (B) Responsibility: accountability, diligence, perseverance, self-control, and self-management.
 - (C) Caring: interpersonal skills, including charity, compassion, consideration, cooperation, empathy, generosity, kindness, and patience.
 - (D) Good citizenship: having concern for the common good and the community; having respect for authority, law, justice, and the rights of others; being free from prejudice; having gratitude and school pride; being courteous, fair, and patriotic; and making responsible decisions.
 - (3) Students are expected to develop an awareness of self-identity as well as recognize multiple perspectives, differences, diversity, biases, and the social and cultural context in which they live.
 - (4) The knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills are organized in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12. However, due to the complexity of the concepts, student expectations and knowledge and skills statements cannot be taught, discussed, or viewed in isolation.
 - (5) Statements that contain the word "including" reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase "such as" are intended as possible illustrative examples.

- (c) Knowledge and skills.
- (1) Trustworthiness. The student understands how personal skills, choices, and actions build trustworthiness. The student is expected to:
 - (A) describe what it means to be reliable and loyal;
 - (B) define and give examples of honesty and integrity;
 - (C) examine the benefits of being trustworthy; and
 - (D) describe personal actions that demonstrate trustworthiness at school, home, with peers, and within the community.
 - (2) Responsibility. The student understands how personal beliefs and feelings and self-management skills influence one's sense of responsibility. The student is expected to:
 - (A) examine how personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about self can build responsibility;
 - (B) identify and describe personal role models who demonstrate what it means to be accountable for words and actions;
 - (C) discuss the benefits of practicing self-management skills; and
 - (D) compare the benefits of responsible behavior with the consequences of irresponsible behavior.
 - (3) Caring. The student understands how interpersonal skills and characteristics of caring impact personal relationships. The student is expected to:
 - (A) evaluate one's personal attitudes and mindsets about self and others;
 - (B) discuss how feelings, decision making, personal behaviors, and interpersonal skills can influence relationships with others; and
 - (C) explain and identify examples of how a person can demonstrate empathy through kindness, charity, generosity, and courtesy.
 - (4) Good citizenship. The student understands how responsible decision making and good citizenship impact personal relationships. The student is expected to:
 - (A) differentiate between personal responsibility and responsible decision making and give examples of each;
 - (B) explain how one's personal actions can impact the perception of others; and
 - (C) identify and practice a variety of conflict-resolution skills and strategies.

§120.9. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills, Grades 9-12, Adopted 2020.

- (a) Implementation. The provisions of this section shall be implemented by school districts beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.
 - (1) School districts and open-enrollment charter schools are required to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills outlined in this subchapter at least once in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12.
 - (2) School districts may provide the required instruction in a variety of arrangements, including through a stand-alone course or by integrating the positive character traits standards in the essential knowledge and skills for one or more courses or subject areas at the appropriate grade levels.
- (b) Introduction.

- (1) Character education introduces students to character traits and personal skills that empower them to be good citizens who are trustworthy, responsible, and caring. The character traits and personal skills reflect positive beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets; provide opportunities for self-reflection; and permit students to apply effective strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and behave responsibly.
 - (2) The standards for positive character traits and personal skills are comprised of four strands: trustworthiness, responsibility, caring, and citizenship. Each strand consists of the following character traits and personal skills.
 - (A) Trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, loyalty, punctuality, and reliability.
 - (B) Responsibility: accountability, diligence, perseverance, self-control, and self-management.
 - (C) Caring: interpersonal skills, including charity, compassion, consideration, cooperation, empathy, generosity, kindness, and patience.
 - (D) Good citizenship: having concern for the common good and the community; having respect for authority, law, justice, and the rights of others; being free from prejudice; having gratitude and school pride; being courteous, fair, and patriotic; and making responsible decisions.
 - (3) Students are expected to develop an awareness of self-identity as well as recognize multiple perspectives, differences, diversity, biases, and the social and cultural context in which they live.
 - (4) The knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills are organized in the following grade bands: Kindergarten-Grade 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12. However, due to the complexity of the concepts, student expectations and knowledge and skills statements cannot be taught, discussed, or viewed in isolation.
 - (5) Statements that contain the word "including" reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase "such as" are intended as possible illustrative examples.
- (c) Knowledge and skills.
- (1) Trustworthiness. The student understands how trustworthiness is viewed in society, politics, and the local and global community. The student is expected to:
 - (A) examine how the power to make decisions relates to personal actions;
 - (B) analyze how the decisions and actions of leaders in society, government, and the local and global community demonstrate loyalty and integrity; and
 - (C) examine the legal and social consequences of unethical behavior.
 - (2) Responsibility. The student understands how leaders demonstrate responsibility in relationships, families, societies, politics, and the global community. The student is expected to:
 - (A) identify and describe personal role models who demonstrate what it means to be accountable for words and actions;
 - (B) identify and discuss real-world examples of taking personal responsibility for one's words and actions;
 - (C) identify and evaluate strategies for practicing self-management skills in a variety of situations; and
 - (D) differentiate between and give examples of diligence and perseverance and identify strategies for demonstrating perseverance.
 - (3) Caring. The student understands how interpersonal skills and characteristics of caring influence society and impact the global community. The student is expected to:
 - (A) evaluate one's personal attitudes and mindsets about self and others;

- (B) discuss how feelings, decision making, personal behaviors, and interpersonal skills can impact professional and social relationships; and
 - (C) identify strategies for how a person can show empathy through one's actions.
- (4) Good citizenship. The student understands how responsible decision making and good citizenship influence one's personal view of society and the local and global community. The student is expected to:
- (A) explain the impact of personal actions and responsible decision making on the family, school, and local and global community;
 - (B) describe how justice, fairness, and freedom are related;
 - (C) apply conflict resolution skills; and
 - (D) participate in constructive dialogues with those of differing viewpoints.