



# Virginia Character Education Project

## Educating for Character: A Virginia Tradition

**“A nation, as a society, forms a moral person, and every member of it is personally responsible for his society.”**

**– Thomas Jefferson**

### Introduction & Background

Educating for character — the social, emotional, and ethical development of our students that is the foundation for academic achievement — has been an honored tradition since organized public schooling began in the 19th century. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This tradition continues in classrooms today as teachers show students how to learn, work, and play.

Education has always had two great goals: to foster intelligence and to encourage positive behavior. Yet, what is the best way for government to fulfill its responsibility to educate its citizens? This question has long fueled the debate on the true purpose of public education, and has driven virtually all educational development and school reform measures throughout America’s history. Character education has been a part of the educational framework from the very beginning ([www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/history.htm](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/history.htm)).

Virginia has taken major steps toward achieving both goals through the Standards of Learning (SOL) and through legislation of character development, as amended in the Code of Virginia by the Virginia Assembly in 1999.

Legislation passed by the 1999 General Assembly (§22.1-208.01) requires local school boards to establish a character education program in its schools, the aim of which is to improve the learning environment, promote student achievement, reduce disciplinary problems and develop civic-minded students of high character. The legislation also requires that the Virginia Board of Education establish criteria for such programs consistent with the provisions of the bill ([www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/CEP/codeofva.html](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/CEP/codeofva.html)).

In April 2000, the Virginia Character Education Project (VCEP) was awarded a three-year grant by the U.S. Department of Education to support the implementation of character development legislation throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/CEP/index.html>). This resource is the culmination of several years of learning and practice in the creation of an effective, successful initiative. The goal is to address all aspects of character development, to sustain a viable focus within each school, and to evaluate the outcomes. The infusion of character education into Virginia's public schools will help to ensure a safe environment for learning and aid in the development of well-educated citizens.

## Why Character Education in Virginia's Public Schools?

While the primary goal of education is student achievement, it is recognized that school climate directly impacts a student's ability to perform. The Center for the Fourth and Fifth R's reports signs of national crisis ([www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/signs\\_iv.asp](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/signs_iv.asp)). A Gallup Poll reports the issues that concern Americans most are: crime and violence; decline in ethics, moral, and family values; education; and drugs (Gallup Poll, May 2, 1998). In order for the most effective teaching and learning to take place, students and teachers must feel safe and secure in their surroundings.

Although the media would lead us to believe otherwise, schools are one of the safest places to be. Students are usually more concerned with having friends and an enjoyable environment than the possibility of experiencing violence at school.

Within Virginia, the Annual Report on Discipline, Crime and Violence is available at [www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/Discipline/datacoll/coll.htm](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/Discipline/datacoll/coll.htm). The report lists many areas such as bullying, fighting, drugs, and weapons. The discipline issues most frequently listed are tobacco, battery against other students, threats, and fighting without injury. A complete up-to-date listing by school division can be found on the VDOE *Discipline, Crime, & Violence* web page at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/>.

What causes students to be distracted at school with peer issues? Dr. Dewey Cornell, a clinical psychologist and Professor of Education in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, says there is no one reason why kids do what they do. You can view this report and other resources on the Virginia Youth Violence Project web page at <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/>.

What can schools do to help students become more responsible for themselves and more respectful of their peers? Dr. Cornell said, "No strategy is effective for all youth or all settings. Every prevention program will have youth who fail" (*Youth Violence in Prevention Works*, <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/prevention/prevention-works.htm>). There are environmental factors that strongly influence student success and mostly those factors center around a sense of belonging or connection.

Although the dropout and truancy rates have steadily declined over the past few years, there is concern over why students choose not to come to school or work toward graduation. The current Virginia rates can be found on the Department of Education webpage: [www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/Dropouts](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/Dropouts); [www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep\\_page.htm](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm).

How important is school climate on academic success? Robert Marzano in *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, says the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management. In fact, on the average, teachers who had high-quality relationships with their students had 31 percent fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and related problems over a year's time than did teachers who did not have high-quality relationships with their students.

In Virginia, characteristics of a safe school include a focus on academic achievement, positive relationships among students and staff, and a supported learning environment (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/News/violprev.html>). A comprehensive approach to character education within schools will encourage an environment of safety as well as encourage each individual to be their best.

## What is Character Education?

Some schools are said to have a nurturing environment that recognizes children and treats them as individuals; others feel authoritarian where rules are strictly enforced and hierarchical control is strong. Teaching practices, diversity, and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students contribute to school climate. Although the two terms are somewhat interchangeable, school climate refers mostly to the school's effects on students, while school culture refers more to the way teachers and other staff members work together (McBrien, J.L. and R. S. Brandt. *The Language of Learning: A Guide to Education Term*. Alexandria: ASCD, 1997).

Thomas Lickona says that character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act using societal norms (What is Character Education? [www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/ce\\_iv.asp](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/ce_iv.asp)).

Character education is the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable the learner to make informed and responsible choices. It involves a shared educational commitment that emphasizes the responsibilities and rewards of productive living in a global and diverse society. Character education enables students to come face to face with the realities of life. It encourages them to think critically and then act responsibly. Instructional materials, methods, and strategies, when developed into interdisciplinary curricular themes, empower teachers to create meaning while allowing students time for purposeful exploration and self-reflection. Character development provides a foundation

upon which we can build respect for human dignity and create twenty-first-century schools that will empower students to achieve excellence.

Simply put, it is treating others the way you want to be treated. Character development educates both hearts and minds. The social, emotional, and ethical nurturing of young people is as important as their academic achievement (Marzano, Robert, et al. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria: ASCD, 2001).

It takes place within the microcosm of the whole school environment—from the bus to the classroom to the playground and the lunchroom. When done well, character development is the true partner of academic life. The understanding and assimilation of essential character traits, such as honesty, respect, and responsibility is seamlessly woven into all aspects of the school life. In a positive school climate, there is a greater probability that students experience academic success.

Truly effective character development does not rely on one program or a pre-packaged initiative but instead on principles. Thomas Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Catherine Lewis define eleven components for the most effective and comprehensive character focus. The *Eleven Principles of Character* can be viewed at [http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/PRIN\\_III.asp](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/PRIN_III.asp). There are as many ways to create a school of character as there are schools, and each must clearly decide its mission and goals before establishing a program.

Character education does *not* amount to simply a lesson or course, a quick-fix program, or a slogan posted on the wall. It is an integral part of school life. With intentional, thoughtful character education, schools can become communities in which virtues such as responsibility; hard work, honesty and kindness are taught, expected, celebrated, and continually practiced ([www.bu.edu/education/caec/files/FAQ.htm](http://www.bu.edu/education/caec/files/FAQ.htm)).

In a true school of character, a **comprehensive** approach uses a variety of strategies as opportunities for social and emotional learning and character development. A comprehensive approach to character education, as defined by the Center for the Fourth and Fifth R's, includes creating a positive moral culture in the school, schools, communities, and parents as partners, as well as caring beyond the classroom. A visual review of this concept can be viewed at [http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/12pnt\\_iv.asp](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/12pnt_iv.asp). "Stand alone" programs can be useful **first steps** in an ongoing effort, but are emphatically not an adequate substitute for a comprehensive approach. Character development, at its best, must be integrated into every aspect of school life. There are many research-based programs that can be foundational in the development of a unique and effective focus for schools.

Although many schools do begin with a specific program, they find that their needs quickly outpace a particular program's parameters. As a school develops the initiative, elements are added or modified, depending on the nature of the school and its population. For example, as part of their character development initiative, schools may use strategies such

as peer mediation, class or morning meetings, mentoring, and service learning. Above all, an initiative must be flexible enough in its design and implementation to allow for modification and fine-tuning. As character education becomes an integral part of the school, it is integrated into all aspects of school life.

## How Do I Begin?

An understanding of how effective character education is demonstrated within the school structure is paramount in defining or expanding the current focus. Character education is not an "add on" to the existing curriculum. To be effective, it should be integrated into all aspects of the school culture. This includes curriculum, athletics, service, classroom management, and anything else that affects the school climate. Do teachers have time to teacher character education? See Thomas Lickona's answer at <http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=1734>.

Schools may define their character education focus by reflecting on what is important within the school and by evaluating the needs of students. Some schools focus on specific traits that are defined areas of need. Other schools focus on prescribed traits that either the local school board or administration has identified. A sample of approaches from Virginia schools can be seen in Stafford ([http://www.pen.k12.va.us/Div/Stafford/instr.html#\\_anchor16619347](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/Div/Stafford/instr.html#_anchor16619347)), Fairfax ([www.fcps.edu/DSSSE/CharacterEd/CaringCommunity?ppt/sld001.htm](http://www.fcps.edu/DSSSE/CharacterEd/CaringCommunity?ppt/sld001.htm)), and Albemarle Counties (<http://k12.albemarle.org/NewHome/NewPages/Departments/charactered.htm>).

In order to design a character education focus that meets the needs of your particular school, it may be beneficial to begin with a needs assessment. Examples of those include: (1) Eleven Principles Survey (EPS) of Character Education Effectiveness (<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/eps.htm>) and (2) SCHOOL AS A CARING COMMUNITY PROFILE (<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/sccp-II.asp>). Look for all the things you are doing right – things that make a difference in the lives of students. Look for areas of growth by focusing on consistent areas of concern. For example, if a majority of students do not complete assignments, try to discover why. Is it a lack of understanding, irresponsibility or apathy?

All adults should accept the responsibility to guide and model appropriate behaviors – to build meaningful relationships that contribute to the common good. Universal buy-in and acceptance are critical first steps in all character development initiatives.

Bring everyone that has a stake in the outcomes together to discuss what you would like your school to look like. This includes administrators, teachers, parents, and especially your students. Adult must assume the responsibility to become role models. They must take advantage of opportunities to influence the students with whom they interact. Schools that undertake effective character development initiatives need leaders who champion the effort. Sometimes these leaders are teachers within their own classroom.

Staff development is essential for every character development initiative. Staff is trained in workshops with experts in implementation; create in-house training programs, provide time for reflection and hold retreats. Every school staff's development—and this includes support staff, as well—begins with a commitment towards developing a true school of character. Viewing the teacher as a caregiver, model, and mentor is a beginning point ([www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/12.htm](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/12.htm)).

A school that devotes time to staff reflection on moral matters helps to ensure that it operates with integrity. Through faculty meetings and informal conversations, a reflective staff regularly asks questions. What character building experiences is the school already providing for its students? What negative moral experiences (e.g., peer cruelty, student cheating, adult disrespect of students, littering of the grounds) is the school currently failing to address? What important moral experiences (e.g., cooperative learning, school and community service, opportunities to learn about and interact with people from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds) is the school now omitting? What school practices are at odds with its desire to develop a caring school community? Reflection of this nature is an indispensable condition for developing the positive culture of a school.

Student leadership is also a critical component. When students assume developmentally appropriate roles in leading the character development effort, other students are more likely to buy-in to the initiatives. When invested in a process as co-creators, students will have pride of both authorship and ownership. As with adults, students should be careful to understand the impact and influence they have on younger students within the building.

It may be useful to establish a character education team from a variety of stakeholders, including administrators, counselors, students, parents, community members, and teachers. This group assumes responsibility for planning, implementing, and supporting the character focus. They become the character filter of the school.

Few parents need to be convinced that children need to learn and see what good character is. Parents are the first and primary moral educator, but the school community also desires that citizens know appropriate life skills. Schools that reach out to families and include them in character-building efforts greatly enhance their success with students.

They take advantage of every opportunity to communicate with families about goals and activities regarding character education (<http://cce.zzweb.com/family/may.php3>). Parent representation on the character education team builds greater trust between home and school.

The issue of parental involvement has become an accepted critical factor in a child's success in school. When dealing with adverse family situations, schools should make a special effort to reach out to subgroups of parents who may not feel part of the school community. Schools can make a difference in the lives of students coming from unpleasant situations.

When parents become school partners and have a committed stake in a school's success, everybody wins. Parent and community partnership is specifically addressed at <http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/2.htm>.

Schools can add to the character education of a child, but theirs should not be the only input. That's an unfair burden. As far as possible, involve parents and other community members. Schools and families enhance the effectiveness of their partnership by recruiting the help of the wider community in promoting character development. Bring these adults—including members of local service clubs—into the classroom to talk with students about their service activities, and about what service and citizenship mean in their own lives. Don't just bring the community into the school—bring the school into the community and get your kids out beyond the school walls.

Community participation and support is an added benefit in achieving success. There are a variety of ways that the community can get involved and each school should determine the level of appropriate participation. Career Fairs, mentoring programs, and class speakers are just a few ideas for business partnerships. A special emphasis on work ethics and job integrity directly connects business partners to the character focus.

As much as possible, bring adults into the classroom to talk with students about their lives and experiences as they relate to curriculum. Encourage these adults to discuss what service and citizenship means in their lives and how it affects day-to-day decisions. These activities offer a real life experience for students to see what good character looks like outside the school building.

## **What Does Character Education Look Like?**

When you walk into a school where character is a seamless part of the school environment, you know it—and although initiatives may differ in scope and intent, all demonstrate a shared commitment to promoting positive traits, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and honesty. Suggestions for creating a positive school climate can be viewed at <http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/3.htm>.

Teachers model the behavior in their interactions with students and others that they'd like to instill—and the students learn these core ethics, deeply care about them, and demonstrate them through cooperation with others, in their behavior toward peers and staff, through student leadership and in service to others. There is no one particular formula, but all schools dedicated to character have a school wide commitment to infusing character into every part of their curriculum and culture. All adults are concerned with the well being of the whole child – their social, emotional, and intellectual intelligences. There is an expectation with accountability for all the community members to uphold an appropriate standard of conduct.

Schools of character recognize that character development is as highly prized as academic excellence. Good character is acknowledged in a variety of ways. Some schools give

character updates to families or recognize positive student behavior on the morning announcements.

Character education can be seen when young people exhibit traits needed for successful living. They learn the power of choice and begin to understand that with a greater sense of freedom comes a greater sense of responsibility. They learn to appreciate the qualities of others and understand that respect for oneself is connected to respect for others. Character education looks like students and adults functioning as a community.

A school of character reflects a civil, caring, and just society. In this environment, rather than simply waiting for opportunities to arise, the school staff takes deliberate steps with an intentional and active approach for developing character, drawing wherever possible on practices shown by research to be effective. More information on whole school strategies can be viewed at <http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/school.htm>.

All children and adolescents have a need to feel safe, to belong, and to contribute. When these needs are met, students are more likely to internalize the values and expectations of the groups that meet these needs.

Likewise, if staff members and parents experience mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation in their relationships with each other, they are more likely to develop the capacity to promote those values in students. In a caring school community, the daily life of classrooms and all other parts of the school environment (e.g., the corridors, cafeteria, playground, school bus, front office, and teachers' lounge) are imbued with a climate of concern and respect for others.

## **How Do I Integrate Character Education into What I'm Already Doing?**

In all grades, character development can be linked to academic development. You can structure character education to fit into standard curricula, especially in language arts, social studies, civics, visual arts, and life skills. Students can practice writing, doing research, reading, brainstorming, thinking critically, public speaking, and communicating through the visual arts. They can learn the importance of public participation and gain experience in reflecting, working with others, honoring diverse views, taking responsibility, and setting and managing goals. And with a service component in your character education, even more opportunities open up to teach responsibility and caring. More suggestions on classroom strategies can be viewed at [http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/12pnt\\_iv.asp#classroom](http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/12pnt_iv.asp#classroom).

The most effective way to integrate character education is to create a positive and caring climate in the school. Teachers should realize that students have a strong desire to belong and be a participating member of the school and classroom. There should be plenty of opportunities where all students can find success – academics, athletics, service, clubs,

leadership, and fine arts. For more information on teaching values through the curriculum, visit <http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/7.htm>.

In order to keep the explanation as concise as possible, this project will discuss three main avenues for character education integration – curriculum, community, and connection. **Curriculum** is the subjects taught at an educational institution, or the elements taught in a particular subject. Simply put, it includes everything academic that we do in schools. **Climate** involves the prevailing influence or environmental conditions characterizing a group or period. It includes everything we do to provide a safe and orderly environment. **Connection** involves people who are influential and to whom you are connected in some way, as in family or friendship. This involves all the relationships within the school – adult-to-adult, adult to student, student to student. Curriculum, Climate, and Connection are evident and operational in a successful school.

## Curriculum

Although the challenges of meeting the requirements of Virginia’s Standards of Learning tests are daunting, teachers can provide a compelling curriculum that helps students succeed in their studies and feel an empowering sense of competence and autonomy. To view sample lessons for all levels, visit <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/ce/strat-index.html>. There are several approaches to curriculum integration of character education. Additional help can be viewed at [www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/char\\_ed/grants/Frameworks/three.htm](http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/char_ed/grants/Frameworks/three.htm).

Students come to school with diverse skills, interests and needs, and an academic program that helps all students succeed will be one in which the content and learning methods are sophisticated enough to engage all learners. A meaningful curriculum includes active teaching and learning methods such as cooperative learning, problem-solving approaches, and experience-based projects. These approaches increase student autonomy by appealing to students’ interests, providing them with opportunities to think creatively and test their ideas, and fostering a sense of "voice and choice"—having a say in decisions and plans that affect them.

Effective teachers of character seek vital and natural connections between the academic content they wish to teach and the character qualities they wish to develop. These "character connections" can take many forms, such as addressing current ethical issues in science, debating historical practices and decisions, and discussing specific character traits in literature. When teachers bring to the forefront the character dimension of the curriculum, they enhance the relevance of subject matter to students’ natural interests and questions, and in the process, increase the active student engagement that contributes to achievement.

If you are just beginning the process of formally integrating character education into the curriculum, start with a lesson you already have prepared. Find connections between the content and a trait, such as respect, honesty, and fairness. Consider teaching strategies that encourage cooperative learning and other group activities. Once you have seen how much sense it makes to focus what you already do around character traits, you will want to make the connections even more often.

## Climate

The most important determinant of a positive classroom climate is classroom management. This includes everything from the class rules and procedures to the way homework is turned in. The main components for successful classroom management include an engaging and effective curriculum, the expectation for students to behave like responsible citizens, and the teacher being a good role model. Rules and consequences are used to develop self-control and ability to reason. According to Dewey Cornell in *What Works in Youth Violence Prevention* <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu/prevention/prevention-works.htm> there are proven means where schools can reduce youth violence. They include conflict resolution training, social competence development, and bullying education.

## Connection

Positive relationships within the classroom and school provide students a sense of belonging and stronger sense of involvement. Students learn to respect others by developing empathy, forming caring relationships, helping to create community, hearing illustrative and inspirational stories, and reflecting on life experiences. In the ethical as in the intellectual domain, all students are constructive learners; they learn best by doing. Students need many and varied opportunities to apply values such as compassion, responsibility, and fairness in everyday interactions and discussions as well as through service. By grappling with real-life challenges, such as how to divide the labor in a cooperative learning group, how to reach consensus in a class meeting, how to reduce fights, or how to carry out a service learning project and reflecting on these experiences, students develop practical understanding of the requirements of cooperating with others and giving of oneself. Through repeated moral experiences, students develop and practice the skills and behavioral habits that make up the action side of character.

## Here are a Few Tips - Elementary School - Curriculum

Integrate character education into what you are already teaching. Many stories in children's literature, for example, reflect lessons in virtues. Focus on specific traits clearly visible in characters' lives. Aesop's Fables are good examples of stories with morals. Do not assume the students understand the moral of the story. Talk about and relate situations to their lives and present day. Character education fits well with social studies and health topics. Accepting individual differences, showing courage, developing citizenship, taking responsibility for oneself, and making positive choices are skills normally taught at the elementary level. Sometimes all that is needed is a reminder to focus on the character aspects of your lessons.

### EXAMPLES

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

<http://tigger.uic.edu/~Inucci/MoralEd/practices/unitcharlie.html>

A list of children's books that link to character  
[http://www.uensd.org/USOE\\_Pages/Char\\_ed/resc/bib1-6.html](http://www.uensd.org/USOE_Pages/Char_ed/resc/bib1-6.html)

Children's Literature and Character Development  
<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/newsletters/2001-Fall-blue.pdf> (p. 1-3)

Teaching Character through the classics p. 4-5  
<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/newsletters/2003-Fall-blue1.pdf>

## **Here are a Few Tips - Elementary School – Climate**

Talking about good character traits fits naturally into the scheme of setting up a successful primary classroom. Instead of just assigning chores, use the classroom job chart to teach about responsibility and teamwork. Class meetings, morning meetings, or circle time may be used to allow students opportunities to discuss respect and responsibility, as well as learn appropriate skills for conflict and problem solving. Recess and game time are always good times to discuss ideas of fairness and cooperation. Teaching strategies such as cooperative learning and graphic organizers allow students to find new areas of expertise and expression.

### **EXAMPLES**

Cooperative Learning <http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/8.htm>

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program <http://www.esrnational.org/es/rccp.htm>

Graphic Organizers - Ed Helper.com  
[http://www.edhelper.com/teachers/graphic\\_organizers.htm](http://www.edhelper.com/teachers/graphic_organizers.htm)

## **Here are a Few Tips - Elementary School – Connection**

Talk to your students about opportunities and challenge them to find out for themselves what problems their community needs to solve. Take them out for a look-see, even if it's just for a walk around the local neighborhood, or, for the little ones, maybe just the blocks that face their schoolyard. The idea is to help them see values not in the abstract but as the means to real change. If you are able to do a service project, help the kids develop a plan for something that they can see makes a difference. That makes them stakeholders in the community, people who care about what happens there. This is the essence of good citizenship.

### **EXAMPLES**

National Service Learning Clearinghouse <http://www.servicelearning.org/>

## Here are a Few Tips - Middle & High School – Curriculum

When schools decide to do something about character education, they often look outside the building for solutions. Some buy materials, they put up posters, but may neglect to use readily available resources such as stories of the founding fathers, how civil rights have developed, the lessons we learn from our history, and those who have made a contribution to the society. Students also learn from stories of Benedict Arnold, Enron, and the Great Depression. An intentional approach to include character traits within the high school curriculum may include such things as studying environmental issues, the use of the Internet, and having integrity during experimentation.

### EXAMPLES

Achievement Curriculum Center

<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/pagegen/curriculum/>

Ethics and Statistics (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade)

<http://tigger.uic.edu/~Inucci/MoralEd/practices/unitstatistics.html>

Peers and Fairness PE (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>)

<http://tigger.uic.edu/~Inucci/MoralEd/practices/unitpeers.html>

Hammurabi's Code (6<sup>th</sup>)

<http://tigger.uic.edu/~Inucci/MoralEd/practices/unithammurabis.html>

Finding Heroes in Art

[http://myhero.com/teachersroom/teachersguide\\_findingheroesart.asp](http://myhero.com/teachersroom/teachersguide_findingheroesart.asp)

The Pledge and the Contract Lesson MS & HS

<http://www.activecitizenship.org/pledge.html>

## Here are a Few Tips - Middle & High School - Climate

There are many ways in which secondary school students can value and assimilate character development in their daily lives: through mentorship, peer mediation, and service learning.

### EXAMPLES

Conflict resolution

[http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/ed\\_topics/el200110\\_singh.html](http://www.ascd.org/cms/objectlib/ascdframeset/index.cfm?publication=http://www.ascd.org/ed_topics/el200110_singh.html)

Teaching Conflict Resolution

<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/11.htm>

Creating a Democratic Classroom Environment  
<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/wheel/6.htm>

Athletics - Coaches Checklist p.6  
<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/newsletters/2003-Fall-blue1.pdf>

## Here are a Few Tips - Middle & High School - Connection

Link character education with active service and citizenship in the school and community. Give kids the chance to put their values into action on some real issue they care about. Service makes character education socially relevant; kids learn how values work in the world. Service projects also give kids the chance to learn and practice important life skills such as teamwork, communication, and other social skills, and to experience success in a real-world task. This raises self-esteem, and gives kids more confidence to recognize and use their abilities to make good decisions—an important prevention goal. **Service Learning** is a teaching / learning method that connects meaningful community service with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility. This method is a powerful way to make the principles and process of our democracy meaningful to students, by giving them guided practice in responsible citizenship. Opportunities can be offered to encourage responsibility, compassion, and good citizenship. Research has shown that student involvement in community projects increases the likelihood of their involvement in voluntarism as adults. Students usually have a desire to belong and feel like they are a contributing part of the classroom. Some schools use a mentor approach, which allows each student to have an opportunity to connect more closely with someone in the building and to have a voice in expressing their needs.

### EXAMPLES

Service learning 1+1 is more than 2  
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/24/81/2481.htm>

National Service learning  
<http://www.servicelearning.org/>

Monticello High School Mentor Program  
<http://www.k12albemarle.org/Monticello/Community/Community.htm>

## Taking Time to Reflect – for teachers and students

The art and practice of reflection—no matter how busy you are or how many tests and quizzes fill the day—is not a frill. It's a necessity, and allows you and your students the time to put everything into context and perspective. It makes character education real and lasting.

Kids need to put positive attitudes and behavior in the context of a value system that makes sense to them—one that has enough perceived merit for them to take it seriously as guidance for their lives.

They need to think hard about the attitudes, behaviors, and qualities of character that are being presented to them. They need to argue about them and test them, not just recite them. Ask questions that will lead them to truly ponder what they've learned.

We all want to be able to look at ourselves in the mirror and know that who we are and what we're doing matters, that we're not just marking time. This is a particularly pressing question for youth, as they look out at the world and wonder about their place in it. Getting kids to explore meaning, as part of their reflection is a very important thing. Don't be afraid to do this, and to do it from your own experience. The kids will love to hear your stories and will learn from them. It will push them to more reflection and give them something to bounce off of in answering the questions for themselves. And it will give you added credibility with them.

Discuss with them what they care about, what, if anything, they'd be willing to commit to and work hard at. Keep asking them to go deeper with their answers. For a lot of kids, talking about questions of meaning with you may be the only opportunity they get to explore these questions with a caring adult. Your understanding and time and ear and honesty could be tremendously important to them.

In this confusing time in our lives and history, students need to know that every one of them is on this planet to lead a life with meaning—every one of them will have unique opportunities to be of service, somewhere, somehow. A successful life is about spotting those opportunities and acting on them.

Urge your students to become their own heroes by reaching out to others to help solve problems they see, in acting with courage and compassion every day of their lives. Urge them to choose to let his or her life be as important as it needs to be.

Exploring character development is something you do with your students and colleagues. It is a lot to ask of you if you do it well. As an educator you may have to sail into unfamiliar waters, confronting issues of values and ethics from your students that you may struggle with in your own life. You may have to handle conflicts with others who resist change, or who don't see the merit in character development that you do.

You may have to accept significant expenditures of your own time. But the rewards are immeasurable, and the task will be one of the most worthwhile you will ever undertake in your life.

Any of you who are parents know that character is very hard to teach as a theory. Attitudinal and behavioral lessons are more likely to stick if we go beyond hearing or reading words and concepts, and actually put those lessons to work in our own lives. Exercising compassion, for example, gets that message home a lot better than learning about compassion, or reciting that compassion is good.

## How Do I Know It's Working?

There are formal means to evaluate the effectiveness of your character education focus and there are also informal methods where you observe your students. Character traits are seen as “soft skills” therefore, a written evaluation may be difficult to measure actual results. We also acknowledge that many factors influence students each day – some negative and some positive. It is difficult to ensure that all change has come from the influence of character education.

In order to see if your focus is working with your particular students, it is imperative to have certain observable behaviors and/or attitudes that you were hoping to change. Then simply ask these questions about your students:

- Do they know right from wrong
- Do their actions show a respect for others
- Do they work well cooperatively
- Do they influence others in a positive way

These same questions can be used when evaluating the success of a school wide program. Is the school becoming a more caring community? Is the entire school staff working on being a positive role model and friend to students?

In order to evaluate the character education focus using a more definitive approach, some schools use data on attendance, suspensions, or specific behaviors, such as fighting, bullying, etc.

The true success of all character development is seen when misbehavior is changed and when a stronger sense of respect and responsibility is expressed through actions.

There are research-based evaluations available if a more formal approach is needed.

### EXAMPLES

Eleven Principles Survey (EPS) of Character Education Effectiveness  
<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/eps.htm>

The School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II)  
<http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/sccp-II.asp>

## FAIRNESS

# "DON'T JUDGE AN EGG BY ITS SHELL"

**Suggested Grade Level: K-2**

**Time Frame:** 30 minutes to 1 hour

**SOL Correlation(s):** Social Studies K.8, 1.10, 2.10

Science K.1, K.4, 1.1, 2.1

English K.2, K.11, 1.2, 1.12, 2.3, 2.11

### **Description/Purpose**

To explore whether or not it is fair to judge people or things based on appearance only.

### **Materials**

One hard-boiled brown egg and one hard-boiled white egg for each group  
Drawing paper

### **Procedure**

1. Discuss the two eggs. Pose the following questions:
  - How many of you have eaten an egg like this? (Show white egg.)
  - How many of you have eaten an egg like this? (Show brown egg.)
  - Which egg would you rather eat and why?
2. Divide the class into small groups. (Each group needs one white and one brown hard-boiled egg.) Have students peel the egg and discuss its appearance. Allow students time to taste both eggs.
3. Bring students back to whole group and discuss findings.
  - Did the eggs taste different?
  - Did you think that they would taste the same or different? Why?

- Was it fair to think that you wouldn't like one because it looked different?
  - Did you ever decide not to play with someone because he or she looked or acted different?
  - Was it fair to make that decision before you got to know that person?
4. Conclude the activity by writing a sentence starter, such as "I can be fair to others by \_\_\_\_\_." Have students complete the sentence and draw a picture.

### **Thematic Correlations**

Martin Luther King, Jr., Baby Animals, Life Cycles, Layers of the Earth, and Civil Rights

### **Teacher Notes**

- For younger students it might be good to have the sentence starter pre-printed on the paper.
- A good book to read before or after this lesson would be The Brand New Kid by Katie Couric.

# KINDNESS

## "KINDNESS CARDS"

**Suggested Grade Level:** K-5

**Time Frame:** 45 minutes

**SOL Correlation(s):** English 3.1, 3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.7, 5.1, 5.3, 5.8

### **Description/Purpose**

Similes and metaphors will be used to create cards thanking people for their kindness. Students will learn that similes and metaphors are concrete examples of abstract concepts, such as kindness.

### **Materials**

Construction paper

Crayons, markers

### **Procedure**

1. Discuss acts of kindness, which students have experienced. Ask students to share similes and metaphors that illustrate kindness.  
(Example: He was as kind as a puppy bringing his master's slippers.)
2. Ask students to create a "Thank You" card to give to a person that has been kind to them.
3. The card should include a paragraph that uses at least one simile or metaphor to illustrate the kindness the person has shown toward the student and how this kindness affected the student.
4. Share the cards with the class.

### **Extensions**

- Can be used for Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Valentine's Day.

# COURAGE

## "JAMESTOWN ACROSTIC"

**Suggested Grade Level:** 4

**Time Frame:** 30-45 min.

**SOL Correlation(s):** Social Studies VS.3  
English 4.1, 4.2, 4.7

### **Description/Purpose**

Using examples from the Jamestown settlement, students will recognize courage in others and in them.

### **Materials**

Acrostic poem worksheet

Pencil

Prior knowledge of Jamestown

### **Procedure**

1. Identify and discuss examples of courage shown by the settlers of Jamestown.
2. Discuss and compare how students have shown acts of courage in their own lives.
3. Each student will complete an acrostic poem using the name Jamestown. Each letter will represent an act of courage the settlers of Jamestown portrayed. Use one-word answers or phrases.
4. Share acrostics with the class. Display on classroom bulletin board.

### **Teacher Notes**

Students may also use their names in an acrostic poem to show acts of courage they have done. This activity can also be used as a culminating activity for the study of Jamestown.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

J \_\_\_\_\_

A \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_

S \_\_\_\_\_

T \_\_\_\_\_

O \_\_\_\_\_

W \_\_\_\_\_

N \_\_\_\_\_

# ***HONESTY***

***“HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY”***

**Suggested Grade Level:** 6-8

**Time Frame:** 1-2 class periods

**SOL Correlation(s):** Math 6.1, 7.4, 8.3

## Description/Purpose

Students will use sale ads to determine the correctness of percentages and sale prices. Students will discuss ethics in advertising and commercials.

## **Materials**

Sale ads  
Paper and pencil  
Calculator

## **Procedure**

1. Each student will need five or more sale ads showing the percentage off as well as the regular price and sale price.
2. Students will use the calculator to determine if the sale price is correct, based on the percentage off.
3. The teacher will facilitate a discussion on honesty and how businesses sometimes use false or deceptive advertising to attract customers. Some questions to consider are as follows: What are some ways that advertisements and commercials have been less than honest? How do you feel when you have been “conned” by a deceptive ad or commercial? Is it ever acceptable to “stretch the truth” in advertising? Who gets hurt by deceptive advertising? How will good math skills protect the consumer from being cheated?

## **Extension**

- Students can look for examples of false or deceptive advertising outside of the classroom -- in their newspapers, on television, on the radio or in mail flyers.
  - Students may role-play situations related to deceptive advertising and the use of math skills to reveal the deception.

## **Teacher Notes**

An example of false or deceptive advertising could include the carpet cleaning ads where the ad offers three rooms for a certain price and the small print states the total square feet, which is often smaller than the average three rooms!

# DEPENDABILITY

## "ARCHITECTURAL SIMULATION"

**Suggested Grade Level:** 8

**Time Frame:** 2 days

**SOL Correlation(s):** WHI.5, WHI.6, WHI.7,  
WHI.9, Art 8.11

### Description/Purpose

Through simulating architectural structures, students will see how the final structure is dependent upon each part carrying its share of the weight.

### Materials

Prints of different types of architectural structures

Post and lintel - The Parthenon

Dome - Pantheon

Arch - Roman Aqueduct

Barrel Vault - St. Sernin

Flying Buttress - Chartres, Notre Dame

### Procedure

1. Using 3 groups of two students, demonstrate the post and lintel. The first group stands with their arms spread out and fingertips touching. The second lay their arms on top of each other. The third group interlocks their arms. Which do you think will be strongest? Demonstrate by adding weighted books to each? Which holds the most weight? How are the two parts dependent on each other?
2. With blocks demonstrate the arch. What happens if the keystone is removed? Have to students lean together and hold a large ball over their heads? What would happen if the ball were removed? What would happen if one person did not push or one pushed too much?
3. Using their bodies, students get together and form the other architectural structures. Look at prints of the structures in architecture.
4. Discuss what you have learned about dependability. How is the structure dependent upon each individual part carrying its weight? How are the small parts

and small jobs just as important to the whole? What happens when one part doesn't do its job? How can this relate to working together and working in groups? How important is it to be able to depend upon the others in your group? How is every job important?

## **Extensions**

- Work in groups to build structures using blocks, balsa wood, toothpicks and marshmallows or straws.
- In art, draw architectural structures in perspective.
- In history, follow the development of architecture from *Classical Greece* through the *Gothic* period. Make a time line.

# ***PATIENCE***

## **"I HAVE A DREAM"**

**Suggested Grade Level:** 6-8

**Time Frame:** 1½-2 hours

**SOL Correlation(s):** History USII.3, USII.8; Civics  
CE.3, CE.4;  
English 6.8, 7.8, 8.4, 8.5

### **Description/Purpose**

Students will realize the importance of patience and perseverance in order to see a dream fulfilled.

### **Materials**

Copy of Martin Luther King's speech, "I have a dream"

Paper

Pen/pencil

### **Procedures**

1. Read Martin Luther King's speech, "I have a dream" out loud to the class.
2. Discuss with students how Martin Luther King and other African Americans had to be patient to see their "dream" fulfilled.
3. Ask students if they think it was worth the perseverance and patience endured by many African Americans to see their dream fulfilled.
4. Discuss with students the importance of patience and perseverance to see a dream come true.
5. Have students write their own "I have a dream" speech of something they want to see changed in the world.

### **Extension**

Students may wish to present their speeches orally to the class.

# ***FAIRNESS***

## **"LA JUSTICIA"**

**Suggested Grade Level:** Spanish, Levels 1-5

**Time Frame:** 7 days

**SOL Correlation(s):** N/A

### **Description/Purpose**

The students will act out a mock trial in the target language and demonstrate their understanding of fairness by coming to a decision regarding the trial after listening to all evidence presented.

#### *Materials*

Spanish Courtroom Vocabulary

Case to Argue

Judge's Robe & Gavel

Desks to put together for defense, prosecution, judge and jury

Props (evidence supporting the case)

#### *Procedure*

1. Teacher will introduce the word for fairness in Spanish. (La justicia). The teacher will pose the question: ¿Por que es importante tener justicia? (Why is it important to have fairness?) The students will answer this question in their journals. The class will discuss answers in Spanish and places in the community where it is important and necessary to be fair. The teacher (if not mentioned by students) will state that one place it is important to be fair is in a courtroom. The class will brainstorm why. (Day 1)

2. After discussing fairness from a courtroom perspective, the class will read a selection in Spanish about a trial without an ending. Class will learn relevant courtroom vocabulary. (Day 2)
3. After reading the story, the class will decide characters: Who is defense, prosecution, jury and judge. The characters will have time to prepare their cases. The jury and judge will be sequestered so that they can be impartial, or fair. (Days 3 & 4)
4. The case will be acted out in the target language. The jury and judge will come to a decision. (Days 5 & 6)
5. After the trial, the class will debrief the activity discussing fairness. (Day 7)

Teacher Notes

Can be adapted to any language

Extends student vocabulary and reading skills for Spanish literature

## **Thematic Correlations**

Social studies

English

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

### **"FROM WALDEN, OR LIFE IN THE WOODS BY: HENRY DAVID THOREAU"**

Suggested Grade Level: 11

Time Frame: 45 min.

SOL Correlation(s): 11.3

#### **Description/Purpose**

To explore the concept of personal responsibility as it involves the individual and the environment in which he/she lives by reflecting on Henry David Thoreau's writing and its influence on environmental awareness

#### **Materials**

Class text: from *Walden, of Life in the Woods*

#### **Procedure**

1. After reading excerpts from *Walden, of Life in the Woods*, discuss with students the relationship Thoreau developed with his environment as a result of his seclusion.
2. Create a list of the responsibilities and benefits this type of relationship involves.
3. Encourage students to reflect on this list in connection with their own lives. Break into small groups for discussion and charge each group to record the highlights of their discussion. Then each group will share their thoughts with the class and discuss them.
4. Read the excerpt from "Heaven Is Under Our Feet" by Don Henley and discuss the influence of Thoreau on modern issues related to the environment and self-reliance.

#### **Thematic Correlations**

American history and science

#### **Extensions**

- Visit the Thoreau Institute at <http://www.ti.org/index.html>.
- Read and discuss articles concerning current environmental issues.

## *ALL WORDS*

### **"AMERICANS OF CHARACTER"**

**Suggested Grade Level:** 11, 12

**Time Frame:** 1 class period

**SOL Correlation(s):** Government

#### **Description/Purpose**

To identify ordinary Americans who exhibit good character and tell about them using the 5 W's of newspaper reporting

#### **Materials**

Daily newspaper

"Americans of Character" worksheet

#### **Procedure**

1. The teacher leads a discussion with students on the meaning of various character traits. (Worksheet identifies the twelve Stafford County Citizenship Education Words of the Month)
2. Students name famous people who have shown these traits.
3. The teacher explains to students that Americans who are not well known exhibit these traits everyday. The public just does not always hear about their actions. One way the public does hear about ordinary people exhibiting good character is through the newspaper.
4. The teacher distributes a daily newspaper and an "Americans of Character Worksheet" to each student.
5. Students select someone in the newspaper who has shown good character and complete the worksheet answering the 5 W's.

#### **Thematic Correlations**

English

# AMERICANS OF CHARACTER

Name of Person \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth/Death \_\_\_\_\_

(If available)

Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Page Number \_\_\_\_\_

## WHERE?

Important places in his/her life.

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WHO? Important people in his/her life. Why Important?

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## WHEN?

Important dates and times

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---

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## WHAT?

Important contributions

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other important and interesting facts:

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Check the qualities of a good citizen that you feel are descriptive of:

1. \_\_\_ Fairness
2. \_\_\_ Responsibility
3. \_\_\_ Honesty
4. \_\_\_ Kindness
5. \_\_\_ Courage
6. \_\_\_ Respect
7. \_\_\_ Perseverance
8. \_\_\_ Cooperation
9. \_\_\_ Dependability
10. \_\_\_ Forgiveness
11. \_\_\_ Patriotism
12. \_\_\_ Patience

## WHY?

What makes you think so?

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