

Ways to integrate social responsibility skills into primary and secondary education

Our model of social responsibility focuses on four key components:

1. Multicultural competence, which involves knowledge of and sensitivity towards cultural identities.
2. Ethical competence, which focuses on knowledge of ethical standards and applying those standards to make ethical decisions.
3. Civic competence, which means being an informed and active local, national, and global citizen.
4. Environmental competence, which includes a concern for the well-being of the planet and practicing sustainability.

Social responsibility is an important skill that employers expect in their hires, and a crucial factor for developing ethical, just, and well-functioning societies. Employers agree that social responsibility should be taught to higher education students regardless of their area of study.¹ On a more global level, building a nation's social responsibility encourages people to be more involved in their societies and has the potential to create more caring and just communities.^{2,3}

Below are some example learning tasks to give you inspiration for how students can develop and practice social responsibility skills in the classroom.

Subject	Component of social responsibility	Learning activity
English literature	Multicultural competence	Throughout a course unit, learners read works on similar topics by authors of different nationalities. Learners then engage in a discussion around how national identities and broader cultural issues may have shaped the approach and perspectives taken by each author.
	Environmental competence	Learners read an older essay, article, or other text on an environmental issue (such as <i>Silent Spring</i> by Rachel Carson) and then compare and contrast the concerns raised in the book with the current environmentalism movement.
History	Civic competence	Learners analyze and discuss real world political advertisements. As part of the discussion, learners evaluate how likely politicians are to deliver on the promises made in the ads.
	Ethical competence	Learners complete a unit on ethical philosophers. As part of this unit, they read a case study of a modern-day ethical dilemma and determine how different philosophers might approach and understand the dilemma. They could also discuss how their own ethical beliefs are similar or different to those of the philosophers.
Language teaching	Civic competence	During a lesson about cities and how different people and organizations help the city function, learners engage in a discussion about how they could contribute to their city or community.
Maths	Environmental competence	Learners analyze data on different energy efficient products and determine which will have the biggest net positive impact.
Science	Ethical competence	Learners discuss ethical standards as they relate to responsible research practice. Learners are then presented with dilemmas and discuss how ethical standards are applied to make decisions in these situations.

¹ Hart Research Associates. (2015). *Falling short? College learning and career success*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

² Beane, J., Turner, J., Jones, D., & Lipka, R. (1981). *Long-term effects of community service programs*. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 11(2), 143–155.

³ Hyman, J. B. (2002). *Exploring social capital and civic engagement to create a framework for community building*. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4), 196–202.

These are the big ideas behind the learning activities overleaf. Use these to adapt the examples for your students, or as guidance to devise your own learning tasks.

Consider the different ways social responsibility can be demonstrated

Each of the four components of social responsibility can manifest as a set of knowledge, values, or behavior. All three aspects are important when developing social responsibility, although some may be more suited to certain instructional contexts than others.

1

Each component of social responsibility involves a core knowledge piece. To practice multiculturalism, one must have some awareness of different cultural identities. Knowing about governmental structures and current civic issues supports civic engagement.

2

Social responsibility is also reflected in one's values, such as believing in the importance of ethical behavior or caring about the well-being of the planet.

3

Lastly, social responsibility can be represented through one's actions, including working effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, practicing sustainability, or civic participation.

Teach social responsibility within authentic contexts

Many activities that support social responsibility allow students hands-on experience with authentic issues. Teaching about social responsibility in these authentic contexts helps students translate knowledge into behavioral practices.

1

Programs that enhance civic competence allow students to actively engage with their communities and political processes.

2

Many interventions supporting environmental competence involve students getting out of the classroom and experiencing nature first-hand.

3

Multicultural competence is supported by interacting with diverse groups.

4

Analyzing and discussing real world ethical dilemmas contributes to the development of ethical competence.

Use active learning strategies

Learners can also meaningfully engage with social responsibility through active learning activities.

1

Engaging in debates around ethical issues supports ethical competence. For example, given that many companies gather considerable data on their customers, students could debate what ethical obligations these companies have regarding the use of that data.

2

Analyzing case studies allows learners to think deeply about situations relevant to social responsibility that they haven't directly experienced.

3

Students can also role-play situations that involve social responsibility.

Incorporate a broad range of activities when assessing social responsibility

Because of its complexity, social responsibility can be assessed in a variety of different ways. Consider which activities are most well-suited to the specific components of social responsibility you are focusing on.

1

Knowledge of social responsibility can be assessed through written work products, such as a report on the functions of government or an analysis of an ethical dilemma case study.

2

Behavioral observation of naturally occurring or role-played activities that require social responsibility can also provide information on learners' social responsibility.

3

Learners can compose reflections or reports on experiences that address social responsibility, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Are you already incorporating social responsibility skills in your teaching? Tell us how. efficacy@pearson.com