

June 2019

Dear Ohio parents, families, caregivers, educators and community partners:

Together, we share a common vision for our children: that they are challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path and empowered to become resilient, lifelong learners who contribute to society. This journey begins at home and is led by nurturing parents and caregivers who have the greatest impact on their children's development. The journey is reinforced by a highly effective prekindergarten-grade 12 education system that focuses on the fundamentals like English and mathematics; well-rounded content such as social studies, sciences and the arts; and leadership and reasoning skills like problem-solving and growth mindset. The education system also needs to support the development of social-emotional learning and integrate it as a component of learning.

What do we mean by social-emotional learning? Human beings are social creatures. That means in society, successfully interacting with other people is essential to the effective functioning of a community, a workplace and even a family. People need to know how to successfully interact with each other, establish and maintain positive relationships, feel and show empathy, understand and manage their emotions and set and achieve positive goals. Social-emotional learning improves children's mental health and helps them avoid risky decisions, make healthy choices and stay drug free.

Sounds simple, right? But, in reality, we need to be more specific and intentional about helping students acquire these skills and understand that they are important to future success.

That's why I am excited to introduce Ohio's Social and Emotional Learning Standards for students in kindergarten through grade 12. Carefully crafted over a 10-month period by Ohio educators, counselors and social-emotional learning experts, the standards seek to develop the "whole child" by helping students build self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship and responsible decision-making skills.

The social and emotional learning standards are a response to what already is happening in schools and districts across the state. Parents and teachers tell us we need to focus more deliberately on developing these skills in students, and we need clear standards that define social-emotional learning. They recognize a child's social-emotional learning is an important enabler to student success during a child's formative years while they are in school—and beyond. Students with social-emotional learning skills benefit from increased attention, learning memory and academic success that will put them on the road to a bright future.

The State Board of Education formally adopted the standards in June 2019 to help schools and districts consider their own local implementation. That's right—each district and school will decide for itself the extent to which it uses these standards and how it uses these standards. A school's or district's choice will be informed by the values and needs of its local community. These standards are meant to be integrated into the regular daily activities in school, and they do not mean more classes for students or more work for teachers.

The Ohio Department of Education will not develop tests to measure students' progress in learning the standards. Instead, schools and districts will have flexibility to choose whether and how to gauge the extent to which students are demonstrating mastery of the standards. For more state-developed social-emotional learning tools, please visit the [Department's website](#).

I'm excited about the impact this work will have on our schools and students. For those schools and districts that are interested in implementation, we are committed to partnering with you to advance this work. We know our focus on social-emotional learning will have a significant positive impact on the educational experiences of children and ultimately will mean a future full of hope and success.

Yours in education,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paolo A. DeMaria". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "P".

Paolo DeMaria
Superintendent of Public Instruction