

THE RULER AND THE UMBRELLA



“This year, young people across the country and around the globe will spend hundreds of hours honing their academic skills. But in most schools, they will spend exactly zero instructional hours engaged in the mastery of [emotional intelligence](#).”

Psychologist Angela Duckworth

Professor Duckworth authors a weekly blog titled “Emotional Intelligence 101.” In September, she provided the reader with a “beginner’s guide to feeling.” She mentions the “Mood Meter” developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and suggests that educators try “Yale’s [RULER](#) approach to social and emotional learning, developed to help children and adults recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate their emotions.”

In a book authored by Marc Brackett and Janet Kremenitzer (National Professional Resources, Inc. www.NPRinc.com), the authors write that:

*“The **RULER Approach**...supports the power of emotional literacy training. Students trained in emotional literacy showed higher academic grades, higher grades in social development and work habits, were more likely to complete their homework, work cooperatively with others, demonstrate self-control, and pay attention to the rules of the classroom and the school. (P. xi)*

The model includes:

*“**Recognition of emotions**
Understanding of emotions
Labeling emotions
Expression of emotions
Regulation of emotions (PRIME).”*

One of the questions asked by educators is whether or not to adopt RULER if the school or district has an SEL or character development program? The answer:

“RULER integrates seamlessly with many other school-based initiatives and its goals and methods overlap with those of other SEL and character education programs. In general, RULER becomes the backdrop with a common language and a positive and safe climate in which to teach other academic and SEL topics.”

A 12-page brochure about RULER can be found at <http://www.rulerapproach.org>.

Since we are talking about “rules,” it is interesting to note Robert Marzano’s list of *The Golden Rules of Character*:

- RESPECT: Respect others just as you want them to respect you.
- RESPONSIBILITY: Take responsibility for yourself just as you want others to take responsibility.

- COMMUNICATION: Listen to understand—speak to be understood.
- EMOTION: Think before you act—act for the good of yourself and others.
- APPLICATION: Act on these GR in and out of your classroom and school.

Those of you who have read our postings over the years know that we believe that an “**umbrella metaphor**” captures the paradigm posed by Davidson, Lickona, and Khmelkov (*Education Week*, November 14, 2007) that “*students need performance character to do their best academic work; (and)...moral character to build the relationships that make for a positive learning environment. Performance character: qualities such as effort, diligence, perseverance, strong work ethic, positive attitude, ingenuity, and self-discipline. Moral character: qualities such as integrity, justice, caring, and respect—these are needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior.*”

Umbrellas have a handle and eight panels. In our metaphor, the “handle” represents the core virtues of Caring, Courage, Responsibility, Respect, Empathy, etc.

The “eight panels” of the umbrella represent Academic Achievement—Curriculum—Classroom Climate—Co-curricula Programs—Instruction—Partnerships—School Culture—Special Programs.

A sample of the “special programs” under a school district’s character education umbrella includes:

- anger management
- conflict resolution
- social-emotional learning
- emotional intelligence
- drug and alcohol use/abuse
- violence prevention
- peace education
- anti-bullying programs
- social skill development
- virtues and ethics education
- RULER
- Project Wisdom
- Fostering Purpose Project
- project-based and service learning
- VIA Institute on Character (<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>)
- citizenship (see December 2018 blog –Civics Education)
- assemblies, celebrations, award events

These special programs, either individually or in combination, have three goals: 1) the character development of students, 2) the creation of a positive, safe, and nurturing school culture, and 3) the active involvement of educators, parents and the community.