

Character Education by Design

A Blueprint for Successful District and School Initiatives

Published by the Maryland State Department of Education

Funded through the Partnerships in Character Education Grant,
Title 4, Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Dunbar Brooks, President, Maryland State Board of Education
Martin O'Malley, Governor

JoAnne L. Carter, Deputy State Superintendent
Office of Instruction and Academic Acceleration

Ann E. Chafin, Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Student, Family, and School Support

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs.

For inquiries related to departmental policy, contact the Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch, Maryland State Department of Education, 200 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. 410.767.0433 (voice) 410.767.0431 (fax) 410.333.6442 (TTY/TDD)

For more information about the contents of this document, contact Paula McCoach at 410.767.0307.

Copyright 2007 Maryland State Department of Education

Character Education by Design: A Blueprint for Successful District
and School Initiatives

Copyright 2007 Maryland State Department of Education

Foreword by Paula McCoach, Specialist, Character Education,
Maryland State Department of Education

Introduction by Dr. Philip Fitch Vincent, Director of the Character
Development Group

Published by the Maryland State Department of Education

Funded through the Partnerships in Character Education Grant,
Title 4, Elementary and Secondary Education Act

For the students of Maryland

Contents

Contributors	viii
Foreword by Paula McCoach	ix
Introduction by Philip Fitch Vincent	1
Principles Checklist	13
Building a Districtwide Character Education Initiative	17
1. Character education requires deliberate planning and implementation.....	18
2. A district office committee directs the districtwide character education initiative.....	19
3. A district character education action plan defines the goals and objectives of the district’s character education initiative.....	22
4. The district and its schools base character education initiatives on data.	24
5. The district office and schools share a common character language.....	25
6. The district Master Plan includes the character education initiative.....	28
7. The district character committee and the district character coordinator work with individual schools to ensure character education develops and grows.....	29
8. The district office coordinates regular staff development in character education for school and district staff.....	31
9. Sufficient, continued district funding makes school character education initiatives possible.....	33

10. The district office ensures district-level and school staffs have the time they need to implement character education initiatives.	34
11. Curriculum coordinators identify connections to character education, or “teachable moments,” in their subject matter.	36
12. Service-learning connects with character education at the district level.	37
13. The positive behavior initiative incorporates character education.	38
14. Parent involvement strengthens the district’s character initiative.	40
15. A districtwide character education newsletter highlights effective strategies and successful schools.	41
16. Partnerships with businesses and community organizations support character activities and expand character development into the community.	42
17. Visual character displays represent a clear direction of the district initiative.	45
18. The district recognizes schools with exemplary character education initiatives.	46
19. Periodic infusions of new strategies revitalize the character education initiative.	48
20. District public relations and news coverage highlight the character education initiative.	50

Starting and Sustaining Character Education

Initiatives in Schools. 53

1. All adults in the school are committed to modeling and teaching good character.	54
2. A committee representing all stakeholders directs the school’s character education initiative.	57
3. A character education action plan is an integral part of the school improvement plan.	59
4. The core of the character education initiative focuses on relationships.	61

5. Character education is connected to the curriculum; teachers of all subjects take advantage of “teachable moments” that relate to character.	64
6. The character education efforts are clearly visible throughout the school.	67
7. Morning meetings put character education into practice by encouraging adults and students to share and respect each other’s social and emotional needs.	69
8. Morning announcements reinforce the character education initiative.	71
9. Partnerships with businesses and communities support school and community character-building efforts.	74
10. School assemblies emphasize and recognize good character.	79
11. A positive behavior initiative supports the character education initiative.	81
12. Service-learning and reflection are a part of the school’s character education initiative.	85
Involving Parents in Character Education	89
1. Effective school-parent communication facilitates the character education process.	93
2. Parents/volunteers are trained to promote the character initiative throughout the school.	95
3. The parent involvement program includes parent forums, school social activities, volunteerism, and parent education workshops.	97
Evaluating Character Education Initiatives	101
Resources.	105
Appendix A: 20 Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character	109
Appendix B: Evaluation Instruments.	114

Contributors

P. Brigid Carmichael, Harford County Public Schools

Kerrin E. Cavanaugh, Charles County Public Schools

Jennifer W. Elsis, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Crystal L. Gallagher, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

John M. Jurchak, Frederick County Public Schools

Leslie Amina Gyau, Montgomery County Public Schools

Tracey L.C. Klug, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Paula McCoach, Maryland State Department of Education

Brian K. Muffoletto, Baltimore County Public Schools

Laurie A. Namey, Harford County Public Schools

Sarah Patterson, Montgomery County Public Schools

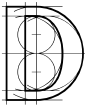
Carole Peacock, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Timothy J. Rossini, Montgomery County Public Schools

Christy W. Scott, Somerset County Public Schools

Philip F. Vincent, Character Development Group

Foreword

esigned for district- and school-level character education committees, *Character Education by Design: A Blueprint for Successful District and School Initiatives* is a how-to guide for developing an effective character education initiative, one that will not only enhance the climate of the school and social behavior of the students, but also improve students' learning and achievement. This book was developed by a group of experienced, successful Maryland educators who are working directly with character education and who have witnessed firsthand an improved school climate through character education. These educators devised and consolidated the best practices in their school districts and surrounding counties. Their goal was to share strategies and success stories that would guide and inspire others in creating their own character education initiatives.

A premise of the book is that a school's climate determines the relationships among the faculty and administration. As the achievement and behavior of the students follows directly from the attitude and behavior of the adults in the building, a healthy school climate is essential. Therefore character education should not be just an add-on program; it should be the fabric of the school, an integral part of the everyday workings of the building and everyone in it. All who have worked in education, whether for one day or 30 years, know that the climate of a school influences everything and everyone in that school community.

Efforts to improve school climate through character are not new. In fact, character education in Maryland has been an active initiative for almost 30 years, beginning with the Values Education Commission of 1978. Delegate Eugene J. Zander and Senator Lawrence Levitan created the Values Education Commission through a joint resolution. Acting Governor Blair Lee III then charged the Commission with assessing the status of values education in

Maryland. The Commission had 51 recommendations, of which two are considered key: Local school boards adopt the State's character and citizenship objectives as their own; and local school systems should begin action immediately with existing resources.

Since that time, all 24 local school systems have been integrating character education into the curriculum. As of 2007, 81 percent of Maryland schools have a character education initiative. Statewide, districts are enacting programs that include a wide range of approaches to meet the needs of schools and local communities in their character building efforts. The Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Student, Family, and School Support is responsible for coordinating state-level character education efforts. To support local efforts, training and technical assistance have been provided across Maryland.

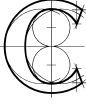
Character education program evaluation efforts are ongoing. From 1997 to 2002, the Maryland State Department of Education conducted a five-year, independent evaluation of character education programs in five school systems. The Department, local school system coordinators, and an outside evaluator and monitor developed a multi-faceted evaluation design. Data were collected on attendance, dropout rates, graduation rates, suspensions, office referrals, and school climate to help determine the efficacy of each program. The evaluation showed that school climates improved dramatically in the first year after character education was introduced, and the improvement continued throughout subsequent years. Every school that participated in the character education initiative for all five years experienced improvements to school climate and an average 18-percent reduction in the suspension rate.

Maryland's most recent evaluation was through the federal Partnerships in Character Education grant, which enabled seven school systems to test three distinct approaches to delivering character education—Character Counts!, Second Step®, and a modified Lickona approach. In the 2002-2003 school year, the Maryland State Department of Education began its evaluation of the three approaches to determine their effect on student achievement. Completed in December 2007, the evaluation found widespread improvements among all three approaches in numerous areas,

particularly in reading and math proficiency, parental involvement, and attendance. For more information on the evaluation, visit the Maryland State Department of Education on the Web at www.marylandpublicschools.org.

Practitioners involved in the grant, as well as other educators who have been directly involved in character education, have gained valuable experience in the practical application of character education. The Maryland State Department of Education has tapped this well of experience for promising practices and inspiring stories, using them as the basis of *Character Education by Design: A Blueprint for Successful District and School Initiatives*.

Introduction

onsider this scenario. You are a writer for a local magazine. You have been assigned to write a story about different outcomes from two schools in the same district. You decide to visit one school on Tuesday and another on Wednesday. The first thing you notice when you drive into the parking lot of the first high school is that the grounds are dirty. Paper is thrown all around the school's yard. The landscaping has little grass and much leaf-covered dirt. When you enter the school you notice paper has been thrown throughout the hallways. The majority of students are slowly making their way to their homeroom period even though the tardy bell has rung. They are loud and rowdy, and many are cursing. You notice there are few adults mingling with the students except those who are urging the students to get to their homerooms. As you are walking toward the office you notice two adults running into the building and quickly turning down the hallway. Based on the papers in their hands, you deduce that these teachers are late and rushing to their classrooms.

You finally get to the office, and after waiting for five minutes, are greeted by office personnel. One informs you that there is often “chaos in the morning” and apologizes for having you wait so long in the office surrounded by the noise.

You finally meet the principal. She informs you that the noise in the school is to be expected. “They are just loud children.” She also tells you that most of these students are working at various jobs after school and have little time for homework. Furthermore, they often sleep in class or come to school grumpy. Others are there to disrupt learning. She adds that staff turnover has been rather high over the last few years, and until that can be reduced, “We are constantly training and retraining teachers.” After a few minutes more in the principal's office, you are escorted around the school to talk to students and other adult stakeholders. Morale seems poor for both

the students and the adults in the building. You leave the building with relief and yet sympathy for both the adults and students who spend their days together in this building.

The next day you visit the second high school. Things are so different. The grounds are clean and covered with quality landscaping. The entranceway into the school is bright and inviting. Students are walking toward their homerooms. Adults are talking and laughing with some of the students as they make their way down the hallways. Several students acknowledge your presence. You notice a lot of the students' work is displayed in the hallways and on the doors of the classrooms. You are quickly greeted by a student helper as you make your way into the office. He takes your name and speaks to a school secretary. She quickly comes from around her desk, greets you, and escorts you to the principal's meeting room where you are joined by several administrators and teachers. They are talking about the success of their students. More and more of the students are taking and demanding more advanced classes. The choir and band have recently won several state awards, and the percentage of students going on to post-secondary education is growing by 25 percent each year. All this is occurring even though the majority of students have some kind of job after school. When you ask about teacher turnover you are told that they do not have exact figures, but the school's turnover average is far less than the district's average.

You are escorted to a room to talk with other students as well as other adult stakeholders in the building. Everyone is excited to be in the school. A student states, "The teachers here push us really hard but they care about us. We can always get extra help. I intend to graduate next year, go to college and come back here to teach. I love it here."

As you are writing the story you look up the demographics of both schools. Much to your surprise, they have nearly the same racial, social, and economic demographics. Yet the outcomes of the schools are radically different. You begin your story with the following line, "Although my impressions are not scientific, I can safely say that after visiting two schools I know that the racial/social/economic status of students does not have to predict the success that students can experience in school."

Successful Schools Care About Character

At first glance, it would appear that I have used my scenario to set up a “straw man” in order to make a point. Unfortunately I have seen the above scenario play out time and time again as I have worked in schools and communities throughout the United States and Canada. One school in a community is showing constant improvement in all aspects of school life, while a neighboring school, with the same or close to the same demographics, struggles. After years of travel and work, I maintain there are several factors that contribute to the success of one school and the struggles of another. In a successful school:

1. There are relationships between all stakeholders in the building. The people in the building, the teachers, administrators, students and other adults in the building are glad to be there. This does not mean that every day is perfect. It isn't. These schools have their struggles and difficult times. But they persevere through these and work toward their goals. They know where they are going and lift each other up when a lift is needed.
2. There are high academic and social/moral standards for all in these schools. Educators believe their students can and will achieve at the highest levels in all varieties of assessments. They also believe that positive social and moral actions are a prerequisite to meeting their academic goals—school climate is a precursor for academic, artistic, and even athletic excellence. They have consistent rules and more importantly, procedures or practices on how we live our lives with others in the building. These procedures are practiced until they become habits.
3. The adults believe that *they* must be a moral compass for students in their school. This is not easy, and sometimes, being humans, we fail. Yet this compass helps guide students in their actions toward others.
4. The adult stakeholders truly care about the students. They care as parents care for their own children—firm but fair—trying to love their students rather than just like them.
5. Parents are considered important in helping students reach their goals. However the school staff does not blame the children if their parents fail to attend meetings or programs.

They acknowledge the presence and assistance of connected parents just as they reluctantly accept that some parents will not come to the schools and may not always act in the best interest of their children.

6. Finally, they feel that the social and ethical development of their students *is as important* as their academic development.

Number six may appear the most controversial. Yet, I would imagine that you, upon reflection, would agree with number six. Take the following test: You are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or friend to a child whose parent you are very close to. (Just choose the one that fits best.) You are shopping at a grocery store when a friend comes up and engages you in conversation. He mentions that you must be proud of the academic achievement of Kim. You state with all possible modesty that you and others are very proud of her achievement. A week later another friend who happens to be a nurse at the hospital engages you concerning the social and moral excellence of Kim. "You can always count on Kim to be at the hospital to volunteer on time. She is the best volunteer that holds and softly strokes the children born prematurely in the nursery. She even comforts some of the parents. We consider her to be a valued member of our staff although she is only 15 years old." Now which compliment means the most to you? The first complement regarding academic achievement, or the second one involving the character of this child? I would imagine that you would answer the second one means the most to you. We do not mean to minimize the academic achievement of any child. Excellence in academic performance and improvement should always be celebrated and recognized. But as adults, we understand that a child can make straight A's in school and still flunk life, and that one's character may indeed shape one's future. Maybe there is no reason to separate or rank the two in importance. First let us define what is meant by the word character.

Character Makes the Difference for ALL Stakeholders

"The English word 'character' is derived from the Greek *charaktêr*, which originally referred to a mark impressed upon a coin. Later and more generally, 'character' came to mean a distinctive mark by which one thing was distinguished from others, and then primarily

to mean the assemblage of qualities that distinguish one individual from another” (Homiak, 2007).

In other words, our character is our distinctive mark that differentiates ourselves from others. Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin (1999) have defined people of good character as individuals who *know* the good, *love* the good, and *do* the good.

Knowing the good includes coming to understand good and evil. It means developing the ability to sum up a situation, deliberate, choose the right thing to do and then do it... Loving the good means developing a full range of moral feelings and emotions, including a love for the good and a contempt for evil, as well as a capacity to empathize with others... Doing the good means that after thoughtful consideration of all the circumstances and relevant facts, we have the will to act. (p. 6)

Who does not want a child, neighbor, friend or a complete stranger to possess the above characteristics? Yet we know this is not easy to obtain, and once it is obtained, it is possible to occasionally do something that we know we should not do. Let us take a simple example: Did you ever do anything in your late teens or early twenties that you are going to keep in the closet and not share with your children, spouse, or significant other? If you are like most people—at least most honest people—you will answer in the affirmative. For some of us it is a *big* affirmative! Luckily, we are not judged by ourselves and others by a single act on a particular day. It is our behavior and actions over a period of time that give us a true picture of our character. Still, we must acknowledge that the development of children who will possess and act upon ethical sensibilities must begin when they are very young.

Parents are the first and primary role models and moral instructors to children. Some are doing a wonderful job in this arena. Others are doing an adequate job, while still others are failing miserably in their efforts. Still, whether we like it or not, for many of our students, the school represents the last, best hope for them to have any chance of fulfilling their potential and flourishing as contributing members of society. The influencing power of the school for all children is quite pronounced. For between 180 and 200 days a year, the majority of

students between the ages of 5 and 18 spend between 7 and 10 hours at school as students and as participants in extra-curricular activities. We as educators are influencing their social and ethical development whether we claim it or not. The only real question is whether we are making a positive or negative impact. It therefore seems that our job as educators is twofold. First we must work to help children succeed or to become smarter in whatever academic, artistic, athletic, or vocational track they might pursue. In order to establish a foundation where this might occur, we must model and teach, as well as have students practice and reflect upon the importance of establishing habits of kindness, caring, honesty, etc. in their interactions with others. To accomplish this requires that an adult stakeholder in the school recognize that he or she may very well be the compass that will make a difference in the life of the child. To be successful will require that we as adults in the life of the school take seriously the academic and ethical development of our students and treat both with intent and with equal effort.

At this point the argument might be made that this is another thing to add onto my plate that is already beyond full. "So you want me to teach all the academics that I am required to cover, tutor students who need help, discipline students, be on committees, coach, volunteer after school, work with parents AND do character education?" My answer is yes! But before you sling this book across the room, I would urge you to think of character education as not another thing to be added to the plate of the educator. You have no additional room for another program. There is no more room on the plate as it is presently conceived. Rather, you must consider the character development of students as the plate on which all else is placed. The character development of students is primary. Teaching is more difficult without a good classroom or school climate. Children who are constantly late to class, disruptive in the class as well as uncivil towards adults in a school or building seriously impact the learning environment for all students. We all know this. We also know that some schools have better teaching and learning climates than others and that economics is not the predictor of which schools can succeed and which schools will fail. (I would urge you to read about the Knowledge is Power Program, or KIPP, that is being established around the country as well as read about National

Schools of Character from the Character Education Partnership Web site at www.character.org.) Now I would ask you to consider the reason you chose education as a career. Did you go into education to teach factoring? Sentence structure? Memorizing the periodic table? Volleyball fundamentals? No, and it would be no for any good teacher no matter what curricular twist I listed above. You went into education to make a difference in the total life of the child. Your curriculum is the tool you use, but as the educator, your personhood is what you wanted to share with students. You went into education to help students become smart and good people.

I am reminded of my daughter, who as of 2007 is a college freshman. Her favorite class during her high school years was never tied to a particular discipline. One year Chemistry and Philosophy were her favorite classes. The next year they were English and Marketing. It was never about the curriculum. It was always about the teacher. When I would quiz her about this, she would reply with something like, "Well, my chemistry teacher really *cares* about us. He demands a lot from us, but he is *fair*. My English teacher is about to kill me, but I *care* so much for her. She is helping me become a better writer. She is a tough grader, but... I just *admire* her so much." You see, it is not about the curriculum. In reality it is about the character of the teacher who uses the curriculum to help students flourish. Consider the film *Mr. Holland's Opus*. In this wonderful film, Mr. Holland is confronted by the principal who reminds him that he must become the compass in the lives of his students. After a restless night of contemplation, Mr. Holland changes his teaching style and becomes the compass in the lives of his students through the teaching of music. In the lovely but heartbreaking movie, *Good-bye Mr. Chips*, Mr. Chips teaches Latin, but it is far more important to the children that he is their teacher—that he gives so much of himself to his children/students. His life is their compass. Think back on your own life. Who was the teacher who made the greatest difference? Was it about the curriculum that was taught to you, or more about how it was taught to you—in other words, the character of this teacher?

It appears that we are left with two difficult challenges. We need to work hard to ensure students are smart. We also want them to be ethical. What is an educator to do? What if we consider the role of education to have children become smart *and* good? This is just the

approach taken by Drs. Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson in their seminal work, *Smart and Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work and Beyond* (2005). In this work (and I would argue most of their insights apply to all levels of education) the authors argue that the definition of good character requires a quest for excellence as well as the quest for ethics. Character is therefore broken into two interconnected parts: performance character and moral character.

Performance character is a mastery orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as effort, diligence, perseverance, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, ingenuity, and self discipline—needed to realize one’s potential for excellence in academics, co-curricular activities, the workplace, or any other area of endeavor.

Performance character is not the same as performance. Performance is the outcome (the grade, the honor or award, the achievement), whereas performance character consists of the character strengths, such as self-discipline and best effort, that enable us to pursue our personal best—whether the outcome is achieved or not.

Moral character is a relational orientation. It consists of those relational qualities—such as integrity, justice, caring, and respect—needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior. Respect includes self-respect; we have obligations to ourselves—to respect our own rights, worth, and dignity, for example—as well as to others.

Moral character enables us to treat others—and ourselves—with respect and care and to act with integrity in our ethical lives. (p. 18)

Notice that performance and moral character are both essential in building a morally consistent person. The authors acknowledge that one can have performance without moral character. Haven’t we seen this in some athletes? Compare Marion Jones, the Olympic sprinter, to Cal Ripken Jr. of the Baseball Hall of Fame. Marion Jones had

excellent performance character, but failed in her efforts in moral character through her denial and later confession to using performance-enhancing drugs. Cal Ripken had excellent performance character but is also considered a person with strong moral character. Ideally the good person, as well as the good student, is striving for competence in both moral and performance aspects of character. This fits in with thinking of schools as opportunities for students to develop and enhance their character. For example, a coach works hard with her students on developing solid volleyball skills. She demands that they are attentive and involved at practice—that they work to develop their skills. She also models and insists on good sportsmanship in all their games. Indeed, she considers their sportsmanship as important as their actual score in determining the efforts of the team. A fifth-grade teacher encourages his students to write, edit, and re-write their papers. Then they present their work to fellow students for further comments before handing in the paper. The teacher works hard at helping students develop respect and encouragement as they edit the work of others. Success and improvement are celebrated and recognized in the classroom. The ethical character of students is treated as seriously as their academic pursuits. A principal is working with a first-year teacher. She encourages and assists this teacher in the development of excellent lesson plans. She also recognizes this teacher's efforts in becoming a model of ethical behavior for his students. This principal is working to ensure that her new teacher is both smart and good in the lives of his students. I would argue this is the symphony we should all wish to play.

Building Character Education in Schools

At this point, I would hope we could all agree that character education is important. Our next step is to examine some specific practices that might make character education a success within our classrooms and our schools. In other words, what might good character education look like? Many researchers and writers consider service-learning to be an essential part of character education. There is ample evidence that indicates the effectiveness of service-learning in developing kind and caring students. But service-learning, by

itself, is inadequate to accomplish all the goals that good character education strives to meet. Perhaps, to borrow a phrase from developmental psychology, service-learning is “necessary but not sufficient” for total character education. There are also many other factors and strategies that have a positive impact on the social/emotional and ethical development of students. Marvin Berkowitz and his colleague Melinda Bier (2004) have done the most comprehensive work in determining the impact of good character education practices on the positive outcomes of students. First of all, they maintain that good character education is simply good education. In a summary of findings regarding character education and its impact on youth, they determined:

Character education has been demonstrated to be associated with academic motivation and aspirations, academic achievement, pro-social behavior, bonding to school, pro-social and democratic values, conflict-resolution skills, moral-reasoning maturity, responsibility, respect, self-efficacy, self-control, self-esteem, social skills, and trust in and respect for teachers. (p. 80)

Now, which one of the above would you feel is undesirable for students? All of these outcomes are worth effort on the part of school stakeholders to develop well-educated students and competent members of a democratic society. Think of it this way, we are educating our future neighbors, potential close relatives, and people who will decide to bring us a glass of water at the assisted-care home. Clearly our successful efforts pay huge dividends to our students and to our lives as educators and as citizens.

Although we can recognize that character education has powerful outcomes, we must consider what strategies we should use to make certain our efforts are successful. We turn to another writing by Marvin Berkowitz and Melinda Bier (2005). They thoroughly examined various programs and approaches to character education and determined effective strategies for quality character development. I have taken the liberty of listing their strategies and have provided some summary statements from their more extensive commentary:

Professional development—People need to know what to do, and this training should be ongoing.

Peer interaction—Peer discussions, role playing, and cooperative learning

Direct teaching—As Thomas Lickona has long reminded the field, “Practice what you preach, but don’t forget to preach what you practice.”

Skill training—Use strategies for teaching social-emotional skills and capacities. This can include intrapersonal skills, such as self management, as well as interpersonal skills like conflict resolution.

Make the agenda explicit—Character as the focus: Make the emphasis on morality, values, virtues, or ethics explicit.

Family and/or community involvement—This includes parents as consumers (e.g. offering training to parents) and parents and community as partners.

Providing models and mentors—Many programs incorporate peer and adult role models.

Integration into the academic curriculum—Character education promotes academic learning and achievement.

Multi-strategy approach—Effective character education programs are rarely single-strategy initiatives. We must use a variety of approaches. (p. 18-19)

Now which of these would we not desire for our schools or classrooms? Most likely we find all of the above desirable, if not essential, in building the schools that both students and adult stakeholders deserve. Once again, if all of the above appear to require us to add another program onto our school—onto our full plate—we will most likely look the other way. If, on the other hand, we see these strategies as part of what makes a good school great, then we are more inclined to infuse these strategies into what we do as a part of our educational efforts.

The following chapters represent ideas and insights designed to develop character education as not another thing on your plate, but as your plate. Each of these ideas was developed by Maryland educators. These ideas are designed to help schools and school staffs work smarter, not harder. I would urge you to examine and use these strategies to facilitate your efforts. The fulfillment of our goal as educators may well rest in how well we help our students, and thereby ourselves, become smart and good.

References

- Berkowitz, M. & Bier, M. (2005). *What works in character education*. Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.
- Berkowitz, M. & Bier, M. (2004). Research based character education. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591, 72-85.
- Homiak, M. (2007). Moral Character. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Web]. Stanford: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University. Retrieved March 14, 2008, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2007/entries/moral-character/>
- Lickona, T. & Davidson, M. (2005). *Smart and good high schools: Integrating excellence and ethics for success in school, work and beyond*. Cortland, NY: Center for the 4th and 5th R's (Respect and Responsibility)/Washington, D.C.: Character Education Partnership.
- Ryan, K. & Bohlin, K. (1999). *Building character in schools: Practical ways to bring moral instruction to life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Principles Checklist

This checklist includes all of the district, school, and parent involvement principles found in this book. As you review your character education initiative, try using this handy checklist to check off principles already present in your initiative and highlight those that still need to be included.

District Principles

- 1. Character education requires deliberate planning and implementation.
- 2. A district office committee directs the districtwide character education initiative.
- 3. A district character education action plan defines the goals and objectives of the district's character education initiative.
- 4. The district and its schools base character education initiatives on data.
- 5. The district office and schools share a common character language.
- 6. The district Master Plan includes the character education initiative.
- 7. The district character committee and the district character coordinator work with individual schools to ensure character education develops and grows.
- 8. The district office coordinates regular staff development in character education for school and district staff.
- 9. Sufficient, continued district funding makes school character education initiatives possible.
- 10. The district office ensures district-level and school staffs have the time they need to implement character education initiatives.

- 11. Curriculum coordinators identify connections to character education, or “teachable moments,” in their subject matter.
- 12. Service-learning connects with character education at the district level.
- 13. The positive behavior initiative incorporates character education.
- 14. Parent involvement strengthens the district’s character initiative.
- 15. A districtwide character education newsletter highlights effective strategies and successful schools.
- 16. Partnerships with businesses and community organizations support character activities and expand character development into the community.
- 17. Visual character displays represent a clear direction of the district initiative.
- 18. The district recognizes schools with exemplary character education initiatives.
- 19. Periodic infusions of new strategies revitalize the character education initiative.
- 20. District public relations and news coverage highlight the character education initiative.

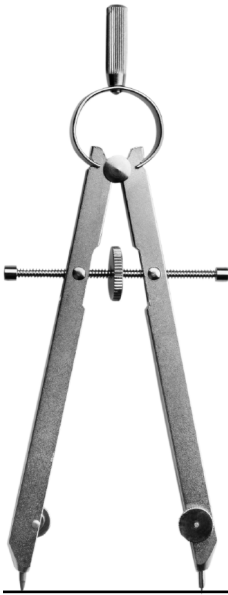
School Principles

- 1. All adults in the school are committed to modeling and teaching good character.
- 2. A committee representing all stakeholders directs the school’s character education initiative.
- 3. A character education action plan is an integral part of the school improvement plan.
- 4. The core of the character education initiative focuses on relationships.
- 5. Character education is connected to the curriculum; teachers of all subjects take advantage of “teachable moments” that relate to character.

- 6. The character education efforts are clearly visible throughout the school.
- 7. Morning meetings put character education into practice by encouraging adults and students to share and respect each other's social and emotional needs.
- 8. Morning announcements reinforce the character education initiative.
- 9. Partnerships with businesses and communities support school and community character-building efforts.
- 10. School assemblies emphasize and recognize good character.
- 11. A positive behavior initiative supports the character education initiative.
- 12. Service-learning and reflection are a part of the school's character education initiative.

Parent Involvement Principles

- 1. Effective school-parent communication facilitates the character education process.
- 2. Parents/volunteers are trained to promote the character initiative throughout the school.
- 3. The parent involvement program includes parent forums, school social activities, volunteerism, and parent education workshops.



Building a Districtwide Character Education Initiative

The role of the district in facilitating the development of caring school communities cannot be overstated. The bulk of responsibility for implementing character education may be carried by the school, but the planning, encouragement, and drive must originate in the district's central office. Most importantly, the district communicates beliefs and sets expectations for the character effort. Namely, that good character can and should be taught, and that every school in the district will consciously build a school climate of positive character and ethical behavior.

The following principles are designed to help districts establish strong character education programs in all schools. Together, these principles make clear the role of the district's central office in facilitating the ethical development of all stakeholders. Following each of the principles are strategies that, when followed, guarantee a strong character education framework for the district, one that supports the initiatives of its schools and ultimately improves the lives of students.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 1

Character education requires deliberate planning and implementation.

Psychologist and author Thomas Lickona describes character education as “the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue.” The key word is deliberate. We should not assume that children, left to their own accords, will grow and become young adults of good character. Clearly, children need adults to teach them through example and exhortation. With this in mind, we must acknowledge that schools have a critical role to play in the development of the ethical

Students spend more than 180 days a year, seven to ten hours a day in school. To state that the school must not play a critical role in the social and ethical development of students argues against reality.

sensibilities of their students. We cannot take the place of parents, nor should we try. However, in the best situations we can reinforce what caring, ethically sensitive parents are trying to instill in their children. In other cases, we can help children forge an ethical conscience that will help them make good decisions and understand how to “do the right thing.” In other words, for some students, the stakeholders of the school must serve as the moral compass.

If we accept that this is true, then we must take seriously the role the school must play in the formation of students’ character. To examine it in another light, students spend more than 180 days a year, seven to ten hours a day in school. To state that the school must not play a critical role in the social and ethical development of students argues against reality. We are going to influence the social and ethical development of children. The only question is: Will our efforts be positive or negative? With consciousness of our character education goals, and with solid planning and implementation, we can succeed in positively shaping the ethical and social nature of our students. Helping facilitate and support schoolwide planning and development falls upon the district office and its representative. The support of the district office sends a clear message that character education is important on a district as well as a school level.

Principle 1 Strategies

- Encourage schools to make character education part of the “ethos” or life of the school.
- Have schools submit character education plans for the current year. See how these plans fit with the three-year district plan called for in District Principle 3.
- Visit schools and, if needed, help with the planning process. Help schools set dates and schedules for implementation.
- Encourage all participants in public meetings to model and exhibit civility.
- Encourage schools to celebrate and recognize ethical exemplars.
- Ensure staff meetings are civil in nature, with adults treating each other the way they would like to be treated.
- Plan networking activities at which all school staffs can talk and plan how they will implement character education throughout the curriculum.
- Develop a districtwide sportsmanship award for schools and teams that exhibit good sportsmanship in athletics.
- Support coaches in making sportsmanship a priority in all events.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 2

A district office committee directs the districtwide character education initiative.

Most Maryland schools already operate some kind of character education initiative. Strong district leadership can make the difference between barely adequate initiatives and initiatives that transform schools and bolster achievement. Districts with strong character education programs are typically guided by a central office committee with a strong leader who provides support for individual schools. This committee, and ultimately its leader, is fully invested in the drive to build caring and responsible school communities.

Schools are given academic and curricular mandates. The same focus and

Strong district leadership can make the difference between barely adequate initiatives and initiatives that transform schools and bolster achievement.

attention should be extended to character education. With district office expectations spurring action in individual schools, the programs can reach new heights of success and achievement. Creating a district office committee that consists of stakeholders from the schools as well as the community will create a unified vision to guide individual schools and communities in their efforts to improve the social and ethical climate of all within their schools.

Principle 2 Strategies

- Identify key school staff and community stakeholders to serve on the district office committee. Consider representatives from central office staff and administration, school staffs and administration, businesses, community agencies, parents, and students.
- Ask committee members for a minimum three-year commitment to allow for continuity of program design and management.
- Charge the committee with:
 - crafting realistic goals, strategies, and guidelines for successful implementation of a comprehensive character education program in every school. A comprehensive program includes curriculum, planning strategies, evaluation strategies, and recognition opportunities.
 - reviewing current character education research and trends and communicating them to schools regularly.
 - exploring character education grants and resources to help fund school initiatives.
 - sharing character education mandates with school teams regularly to emphasize the district’s commitment to character education.
 - ensuring professional development opportunities for schools.
 - monitoring school-level implementation of the committee’s recommendations through school-level action plans that set achievable, timely goals.
- Each committee member should conduct at least one site visit per year to observe the character education practices within a school for the purposes of evaluation and future planning. Each school should be visited at least once.

Theory into Practice

The Carroll County school district's Character Education Committee involves character education coordinators from every school as well as district office representatives. Parents are invited and attend meetings, and students participate in reporting their schools' character efforts to the committee. Since 1996, this district committee has been working to keep Carroll County's character education initiative innovative and effective. The committee is led by the district-level character education and service-learning coordinators. The committee meets two to four times a year and provides school-based professionals time to network and share the important work they do in their schools to create a positive school climate. The committee's objectives for the 2006-07 school year were to examine school discipline data and develop action plans to address trends in student behavior and achievement.

Students present to the committee the character education efforts in their schools and the impact the programs have had. Committee members have a chance to ask the students and advisors questions to further clarify components of the program; this allows the committee to garner more activities to share districtwide. For example, at the Carroll County Character Education Committee's fall meeting, several Liberty High School students and their advisor presented the SPIRIT Project, a character education program with a multicultural focus. Also discussed at this meeting were the Carroll County Best Practices Regarding Discipline.

In Frederick County, a district-level Character Council was created as a collaboration among the schools, city and county governments, YMCA, and others. Meeting monthly, the Character Council has been active since the Character Counts! program was established districtwide in 1996. The Character Council also sponsors two annual character events—a Character Awards Gala and an Ethics Seminar. Both of these events occur within the community and are supported by the schools and local businesses.

Frederick County has also established a Character Coordinators Committee that meets twice a year to share best practices and learn about research and new initiatives in the field of character education. Led by the district-level character education coordinator, this

committee is composed of a character coordinator from each school in the district. During meetings, members discuss effective strategies from across the nation as well as effective implementation of their own strategies. Speakers from the Maryland State Department of Education and other organizations present best practices and current research to this committee.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 3

A district character education action plan defines the goals and objectives of the district's character education initiative.

There is an old saying, "Now that we have lost sight of our goals, we must redouble our effort." Staff time, instructional time, and other resources are too precious to be used haphazardly. A successful character education initiative is a carefully planned initiative; it reflects districtwide goals, but is also tailored to encompass the needs of each school's stakeholders.

By developing three-year action plans, districts can help school improvement teams plan character education initiatives that address

A successful character education initiative is a carefully planned initiative; it reflects districtwide goals, but is also tailored to encompass the needs of each school's stakeholders.

student needs as well as districtwide goals and priorities. The action plans should support and guide school improvement teams' efforts to infuse character development within the "ethos" or life of the school. The action plans should also contain guidelines that reflect district goals for enhancing the social, ethical, and learning

environment within each school. These guidelines should provide a framework, but not a formula. Each school has different strengths and needs, and will need a slightly different approach.

Another critical component of the action plan is the three-year timeline, which will give schools the time needed to bring about meaningful changes in the social and ethical climate. It takes time to develop character-related instructional units tied to the standard course of study. It also takes time to engage the building and community stakeholders and involve them in planning. Put simply,

anything worth doing well is worth doing with consideration and reflection.

To ensure every school is working to enhance its character-building process, districts should require schools to report annually on progress and efforts. In the reports, schools should explain their efforts and include qualitative and quantitative results that indicate the success of the initiative.

Principle 3 Strategies

- Appoint a lead person at the district level who desires to facilitate a districtwide character education initiative. This person should take the lead in the development of the district character education initiative as well as supporting individual schools' efforts.
- Form a district team, including community stakeholders, to develop guidelines that will facilitate school improvement teams' character-building processes. (See District Principle 2.)
- Share current research on character education with the district team to further understanding of what constitutes an effective character education program.
- Design a three-year action plan with guidelines to help facilitate a more comprehensive character development plan for each school.
- Bring in outside experts as needed to evaluate and facilitate the development of the guidelines.
- Assign an individual at the district level the responsibility of assessing and facilitating the schools' character education action plans.
- Keep a district-level "character notebook" that indicates how the district character education plan is working within the established guidelines to achieve the established goals. Include relevant data such as attendance rates, honor roll numbers, suspensions, etc. Include a review of school-level progress and efforts during principals' evaluations.
- Develop a district-level plan for supporting character education in schools. The plan should include all district departments and specify how each will support the schools. Some of these departments might include instruction, athletics, school guidance and counseling, and health services.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 4

The district and its schools base character education initiatives on data.

To be successful, a character education initiative must meet the needs of its community and work in concert with the district's Master Plan. Since character education is data-driven, each district should use needs assessments and other relevant measures to customize a

Districts should consider data-gathering sources such as districtwide surveys, school self assessments, school discipline data, and feedback or evaluation forms.

character education initiative that encompasses all of the district's geographical and economic areas. Districts should consider data-gathering sources such as districtwide surveys, school self assessments, school discipline data, and feedback or evaluation forms. Because a district's focus sets the tone for all schools, district support personnel should assist in the data-gathering process and

demonstrate a commitment to helping schools develop data that provides a good indication of their social and ethical climates. Everyone must agree that needs assessments, climate surveys, and other measures produce important data that drives school improvement planning—it is more than just “nice to know” information.

Once the data has been gathered, the district must support schools' efforts to analyze data and make data-based decisions, including crafting or revising a school character education action plan. The district action plan should emphasize what is working and in what areas improvement is needed. It should also reflect the individual district's demographics and be revised as appropriate when there are changes in the student population. Results from statewide tests like the Maryland School Assessment, or other measures of student achievement, should also be considered when creating or revising a district character education action plan.

Principle 4 Strategies

- Conduct a districtwide needs assessment that includes the views of the central office staff, school staff, students, parents, and community groups.
- Supply schools appropriate surveys that will provide insight on each school as a caring learning community. Direct each school to:
 - analyze its data (attendance, discipline, bullying data, climate, etc.) and identify needs.
 - complete a self-assessment tool that prompts school staff to reflect on current practices, identify objectives, and develop, improve, or update a strategic plan.
 - analyze its monthly discipline data and revise its character initiatives as needed.
 - share schoolwide discipline data with the school improvement team and/or the entire faculty.
 - administer an ongoing perception survey that encourages feedback from stakeholders. These surveys should measure the perceptions of visitors, faculty, and students following school-sponsored events.
 - maintain, if possible, the same survey over time to build a consistent reporting format. For example, a school might survey faculty, students, and parents annually. This would allow the school to see improvement (or lack thereof) over a period of time.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 5

The district office and schools share a common character language.

To be understood, we must speak the same language as our intended audience. In the same way, speaking a common character language districtwide builds a common understanding among all schools and stakeholders. Both children and adults need to understand school and district expectations for character, and what the character traits look like in daily life. Having a common language also promotes

shared values in the school and community. To facilitate this, the common character language should be shared with the larger school community, such as area businesses, government agencies, and faith-

Every voice matters when a district is developing its character language.

based organizations, so that the community can support the effort and reinforce expectations outside of school.

When a common character language is guiding the efforts of each school, students benefit from the consistency. For example, a number of Maryland's school districts have large numbers of students transferring among schools during the school year. Having a common character language throughout the district eases transitions for students because expectations are similar among schools.

Every voice matters when the district is developing its character language. Using a consensus-building process, districts and stakeholders should identify and define character traits to establish a common language that will allow the system to work toward shared goals.

Principle 5 Strategies

- Direct the district's character committee to collect input on the character language from stakeholders, such as students, school professionals, parents, community members/business partners, and central office staff.
- Once a comprehensive list of character traits and virtues is established, direct the committee to distill the list into essential traits and virtues that are key to the goals of the character education program and the district. Conduct this winnowing process collaboratively. The process of developing a common language can be a slow one and should be a thoughtful one. Do not fear using a dictionary to break gridlock in defining character traits!
- Staff development should support the use of the character language.
- Ask individual schools to include the common character language in school improvement plans and action plans.

- Embed the common character language in the district’s vision, mission, and goal statements; display the statements in a visible location, such as the district Web site.
- Communicate regularly to district and school staffs that the common language of good character is in both word and deed. Our words and actions must closely resemble the agreed upon expectations established districtwide.
- Orient new employees to the district’s character education initiative upon hiring. Based on interactions with human resources and other district personnel, new hires should have a feel for the district’s language even before they enter the school.

Theory into Practice

One way St. Mary’s County Public Schools ensures a common character language is incorporating character traits into the discipline policy that all schools follow. The district’s goal was to prevent and reduce discipline problems by pairing positive character traits with specific code violations and disciplinary actions.

The district encourages schools to teach character traits to help students learn to make good, ethical decisions. In fact, the St. Mary’s Public Schools’ official calendar states that “Character building is most effective when a school regularly utilizes the opportunity to strengthen awareness of positive choices. This improves a student’s ability to foresee potential consequences, devise options, and implement principled choices.” Within district guidelines, each school’s administration has established its own specific character-building interventions to enhance the total education program. When an infraction occurs, administrators can review appropriate character traits with the student.

In the St. Mary’s County Public Schools calendar, behavior violations are matched to more appropriate choices that illustrate good character. For example, caring is provided as the alternative to fighting, defamation, and harassment. Citizenship is the alternative to truancy, vandalism, weapons, and possession of drugs and alcohol. Fairness is the alternative to extortion, while respect is encouraged over insubordination, sexual activity, and bullying. Responsibility is the choice encouraged

over bus misbehavior and dress code violations. Trustworthiness is the alternative to academic dishonesty. In this manner, all infractions are paired with a positive, character-based choice.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 6

The district Master Plan includes the character education initiative.

“We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” Martin Luther King Jr.’s wise words articulate two great goals of education: to help children learn, and to help shape their character. Historically character formation has been a mission of the American Common School. To reach this noble goal in our present time, we must work to ensure that character education is treated as seriously as academic programs in school districts. To do so, character education must

The inclusion of character education in district Master Plans indicates that character education is an essential element of successful schools because it helps reduce negative student behavior, improve academic performance, and prepare students to be responsible citizens.

pervade all aspects of system operations and influence the schools’ cultures.

Indeed the argument can be made that programs are most effective and enduring when a comprehensive approach is used by those seeking to develop civic virtue and character in our youth.

In Maryland, the district Master Plan is used to coordinate system goals and serves as a roadmap for improving academic achievement and the safe operation of schools. Character education is prominent in school system Master

Plans, and is coordinated with other school and community-based programs, as a strategy to support the goal for a safe and orderly environment. The inclusion of character education in district Master Plans indicates that character education is an essential element of successful schools because it helps reduce negative student behavior, improve academic performance, and prepare students to be responsible citizens. Additionally, the inclusion of character education indicates that the district will provide support and leadership in this effort.

Principle 6 Strategies

- Evaluate districtwide data regarding the social and ethical climate of schools. Data can be pulled from suspension and expulsion reports, student and staff attendance rates, climate surveys, and qualitative reports generated from interviews with students and school staff. Based on this data, note strengths and weaknesses of the district and individual schools.
- Working with district and community representatives, develop a general statement in the Master Plan that establishes, using data, the need for intentional character development as part of the district's goals and schools' improvement plans.
- Develop a committee, with central office and community representatives, to establish general guidelines schools should consider in developing their individual plans for enhancing the character education of all stakeholders in school buildings.
- Make sure that the district character education plan is not looked upon as another “add-on” program. Character education must be built into the daily life of the schools and the district office.
- The district Master Plan should state an intention to provide trainings and support for schools that are working to develop comprehensive character education plans.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 7

The district character committee and the district character coordinator work with individual schools to ensure character education develops and grows.

Character education is not just for a few schools in a district. The social and ethical development of all stakeholders has relevance for every school. All schools should be involved. The presence of character education in all schools demonstrates that it is a priority for the district and sets high expectations for staff, students, and other stakeholders at the school level.

Character education must involve the whole community, and each school is a vital link in that effort. The school community involves the building staff, students, parents, and community members, all of whom make up a core group in implementing character education. An important advantage of involving each school is the consistent effort in character education seen and felt throughout the district. This consistency is possible only when staff and parents throughout the district are on the same page, speaking the same character language, sharing strategies, and celebrating successes. Simply requiring schools to implement character initiatives is, of course, not enough. The district must provide each school a framework to use for consistency and support. The action steps below, combined with the other recommendations in this section, provide such a framework.

The presence of character education in all schools demonstrates that it is a priority for the district and sets high expectations for staff, students, and other stakeholders at the school level.

Principle 7 Strategies

- Build explicit support for character education at the district level. Successful school building efforts are reinforced by top-down support, from the superintendent, to supervisors, to school principals.
- Designate a character education contact at each school to facilitate communication, attend district meetings, and share information with the school community. This contact may be the person responsible for heading the building's character education efforts, or a different person, which would reinforce that character education is a team effort that belongs to everyone.
- Support each school in forming a character education committee made up of staff, parents, and students. This committee will serve as a core group to advise and facilitate the building's character education efforts.

- Designate the district personnel to be responsible for arranging regular meetings at which school building contacts share their progress and strategies. The networking and support that school personnel receive from these meetings will help them maintain the initiatives in their own schools.
- As the character education initiative follows logically from the district Master Plan, ensure that character education is included in each school improvement plan.
- Ensure character education initiatives are based on individual school needs assessments and relevant data and are consistent with the district's goals and Master Plan.
- Support schools' efforts by providing them sufficient funding and time to implement character education initiatives.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 8

The district office coordinates regular staff development in character education for school and district staff.

The success of any educational initiative hinges upon the capacity of staff to make it happen. Character education is no different. District and school staffs need to be involved in and thoroughly understand the district's character education initiative, the school's character education initiative and action plan, and the expectations for individual students. As facilitators of character education, school and district staffs must also have access to quality staff development that includes research-based strategies to enhance the social and ethical development of all stakeholders in the school system.

Staff development should be aligned with the learning priorities and outcomes of the district, and focused on creating classrooms and schools where character development is treated as seriously as the academic goals of the school. Indeed, the better the social climate of the school, the greater the chance of meeting the

Professional development must relate to the immediate needs of the schools and classrooms.

academic goals. Character educators must also learn how to establish school routines to enhance the social climate, how to incorporate lessons on social and ethical issues into the curriculum, and how to inspire all stakeholders to assume their roles in creating schools that develop ethical exemplars. Additional topics might include: how to teach expectations regarding character; ways to recognize those character traits that emulate the vision of the school and district; funding and otherwise supporting character education initiatives; building school capacity to lead initiatives and inspire learners; motivating the school faculty; building a common set of character traits and language; and enriching a curriculum with character education. Furthermore, in order to be useful to teachers, staff, and administrators, professional development must relate to the needs of the schools and classrooms.

Principle 8 Strategies

- Make character education a priority in staff development planning and in continuing education course planning.
- Assess the needs of staff districtwide to determine appropriate areas of training.
- Use strengths within the system: staff from schools that have been recognized for outstanding work in character education.
- If it is not possible to train entire staffs, then train a representative from each school who will then return to the school and train colleagues.
- Establish a districtwide clearing house for the distribution of character education materials and information.
- Clearly communicate the district's priorities to all staff, every year.
- Align character education staff development to the district's learning priorities.
- Include opportunities for professional development throughout the school year.
- Consider establishing mentoring relationships among staff. Perhaps an experienced character educator mentors a new teacher.

- Provide staff with progressive professional development to assure common knowledge on the basics of character education. Differentiate for staff with more or less knowledge or experience.
- Provide staff and schools with resources and training to integrate character education into schools.
- To assure proper implementation, conduct follow-up visits and observations. These may include classroom and school visits, mentoring, coaching, and reflection.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 9

Sufficient, continued district funding makes school character education initiatives possible.

Funding is an important factor to consider when looking at the state of character education in Maryland’s public schools. The great majority of money spent in education is focused on enhancing the intellectual development of our youth. Who can argue with this? We all want smart children who will be able to compete in a world market. Yet we also need students and adults who are ethical in their treatment of others. This will not occur by happenstance. It requires effort and insight to facilitate this development. It also requires money. Adults need to be trained in best strategies and encouraged to share their knowledge locally as well as at state, regional, or national conferences. Providing schools adequate resources—including funding and time—plays an important role in facilitating social, ethical, and hopefully academic success for the individual student, the school, and the school district. Therefore, it just makes sense for districts to change attitudes about funding—moving character education funding from a luxury to a necessity.

It just makes sense for districts to change attitudes about funding—moving character education from a luxury to a necessity.

Principle 9 Strategies

- Provide character education funds in amounts that can help schools fulfill their character goals.
- Pursue character education grants, including those from federal, state, local, and private sources.
- Direct funds to support professional development at the district and school levels. This should include money to hire speakers and researchers who can help train staff and generate ideas for character education activities.
- Consider using funds from the various “Title” grants. For example, Title 1 requires that some funds be spent on staff development. Improving climate helps improve learning in the school.
- Support the visits of school staffs to exemplary schools throughout the state. This may be a very inexpensive way to greatly enhance the knowledge of staff.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 10

The district office ensures district-level and school staffs have the time they need to implement character education initiatives.

Time is a precious commodity. This is more true today, in this era of school accountability, than ever. There is a curriculum to be taught, standards to be met, academic remediation to be done, and, it seems, never enough time to do it. But districts must

Districts must make time for character education—at the district level and in schools.

remember, and must communicate to schools, that time spent on character education is not time lost on academics. One supports the other. Districts must make time for character education—at the district level and in schools.

To be effective, character education initiatives need to be built into the everyday life, or “ethos,” of the school. This is not always a natural occurrence for educators. Therefore, we must take time to train the adult stakeholders in the building as well as give them time to reflect and begin implementation.

Of crucial importance is making sure schools do not “bite off more than they can chew.” In other words, a steady effort over several years will result in more success than attempting a total change, at one time, in the instructional and social patterns of a school. Regular time to think and reflect on best strategies should be a part of every school’s environment.

Principle 10 Strategies

- Create district and school committees to create classroom lesson plans tied to the curriculum. Lessons can be delivered daily, weekly, or monthly. These may be used as a special focus for the school.
- Explicitly direct principals to support character education in their buildings and participate in creating and implementing initiatives. Principals that take a hands-on approach to creating an initiative will get more support from the staff members who are putting it in place. Use faculty meetings and team planning time to assess and consider the best way to focus efforts in character education.
- Use data from perception surveys and other sources to build a case for more time for character education; present the case to the local board of education and other policymakers and stakeholders.
- Encourage school-level staff to become role models of positive interactions. This way, good character is modeled throughout the school day, and no “extra” time is required.
- Monthly or several times a year, devote a block of time for entire schools to focus on character education. This is a powerful demonstration of district commitment to character education, and it will resonate with schools.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 11

Curriculum coordinators identify connections to character education, or “teachable moments,” in their subject matter.

Schools should focus on teaching character within the regular curriculum. Indeed, whether one is teaching physical education, music, art, English, history, or science, there are ample opportunities to have students reflect on the social and ethical issues contained within the curriculum. There are also “teachable moments” that arise

Schools should focus on teaching character within the regular curriculum.

within the life of the school that can facilitate wonderful discussions. District staff should review the national and state standards that drive the local curriculums. Working either individually or with a committee, they

should seek to illustrate opportunities for discussions and teaching about issues of social and ethical importance. In some districts, committees have reviewed their standard courses of study and determined where their character-building efforts most logically fit into the curriculum. In this manner, the classroom teachers are given support and, in some cases, lesson plans to facilitate their efforts.

Principle 11 Strategies

- Direct the district’s curriculum coordinators to review the curriculum and identify connections to character. They may also want to do a Web search to see what other states have done. For example, North Carolina has provided lesson plans for teachers on infusing character into the regular curriculum. These are available through the Department of Public Instruction’s Web site at www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/charactereducation/handbook/content2/pdf.
- Identify opportunities in the curriculum to engage students and ask them to share experiences. For example, in a history class students may reflect on racial stereotyping and how character is affected. Or in a biology class, discuss respect, responsibility, and appropriate behavior when dissecting animals.

- Consider establishing a Web site where teachers can upload and share lesson plans.
- Consider a time after school when teachers can come together and share their lessons.
- Some publishers are including character lessons in their text books. Encourage teachers to look for recommendations on how the textbook authors believe lessons in character can be taught within the curriculum.
- Encourage coaches to share how they work to develop sportsmanship with their athletes.
- Encourage staff to share strategies for infusing character into the curriculum during team meetings and shared planning time.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 12

Service-learning connects with character education at the district level.

Service-learning should be a natural extension of character education practices at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Service-learning extends what we teach about character and puts it into action. It's one thing to know what is the right thing to do; it is another thing to do it. Service-learning, and students' subsequent reflection on their efforts, provides all students the chance to actively participate and grow in understanding the importance of assisting others as a tool to crafting a life of noble purpose.

Service-learning extends what we teach about character and puts it into action.

As Maryland has a service-learning graduation requirement, many districts already have service-learning experiences embedded in their curriculum. If it isn't already, service-learning should be incorporated into the district's Master Plan and viewed as an important component of the academic and character development process. As service-learning develops within districts, it becomes the foundation for why we teach character. The next step, then, is for districts to intentionally link service-learning to the development of character. In conclusion, school districts that support

school staffs' efforts to help students make connections among academics, character development, and service have a greater chance of educating students and adults who "know, love and do the good."

Principle 12 Strategies

- Align service-learning opportunities with district and school character initiatives.
- Invite the district service-learning coordinator/specialist to join the district character education committee.
- Identify a service-learning specialist from the district's character education committee to provide assistance to schools as they plan service-learning opportunities for students.
- Provide training for school-based service-learning coordinators on the connections between service-learning and character education.
- Develop and align character education and service-learning staff development opportunities.
- Develop a working database of service-learning resources and ideas, infused with character education, for school professionals who coordinate school-based experiences.
- Connect with nonprofit organizations; they can serve as valuable starting points to launch character education and service-learning opportunities. For example, create a list of civil service speakers to talk with children about what their agencies do for citizens.
- Make sure service-learning infused instructional units illustrate links to character education.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 13

The positive behavior initiative incorporates character education.

An increasing number of Maryland schools have adopted a positive behavior initiative, such as the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process. A positive behavior reinforcement process has a direct connection with the character education process. As does

character education, a positive behavior initiative advocates the explicit teaching of virtues and behavioral expectations. A school with a positive behavior initiative is focused on helping students develop habits of civility in their classrooms, throughout the building, and hopefully in the community. District leadership must recognize that a positive behavior initiative meshes with the establishment of consistent rules and practices designed to foster school civility.

It is essential that districts encourage schools to adopt some type of positive behavior initiative that will bolster the character education effort...

Therefore, it is essential that districts encourage schools to adopt some type of positive behavior initiative that will bolster the character education effort, thereby supporting a safe and orderly school environment that enhances academic achievement.

Principle 13 Strategies

- Include a positive behavior initiative in the district's Master Plan.
- Direct schools to include a positive behavior initiative in school improvement plans.
- Secure funding from various sources (local, federal, state, community) for school teams to receive initial or ongoing training in a positive behavior initiative/process such as PBIS.
- On the district level, make sure that schools understand that the establishment of consistent practices designed to build respect and responsibility is necessary, but not sufficient, to provide a comprehensive character education initiative.
- Create a handout on the desired character virtues and expected behaviors based on those found in the district's behavioral policy. This can guide individual schools.
- Encourage each school's administrative team to insure that the positive behavior initiative team and character education team, if they are separate, are working together toward the development of ethically and socially competent individuals.
- Encourage each school to adopt a code of conduct based on its students' needs and display it throughout the building.
- Encourage each school to post and share consequences for students who do not comply with the code of conduct.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 14

Parent involvement strengthens the district's character initiative.

In terms of ethical and character development, parents have the most influence on children. Therefore, parent involvement must be at the forefront of initiatives supporting character education. Their involvement is essential to both district and school efforts. What

Indeed, no program of character education can be sustained without some support from the home.

does such involvement look like? Parents might serve on character education councils and district-level advisory boards; participate in forums; serve as trainers and peer mentors in parenting programs; assist in the design and implementation of character education programs; and volunteer alongside their

children in service-learning activities. Creating home-school partnerships will inevitably improve relationships among community members and strengthen the character development of children. Indeed, no program of character education can be sustained without some support from the home.

Principle 14 Strategies

- Advertise annually for parent volunteers on character committees and for other collaborative efforts.
- Involve parents in developing character education action plans and initiatives.
- Provide workshops for parents throughout the district, taking care to address the diversity of languages, times, and locations parents may need.
- Work with parent-teacher organizations and other community organizations to strengthen community-family bonds.
- Share the district's initiatives with parents several times each year using multiple communication methods, e.g., newsletters, Web, e-mail, or a community television channel.

- Continually help schools recruit parents in the effort to improve school climate, reinforce school goals, and sustain growth in the ethical development of their children. Schools should invite families into the school for events, activities, and meetings.
- Share with all families the character traits emphasized by the district and school along with activities they can use at home.
- Encourage schools to initiate discussions with families about character education materials and to always be open to parents' suggestions.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 15

A districtwide character education newsletter highlights effective strategies and successful schools.

After providing organization and support for schools and communities in their character-building effort, it is important for the district to maintain communication to school stakeholders regarding best practices in building character-developing schools. A districtwide newsletter is an efficient, effective way

to help develop such a learning community. The newsletter's emphasis should be on the most current character education research as well as proven character implementation strategies. The research and strategies should reinforce the district's Master Plan and help

schools with new character education initiatives as well as schools with more advanced initiatives. Besides featuring the best in research studies on promising strategies, a section of the newsletter should also feature lessons from the schools. In this manner, research informs practice, but good practice also validates research. Both are important in furthering the district's initiative.

The newsletter's emphasis should be on the most current character education research as well as proven character implementation strategies.

Principle 15 Strategies

- Since everyone shares the responsibility for character education, every school system employee and volunteer should receive the newsletter.
- Maximize readership by publishing the newsletter on the district's Web site.
- Produce the newsletters in such a way that each year's newsletters can be compiled and used as a reference volume.
- Include articles that principals can easily adapt for their school newsletters.
- Include in each newsletter a section celebrating at least one elementary, one middle, and one high school. Specific strategies used at the school level or achievements of the school should be presented for other schools to use as models.
- The newsletters should highlight upcoming character education conferences and workshops; available character education resources (Web sites, books, articles); best practices from around the nation; and local businesses that contribute to the character education initiative.
- Provide in the newsletter a collection of service-learning opportunities in the community.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 16

Partnerships with businesses and community organizations support character activities and expand character development into the community.

Effective character education engages community members as partners in the character-building effort. Businesses, chambers of commerce, religious institutions, youth organizations, and the immediate community play a pivotal role in the ethical upbringing of children. As stakeholders in the health and success of communities, businesses and other organizations support initiatives that strengthen the character of youths—their future employees, neighbors, and, in some cases, family members. With this in mind,

creating an environment where healthy relationships can form among businesses, community organizations, and the school community is vital.

The Council for Corporate and School Sponsorships (CCSS) serves as a national forum for the exchange of information, expertise, and ideas to ensure that partnerships between businesses and schools achieve their full potential. In a 2001 survey, CCSS found 70 percent of all school districts engaged in some form of business partnership. The contribution to schools is substantial—an estimated \$2.4 billion and 109 million volunteer hours. Districts must help schools harness the power of such partnerships to advance character education in schools.

When character education is tied into these partnerships, districts and schools create powerful mechanisms for promoting good character.

While schools must make the effort to reach out to businesses in their communities, the district must support and supplement school efforts. Encouraging schools, providing staff development, and initiating contacts and partnerships with districtwide businesses and organizations—these are just some of the ways districts support corporate-school partnerships. When character education is tied into these partnerships, districts and schools create powerful mechanisms for promoting good character.

Principle 16 Strategies

- Establish a districtwide goal for all schools to increase their business partnerships, and focus on establishing relationships that will help the schools and communities facilitate the social and ethical development of all stakeholders.
- Identify a district-level staff member to serve as the school's liaison, sharing ideas and providing support.
- Designate a district-based business contact. He/she should inventory the businesses and organizations in the district and initiate contact with them. Also, the contact should identify and reach out to parents who own businesses.

- Work with the area's chamber of commerce, which provides access to community businesses large and small. The district should consider joining the chamber of commerce and appointing a district representative to attend meetings and serve on education-related committees.
- Ask businesses to support character education activities districtwide. Support comes in many forms, such as monetary contributions, volunteer hours, and speakers for a character-related speakers bureau.
- Be prepared when attending chamber of commerce meetings, individual business meetings, and related events. Come ready to talk about the districtwide and school character education initiatives. Bring handouts, have suggestions for how businesses can be involved, and remember to share your business card.
- Encourage schools to watch for the opening of new businesses and welcome them. (Consider bringing student-created artwork as a welcome gift when asking for a business's support. Most appreciate the students' involvement and are eager to display the artwork, as it motivates area families to patronize the business.)
- Communicate regularly with partners. Consider using a monthly newsletter and a page on the district Web site to share the character traits being emphasized and to promote upcoming events. Encourage schools to do the same. In the communication, encourage businesses to get involved. (The exposure the businesses receive is an important motivator for them to continue the partnership.)
- In the district building, create an area to recognize corporate and organizational partnerships. Encourage schools to do the same.
- Recognize business partners and encourage schools to do so as well. Whether it is a special event or a certificate of appreciation, let business partners know their contributions are appreciated and are helping children.

- Encourage schools to conduct business outreach on a local level: Engage businesses, join the local chamber of commerce, welcome new businesses, be prepared with information, ask for support for character activities (assemblies, recognition ceremonies, etc.), communicate regularly with partners, and recognize partners' efforts in the school and with special certificates or events.
- Invite a business stakeholder to serve on the districtwide character education committee. Encourage schools to invite local business representatives to serve on the character committee or planning team.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 17

Visual character displays represent a clear direction of the district initiative.

Character education should be given the same attention and concern as academics and athletics. To paraphrase Dr. Philip Vincent: For the central office character education leader or facilitator, character education is not another thing on the plate of the educator, it is the plate on which all else is laid. In order to communicate the importance of this effort, district offices should construct visual displays that highlight character education's pivotal role in the education of the child. Most district offices focus only on recognizing academics, arts, and athletics. However, when an individual walks into any district building, it should be evident that the district's mission reflects and supports the character education process. A district that visibly displays a mission statement supporting the character education process is a district that is committed to developing the total individual. The need for visual displays extends to the district's Web site, which should reinforce the character initiative and provide information on the district's commitment and process for character education.

When an individual walks into any district building, it should be evident that the district's mission reflects and supports the character education process.

Principle 17 Strategies

- Create a character education bulletin board or showcase that honors school programs and/or individual achievements.
- Revise the district policy handbook to include a section on expectations for appropriate social and ethical behaviors, just as it defines expectations for attendance, discipline, and academics.
- Periodically recognize stakeholders (school staff, students, community members, business representatives, etc.) for their achievements in the character education process.
- Create a character education section on the district Web site. This section should include a character trait to be emphasized, upcoming events, and recognition of accomplishments and partnerships.
- On the district and school marquees, display the character trait for the month and/or a thought-provoking quote relevant to the trait.
- Communicate messages from the district superintendent, on the Web or in newsletters, that reflect on the district's character education process or recognize a particular school or person's efforts to promote good character.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 18

The district recognizes schools with exemplary character education initiatives.

A school's character education initiative is always a work in progress. As research continues to expand the field of character education,

Schools that are staying abreast of current research and making gains in the social and ethical development of their students deserve to be recognized by the district.

schools should strive to implement strategies that are research-based and show promise in facilitating the character development of all stakeholders in the building. Schools that are staying abreast of current research and making gains in the

social and ethical development of their students deserve to be recognized by the district. This recognition can serve as reinforcement as well as a teaching tool. For the school being recognized, the reinforcement shows school stakeholders that others in the community appreciate their efforts. For other schools in the district, the exemplary character education initiatives serve as inspiration and models of success.

Principle 18 Strategies

- Highlight schools with exemplary initiatives in the district's character education newsletter.
- Hold an award ceremony for exemplary character education initiatives. The ceremony should be held annually and recognize not only schools, but community members, students, and local businesses.
- Highlight schools with exemplary character education initiatives at monthly board of education meetings.
- Work with local media to place stories about schools with exemplary character education initiatives.
- Have "share time," where schools that have been recognized for their efforts may share their successes with others. Participating schools should prepare handouts that clearly describe their efforts and the steps they took to build their programs. The district can provide ample space, time, and, if necessary, printing support for each school to tell its story.
- Feature schools with exemplary character education initiatives on the district Web site. Include sections for both recognition and best practices.
- Be sure to recognize schools that have challenging populations and/or conditions. This might include recognizing schools that are making good progress, even if they haven't yet met their goals.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 19

Periodic infusions of new strategies revitalize the character education initiative.

Anything worth doing is worth doing well. The same applies in the strategies we use to enhance the character development of all stakeholders within our school district. What is important to note is that what works for elementary students will not necessarily work for

Therefore, although we should build on common ground and maintain what is working well, we must also seek new strategies to keep the character initiative vital.

middle or high school students. The same applies for high school students. What works in a high school may not work with elementary students. The developmental needs of students will direct our best practices. Just as we take into consideration the developmental needs of students, we must also consider how we might “change it up”

regarding the strategies we use with students. Repetition and routine, although valuable in many aspects of life, can also result in boredom or a lack of interest in other areas. Kids as well as adults can get bored if the same practices and educational strategies are used day in and day out. Therefore, although we should build on common ground and maintain what is working well, we should also seek new strategies to keep the character initiative vital.

Principle 19 Strategies

- Involve new staff members in the initiative at the central office level. New people bring with them new ideas and a fresh perspective.
- Create opportunities for school staffs to share their ideas and experiences.
- Make the district and school character education committee meetings open to all staff members, and encourage new teachers and other employees to participate.
- Attend local, state, and national events to learn new strategies.

- Consider reading journals that focus on social and ethical development issues. Share these findings with other colleagues.
- Curriculum changes constantly. Therefore, the effort to make character education connections to the curriculum is ongoing. Consider forming a committee whenever a new textbook adoption is forthcoming. Have this committee examine potential texts and pick those that align closest with the academic and character-building standards of the school district.
- Business community involvement provides an opportunity to review a character education initiative. Ask business members to talk with students about how character traits developed in youth are crucial through adulthood and are displayed in occupations.
- Allow stakeholders the opportunity to verify and modify the character education initiatives. They must assess the extent to which the programs and activities have met the goals, mission, and expectations. Conduct meetings several times a year to encourage growth. The character education team/committee lead should be open to suggestions and be able to make changes.
- Support communication and collaboration among schools and other districts; both are key to enhancing existing initiatives and gathering fresh strategies.
- Monthly correspondence through a district or state liaison would give schools fresh ideas to blend into their programs throughout the year.
- At the district and school levels, celebrate student and staff successes publicly and often. Celebrations generate excitement throughout schools, homes, and communities. This enthusiasm helps motivate staff and stakeholders to create new strategies.
- Encourage schools with exemplary programs to apply for local, state, and national awards. This application process helps schools to review and revitalize their initiatives.



DISTRICT PRINCIPLE 20

District public relations and news coverage highlight the character education initiative.

When parents, schools, and communities are on the same page, working together to build character, the results for students and adults can be life-changing. But a community must first learn about the character education initiative before it can support schools and

The campaign to inform communities begins by creating awareness of character education's value in improving life for everyone, young and old alike.

be involved in district and school efforts. The campaign to inform communities begins by creating awareness of character education's value in improving life for everyone, young and old alike. A continual flow of information is also vital to keeping character efforts fresh and growing.

As successes are realized, districts and schools should recognize and celebrate them, enlisting the media to share the good news. Communicating positive messages and stories to the community through the media and through public relations materials serves both to inspire and to teach the value of character education. Recognition and celebration are also crucial to motivating all of the stakeholders involved in the character education effort. The glue of a community is the positive relationships of its people. These relationships are nurtured by the good actions of community members for one another; communicating these actions helps to strengthen the community.

The district must take a leadership role in engaging the media and producing public relations materials that educate about character education and promote districtwide and school-specific events and successes. The district should also work with schools to help them understand basic public relations, when and how to engage the media to promote good news in the schools' communities, and other methods of communicating the character initiative to the community.

Principle 20 Strategies

- Facilitate schools' efforts to write and distribute stakeholder materials, such as newsletters, that highlight character education progress and successes.
- Encourage schools to recognize staff and students during the school announcements.
- Hold celebrations to recognize character education efforts at the school, district, and community levels.
- Work with the media and individual schools to place positive stories about character development in community newspapers and local publications.
- Build community partnerships that support a public relations effort, such as radio public service announcements, messages displayed on public transportation vehicles, and character education broadcasts on local television and cable channels.
- Designate a week for character education recognition events to increase public awareness and to celebrate accomplishments.
- Recognize staff at all levels of the district's operation. The district and each school building become models of character recognition not only for students but also for adults.
- Encourage students and other school stakeholders to recognize community groups that perform various services for others.
- Encourage students and other stakeholders to write letters to the editor recognizing the efforts of public service employees.

Reference

Guiding principles for business and school partnerships. (2001).
Council for Corporate and School Partnerships. Retrieved from
http://www.corpschoolpartners.org/pdf/guiding_principles.pdf

Starting and Sustaining Character Education Initiatives in Schools



Intended for reading by school-level character education committees, this section of the book explains, step by step, how to build a successful program of character and ethical development for all stakeholders in the school community. Committees just getting started in character education may want to use this book as a guidebook, following it closely as they plan their initiatives. On the other hand, committees with more established programs may want to use the book more for ideas on refining and rejuvenating their schools' efforts. Whether your school has just started the planning process or has had a thriving initiative for several years, the principles and strategies on the following pages can help focus and strengthen your school's efforts to build a school community of caring, kindness, and respect.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 1

All adults in the school are committed to modeling and teaching good character.

When teachers are asked about the best classes they have taught, they will not always talk about the high-achieving class where all

Character education should not be another add-on program on the plate of the educator.

Instead, character education should be an exciting initiative that is infused into the school culture.

students were working above their grade level. Instead, teachers often refer to their favorite classes as being composed of kind, caring, respectful students who worked well together.

The way we measure the success of a student is not always by looking at his or her grades. Perhaps we should focus on the education of the total child, and this includes character. To commit

to modeling and teaching students good character is to commit to educating a generation of ethically and socially competent people.

Character education should not be another add-on program on the plate of the educator. Instead, character education should be an exciting initiative that is infused into the school culture. This excitement starts with the school's administration. If the leadership commits to modeling and leading the initiative, we believe the great majority of the other stakeholders will follow and assume leadership roles in the initiative.

But it cannot be just a top-down approach from the administration. All adult stakeholders in the building must commit to modeling and teaching the importance of developing a personal culture of ethical and social excellence. The coach models and demands sportsmanship from all athletes. The band teacher creates a climate in which band members put in extra practice time in order to meet excellence in their performances. The fifth-grade students have lunch with all kindergarten students regularly as a means of passing on the importance of caring about each other. All of this excellence is developed by caring adults who model, teach, and demand a higher standard of excellence from their students.

In order to make character education a crucial part of the education of all children, the improvement of the social and ethical

climate of the school should be a priority and should be included in the school improvement plan. If we are focusing on improving the academics of students in our school, then we must surely give attention to focusing on the social and ethical climate of our school. As previously noted, the improvement of the social and ethical climate of our schools may be the precursor to a rising of academic excellence; if teachers have more time to teach, students have more time to learn.

Principle 1 Strategies

- Form a character education committee comprising a core group of individuals in the school who are willing and dedicated to establishing the character education initiative, and who are themselves models of good character. This group will not be solely responsible for the implementation of the initiative. However, they will be responsible for the initial research and structuring of the initiative.
- Direct the character education committee to research the subject of character education (theory, history, and examples of successful implementation). This knowledge will be useful when making decisions regarding the school's character education initiative and when providing staff development.
- Involve the principal, assistant principal(s), and guidance counselor(s) in the character education initiative, as they are crucial in setting the tone for the school.
- Involve the entire staff in developing a vision for their school. Provide them time to brainstorm and develop a clear vision for what the school climate should look like. When everyone is involved, multiple points of view evolve, and there is a greater likelihood that everyone involved will buy into the vision that is created.
- After a vision is developed, the principal must provide the time and resources that are needed to carry out the planning and implementation of the character education initiative. This time can be found in different places, such as common planning time for grade levels or departments, a scheduled time for

character education on the staff development agenda, or setting up workshops. Resources can take the form of books, guest speakers, attendance at conferences, or anything else the staff needs to improve their knowledge and skills.

- Ensure the school improvement plan displays a salient character education approach. The character education vision should be developed into clear goals that are listed in the school improvement plan along with specific strategies for achieving them.
- Secure a commitment from staff to consistently reinforce good character. Staff should be role models of character when interacting with each other and with the students. Staff should also use a common character education language and expect all students to show good character in all settings.
- Expect teachers to infuse the teaching of character throughout their subjects. Character should not be treated as an individual subject; instead, it should be taught through the curriculum and through the use of “teachable moments.”
- Reinforce character education concepts when disciplining students. The language used in the character education initiative should be the same language used in office referrals and during discipline-related conversations with students and parents.
- Expect guidance counselors to reinforce character education with class lessons as well as individual student interactions. Guidance counselors should not be solely responsible for teaching character education lessons; however, their lessons are a perfect opportunity to reinforce good character.
- Expect office staff to display polite behavior in all interactions and to acknowledge it in students who are visiting the office. Interaction with the office staff is often the first form of communication that visitors and parents have with the school. This interaction is a great time to display an atmosphere of character.
- Enlist bus drivers in the reinforcement of good character. They can set the tone for students since they are the first people to see students in the morning. Drivers can reinforce good character by assigning bus monitors, who can model good character and acknowledge it in others. Consider inviting

drivers to a safety assembly to highlight positive bus behavior as well as to show appreciation for what the drivers do each day.

- Ask custodians and cafeteria workers to reinforce character education by modeling and demanding respect. Cafeterias are a place to demonstrate good table manners, and the custodians, lunch monitors, and cafeteria workers can reinforce the importance of this issue.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 2

A committee representing all stakeholders directs the school's character education initiative.

At least 81 percent of Maryland public schools report having an active character education initiative. In all schools, solid school leadership can make the difference between a character effort that occurs in a few classrooms and a character education initiative that influences the entire school community. School-level character education committees can provide this

needed leadership and direction. The school character education committee, and especially its chair, must be committed to the goal of creating a respectful and responsible school community. Committee members should believe and expect that the character education initiative will be

given the same priority as academic and

behavior expectations. In fact, the character education initiative can provide the foundation for improved academics and behavior. Most often, school character initiatives are led by school counselors.

Character education does relate closely to the job duties of the school counselor, but in order to be effective, character education must also be “owned” and directed by teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Through an effective and active character education committee, the school's character education initiative will have a definite and deliberate direction that supports a positive school climate.

Solid school leadership can make the difference between a character effort that occurs in a few classrooms and a character education initiative that influences the entire school climate.

Principle 2 Strategies

- Establish a school character education committee that includes stakeholders from the school building and community.
- Invite committee members from each main area of the school. For example, a representative from each grade level, guidance, special subjects, and administration should participate. Ideally, custodial and cafeteria staff are represented as well.
- Invite a parent and a student from each grade level to serve on the committee.
- Include the school principal as an active member of the committee.
- Invite the district character education coordinator to each meeting and/or forward him or her the minutes of the meeting.
- If the district coordinator cannot attend every meeting, consider inviting him or her to one meeting each year to help direct the character education initiative and ensure it is aligned with the district initiative.
- Hold committee meetings regularly, about every four to six weeks.
- Appoint a committee secretary to keep and distribute minutes of the meetings to all of the staff. Consider including relevant portions of the committee's meeting minutes into the character education column of the school newsletter.
- Ask committee members to report back to their respective constituencies (e.g., grade levels, other community members, other parents) about the character education minutes and ask for input and suggestions.
- Ask committee members to share the feedback from their constituencies to enable the committee to make informed decisions based on input from all stakeholders.
- Rotate committee members on and off, leaving a core group that has a history of directing the character education initiative while new members are being acclimated to the initiative.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 3

A character education action plan is an integral part of the school improvement plan.

The Character Education Partnership defines character education on its Web site as “the intentional, proactive effort by schools, districts, and states to instill in their students important core, ethical values that we all share...” Accordingly, the school’s character education initiative must have a specific plan that targets the needs of the school and its stakeholders. Without a solid plan, the process of character education will not occur.

Every school in Maryland creates some type of school improvement plan, and the character education initiative should be an integral part of it. The school action plan should be based on the district character plan and should integrate the process of character

Every school in Maryland creates some type of school improvement plan, and the character education initiative should be an integral part of it.

education into all parts of the school. The action plan should be ongoing, spanning from three to five years, but with regular infusions of new strategies to keep the initiative fresh. The school character education committee, with input from all stakeholders, should create the action plan. The district character education coordinator should also be involved to ensure the school plan supports the district plan, and that all stakeholders are working to achieve shared goals. However, each school should tailor its plan to its own needs.

As with the district plan, the school character education plan should be based on the individual needs of the school. Therefore, a needs assessment, using the multiple character education needs assessment tools available, should be completed before the action plan is written. The results of this needs assessment, whether behavior, academic, etc., need to be addressed in every area of the school, starting with the most troublesome first and expanding into those areas that could eventually benefit from the improved climate brought about by the character education initiative. Assessment components should be incorporated into the plan yearly to be sure the goals of the plan are being met. Yearly adjustments to these goals will be necessary to keep the plan current with the changes occurring within the school community.

Principle 3 Strategies

- Complete a needs assessment for your school to pinpoint the areas the character education action plan should address first.
- The Character Education Partnership (CEP) Web site, www.character.org, has many downloadable resources, such as *The Eleven Principles Sourcebook*, that schools can use to assess their needs.
- Once the needs assessment is complete, use the results along with input from Character Education Committee members to write the action plan.
- When writing the plan, create achievable strategies that directly relate to the goals established by the needs assessment results.
- Consult the district character education coordinator to align the school's action plan with the district plan.
- Span the action plan over three to five years to assure quality strategies and activities are added each year.
- Assess the new strategies implemented each year, as well as the original strategies, to determine if the character education goals are being met.
- Adjust strategies and activities annually based on the evaluation results.

Theory into Practice

Pocomoke Middle School in Worcester County created a character education action plan as part of their Accreditation For Growth (AFG) initiative. The pillars of the school's AFG initiative are character education, academics, technology, and parent involvement. Each pillar of the initiative is run by a committee of staff members. The character education committee, which represents each area of the school as well as parent and student representatives, implements and monitors the character education plan.

Pocomoke designed its character education plan with the following categories: activity, person responsible, timeline, resources needed, and date completed. Activities were described over a five-year period (2003 to 2008), with new ones being added each year to

enhance and refresh the program. As a result, everyone is clear on what needs to happen and when, and there is a level of accountability for following through on character education. The action plan was written by Pocomoke's central AFG committee, which consisted of the committee chairmen and the school's administration. The character education committee implemented the action plan under the direction of its chairman, a school counselor.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 4

The core of the character education initiative focuses on relationships.

According to Geneva Gay, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (2000), a crucial element of a culturally competent school is its ability to build and sustain relationships among its stakeholders. Character education researchers have supported this idea by emphasizing the importance of adults building relationships centered on respect, responsibility, and caring with each other and with students.

In today's culture, students as well as adults are in need of positive role models of civility and caring. Far too many of our students are living in homes and communities that have few examples of positive models. These role models are needed to help students build the habits and attitudes essential for academic and social competence. It

is imperative, as educators and role models, that we teach and model the character traits that have contributed to our success as caring, committed educators. Whether we like it or not, we as the adults in a building are role models to the students, just as athletes are role models to sports fans whether they choose it or not. (Former Baltimore Oriole Cal Ripken Jr., who understood this much more than most, addressed it eloquently in his Baseball Hall of Fame induction speech.)

It is essential, as educators and role models, that we teach and model the character traits that have contributed to our success as caring, committed educators.

Principle 4 Strategies

- Discuss regularly, in team and staff meetings, the importance of modeling and teaching character to all stakeholders. A book such as Hal Urban's *Life's Greatest Lessons* would be a wonderful faculty read.
- Recognize students for improving their behavior or developing responsible habits, such as turning in homework. (Many schools use reinforcement programs in conjunction with a positive behavioral initiative.) Recognize adults in the building, too, for modeling responsible and civil behavior. This recognition for students and adults can be as simple as a kind word or note.
- Emphasize to all stakeholders the essential role that positive staff-to-staff, staff-to-students, and student-to-student relationships play in forging a positive school climate.
- As administrators set the tone for a school, focus extra attention on administrator-staff and administrator-student relationships.
- Plan regular social events for staff to reinforce the character and climate of the school.
- Hold ceremonies to recognize students who excel in character education traits and values.
- Provide students opportunities, through literature and narratives, to observe and discuss character strengths and flaws.
- Remind teachers and staff to be "warm demanders." Teachers want to build wonderful relationships with their students, but we must also demand rigor in all they do. Excellence, whether social or academic, is contagious.
- Encourage staff members to get to know their students, their dreams and aspirations.
- Teach to the students' learning styles and intelligences, so that every student can feel successful.
- Hold high expectations for students. Empower them to make positive decisions and set goals.
- Encourage positive relationships among students by rejecting bullying and teaching tolerance.

- Remind staff that positive and negative teacher attitudes and expectations have profound effects on student achievement, and that caring prompts effort and achievement.
- Identify disconnected students and create a mentoring program within the school to support them.
- Remember that all relationships should maintain professional integrity.

Theory into Practice

In Washington County's Clear Spring High School, the character focus for the past several years has been improving the sportsmanship and conduct of athletes and spectators through the Pursuing Victory with Honor program from Character Counts.

Hanging prominently in Clear Spring High's gymnasium is a banner that reads "Pursuing Victory with Honor." It reminds athletes and fans, including parents and other adults entering the school, of the high expectations of Clear Spring High School. At every athletic event, attendees receive a copy of the school's expectations for spectator behavior. These simple actions communicate to adults the school's commitment to sportsmanship and encourage them to model sportsmanship at all school events.

The Pursuing Victory with Honor Award is one of the most prestigious school awards at Clear Spring High School. This honor is bestowed upon one female athlete and one male athlete. The students are honored at a banquet and are each presented with a trophy. Their names are added to the Pursuing Victory with Honor plaque that is always on display in the trophy cabinet in the front vestibule of Clear Spring High.

During the school year, coaches, the athletic director, and the principal are looking for student athletes who are exemplary on the field and in the classroom. These students accept responsibility for their actions. They demonstrate respect for everyone, athletes and non-athletes, teammates and opponents. They know what the rules are and play by them, not taking advantage of anyone along the way. Not only do they win graciously, they also know how to maintain their dignity upon losing. They carry this attitude with them wherever they go. It's a code of ethics that they live by.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 5

Character education is connected to the curriculum; teachers of all subjects take advantage of “teachable moments” that relate to character.

Creating a school culture of character takes more than a few posters and several morning announcements. Creating this desired culture takes all stakeholders moving toward shared goals for civility, kindness, tolerance, and responsibility. To actualize such a culture, we must educate the minds and hearts of children.

A comprehensive character education approach will use the curriculum as a tool to develop students’ intellectual understanding of the ethical and social issues faced by citizens in a democracy.

Integrating ethical education into the life of a school requires a curricular approach to character education. Assigning responsibility for character education to one teacher or the counseling department, or relying on one course, will do little to affect children’s underlying character. Ideally, character education components are woven into curriculum throughout the

school day. The humanities, sciences, and social sciences are replete with examples and opportunities to expand a student’s understanding of life’s social and ethical issues. This can be accomplished, for example, by teaching tolerance through multicultural readings in Language Arts, or by teaching responsibility through personal fitness goal-setting in physical education class. A course or unit that incorporates character education by teaching conflict resolution, violence prevention, and personal character responsibility can be effective if practices and lesson plans are shared and reinforced throughout the school. Having time to incorporate lessons based on character education will inevitably reinforce the school’s common language and goals for students’ civility. A comprehensive character education approach will use the curriculum as a tool to develop students’ intellectual understanding of the ethical and social issues faced by citizens in a democracy.

Principle 5 Strategies

Strategies to integrate character into the curriculum

- Teach staff how to build character education lessons and core values into daily learning in all subjects.
- Check to see if the district has already established recommendations for schools on integrating character into the curriculum.
- Have teachers share across disciplines their lesson plans and teaching strategies for developing student discussions on important ethical and social issues.
- Choose literature that creates “teachable moments”—that is, literature that focuses on character virtues and multicultural elements, and offers opportunities to identify persons as having good character.
- Discuss historical events in which character attributes are exemplified by historical figures.
- Build relationships with students by sharing personal stories of growth, triumph, and character development.
- Provide students opportunities to practice good character, for example, service-learning projects, cooperative-learning activities, and peer tutoring.
- Recognize individual staff and teams who successfully infuse character into their respective curriculums.

Strategies for implementing a character education curriculum

- Formulate a representative team to create a common language and define the school’s core values.
- Develop and collect resource materials that support the common core values established.
- Create or find activities that reinforce the values of the school and community.
- Correlate the character education curriculum to the achievement standards set by the state and local boards of education.

- Include conflict resolution, violence prevention, anti-bullying, and anti-harassment activities, along with celebrations of diversity, in the school's strategies for developing good character.
- Empower students by giving them opportunities to establish goals, serve others, plan activities and actions, and explore career and college options.
- Develop character-related resources: a quotation list, hero profiles, and a collection of articles from newspapers, magazines, and the Web.
- Share often the purpose, goals, and concepts of the character course so that they may be reinforced throughout the school community.
- Align all other aspects of the character education initiative to this curriculum so that there is a congruence of core values.
- Create a professional library that includes character education resources.

Theory into Practice

At Pyle Middle School in Montgomery County, a class survey in health classes revealed a bullying problem among seventh-grade students. To address the problem, the class conducted an anti-bullying campaign. The students learned about advocacy and proactive behavior, and identified ways to show caring and respect for others in an assertive manner. Working in pairs, students researched different types of bullying (cyber-bullying, in-person bullying, harassment), their risks and consequences, and their effects on both the victim and perpetrator. Students also researched problem-solving strategies and presented their findings on posters that were displayed throughout the school, reinforcing anti-bullying messages schoolwide.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 6

The character education efforts are clearly visible throughout the school.

As stakeholders in our school, we know that a visual representation of excellent work speaks volumes to visitors as they walk through hallways and enter classrooms. We can recite a pledge and listen to thoughtful words about a certain trait, but displays and visual testimonials to our actions echo louder and are farther reaching.

For years, teachers have faithfully displayed their students' best work. Bulletin boards and "best work" boards represent students' academic achievement. Such exemplary work communicates to parents and other visitors the high standards to which students can and should be held academically. Similarly, as an individual

There should be immediately visible a bulletin board that communicates and celebrates the beliefs and practices of the school, and the standards to which students are held.

comes into a school building, there should be immediately visible a bulletin board, banner, or framed picture collage that communicates and celebrates the core beliefs and practices of the school, and the standards of character to which students are held. On this display should be pictures or descriptions of the different ways school stakeholders exhibit exemplary character in their relationships. To reinforce the importance of consistently making the effort, there should also be visible proof that members have met the expectations and have been recognized for their efforts; for example, pictures of individual members accompanied by a written statement explaining why the individuals are being recognized and giving specific examples of their positive behavior speak volumes. As Mark Twain said, "I can live for two months on one good compliment."

Principle 6 Strategies

- Dedicate a prominent spot near the school entrance for a physical display that promotes the school's character education philosophy. Be sure this is not a "left-over" space, but a prime location that will be seen by all stakeholders.

- Designate someone to maintain an accurate, current display. Keeping the information current is essential to gaining the interest and support of the community.
- Purchase or make available at all times a camera to make visual displays possible. A picture is worth a thousand words!
- When a student is recognized, send home a written “Trait-o-Gram” (a brief communiqué in a telegram format) that lets parents know their child has been honored and encourages them to visit the school to see the recognition.
- Set the expectation that when staff members are recognized, there will be some type of indication made in their personnel file to show they supported and promoted positive citizenship in their school.
- Display news articles about the school and its stakeholders.
- Develop a “compliment tree” in the school and/or classroom. Individuals can thank others who have made a positive impact in their lives. The compliments can be written on leaves, apples, etc. Once a month, remove the compliments from the tree and give them to those people who inspired the compliments.

Theory into Practice

Harford County’s Joppatowne Elementary School maintains a strong visual display of character through its Best Stars program. Each month, the school holds a separate assembly for the primary and secondary grades to celebrate the successful practice of a certain character trait. Each classroom teacher recognizes one student from his or her classroom, and that student is recognized as the Best Star for the month. The students’ pictures are taken and displayed on a Star Wall in the school’s main hallway along with their nomination statements. On Friday, teachers recognize one Joppatowne Star Student from each classroom. The students’ names are read on the morning announcements the following Monday. In addition, the children get to write their names on stars posted on the wall outside their classrooms.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 7

Morning meetings put character education into practice by encouraging adults and students to share and respect each other's social and emotional needs.

We know that students as well as adults have lives both inside and outside of school. And our experiences both inside and outside the school can influence each other. Therefore, it behooves us to consider how we can start the day to ensure a positive experience for all stakeholders in the building.

Morning meetings are a good way to help stakeholders in a school focus on positive practices that will help them meet social/emotional and ethical goals within the school day.

The morning meeting concept is not new. This concept is similar to the middle school advisory period and the high school homeroom. These approaches, if done well, help students connect with their peers as well as the adults in the school. These times are also ideal for sharing information that all stakeholders in the school might find helpful. Notice, the development of a connection requires more than just a few announcements. It should be a time for the “family” to gather to greet each other and address the concerns that arise in any close-knit group. Deb Brown in her book, *Growing Character* (2003), describes her morning meeting,

A common misunderstanding is that morning meetings are just for elementary schools. The truth is that high school students can benefit just as much, if not more, from this opportunity to connect with other students and adults...

Right after the morning announcements, we all come together for a meeting. The students usually sit on the rug and lean back on the big, comfortable floor pillows. I sit in a chair close by. At that time, I make announcements and give students any information they need to take home to their parents. We also share and celebrate good news...Some days there is bad news to share. A family illness or death is sad to share, but is an important part of our caring curriculum... This process is a real community builder. (p. 49-50)

Clearly, a morning meeting can set the stage for a more positive day for all within the classroom or school. A great strength of this format is that it is easily customized to address each school's unique needs. A common misunderstanding is that morning meetings are just for elementary schools. The truth is that high school students can benefit just as much, if not more, from this opportunity to connect with other students and adults, to practice kindness and good manners, and to prepare mentally for a day of learning.

Principle 7 Strategies

- In middle and high school settings where advisory periods or morning meetings are not established, use time at the beginning of a class, before instruction, to review classroom norms, share feelings and thoughts, and set goals. Establish procedures and a time limit to keep these sessions productive and efficient.
- Start each meeting by having students sit on the floor or carpet, or in desks and chairs, in a circle. Going from left to right, or right to left, have them exchange greetings. This can be a hand-shake, "high-five," or a hug!
- Invite students to thank anyone in the class who helped them the day before or that morning. (This is especially relevant for elementary students who remain with the same students most of the day.)
- In high schools, consider a multiple-grade grouping for the homeroom or advisory period. This will allow seniors to help younger students, as well as younger students to support seniors who may be struggling to graduate. It can also be a good time for older students to inculcate younger students into the hopefully positive "ethos" or life of the school.
- Have middle and high school students bring their breakfast to class occasionally, so the group can "break bread" together. Some groups have even gone as far as bringing covered dishes to share.
- Share important information. Be sure to plan time for discussion if the topic merits elaboration.
- Consider this a good time to discuss current events that could be influencing the students or their community. This might be

especially helpful for those connected to the military during times of conflict.

- Develop service projects that may be sponsored or participated in by the students during the morning meeting time. This is a good time for middle and high school students to gather in a central area for a morning breakfast and then work, for example, cleaning up a stream or serving as buddies to Special Olympic athletes.
- Use the morning meeting to discuss issues that may arise within the life of the classroom. Have students share some of their concerns. This can be done in the actual meeting, or concerns can be placed in a jar beforehand and then discussed during a meeting. This anonymity may help more students to express their concerns. In discussing these group concerns, be careful not to use individual names, and seek input from students on how to resolve the issue.
- Take time to celebrate good news and accomplishments. For example, recognize students who have improved their grades, won an art award, or made the travel volleyball team.
- Consider meeting at other times during the day. Although the term “morning meeting” is used, schools have found success using this type of strategy throughout the course of the day. For example, a school that has a mid-morning break might combine the break with a meeting time, using the time to celebrate successes and intervene in conflicts and other issues.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 8

Morning announcements reinforce the character education initiative.

A focus on a character trait, idea, thought, or quote is an excellent way to start the day and to instill a common thought throughout the school building. Everyone spends a few minutes learning and reflecting on the message that can frame the day and be reinforced throughout the day. A character message during the morning announcements is a powerful method for maximizing impact in a short amount of time. An added benefit is that the message reaches

the entire school, and its positive impact can be seen in the actions and attitudes of both adults and students in the building.

A character message during the morning announcements is a powerful method for maximizing impact in a short amount of time.

Morning announcements allow the school to hear a common message on what is worthy and important within the life of the school. Yet if this is all we do to promote the development of character, we will fail. Using morning announcements to focus all stakeholders on the school's character goals is just one tool from the box for focusing and reminding stakeholders of what is important in the school. What we do the rest of the day will determine how well we succeed.

Principle 8 Strategies

- If your school broadcasts the morning announcements on closed-circuit television, use the school's character display as the background for the broadcast. The display may feature the month's virtue, thus emphasizing a target virtue visually rather than with words, a strategy that will be especially effective in reaching the school's visual learners. A bold and colorful backdrop will capture viewers' attention.
- Make positive affirmations, character quotes, daily words of wisdom, or thoughts of the day a part of every daily announcement.
- Invite a staff member, school visitor, student, custodian, or office staff member to deliver the daily message. He or she can add personal examples or interpretations of the message. For example, a message about caring may be presented by, or about, a person working within the building (e.g., custodian, teacher, cafeteria worker) who continually demonstrates a caring attitude toward others.
- Involve all staff in sharing the message of good character. A daily, identifiable, and meaningful phrase such as the school motto or creed can be repeated by students and staff members alike at the end of morning announcements.

- Ensure a consistent character language is used during morning announcements and throughout the school. A principal's daily message to staff may include the monthly virtue along with examples and suggestions for practicing the virtue during the day.
- Consider using skits or role-plays to capture the attention of students and staff. These visual displays model positive choices, decisions, and actions. Base the skits on real situations occurring in your school. Then have the students act out their skits over the closed-circuit television or via the morning announcements.
- Incorporate the use of music into the announcements; for example, play character-education specific songs or any music that will capture the attention of students.
- Use the morning announcements to identify students and staff who display exemplary virtues. Students and teachers may identify others displaying positive virtues by writing a complimentary statement, citing the virtue and describing the positive act. Compliments are placed in a box available in each classroom, and many of them are read on the morning announcements. All are discussed within the given classroom, and students are praised publicly.
- Consider designating students exhibiting positive behavior as the Respectful Student of the Day (or week, month, etc.).
- Consider using the morning announcements as a time to teach children about national holidays, important historical events, and individuals in history showing positive character traits.
- As a follow-up to a weekly character lesson, consider inviting students to present their own skit, poem, story, etc. on the morning announcements.
- Alert parents to a child's upcoming "performance" on the morning announcements. This generates an enthusiasm that is carried home and reinforces the character traits established at school. Parents are more likely to buy into character education when they see a direct connection to their child.

Edgewater Elementary School in Anne Arundel County uses recurring characters in a popular sketch series to illustrate character during the morning announcements. After being introduced by the music of “Green Acres,” the music and art teachers don large snouts and reenact real-life scenarios as “The Piglets.” One piglet consistently finds herself having made poor choices while the other piglet finds a way to redirect her friend, describing the current virtue and explaining how to better solve her problem.

One popular skit was a lesson on the virtue of patience. It began with one piglet quietly reading a library book when the second piglet abruptly snatched the book from the first. The first piglet patiently explained that if the second piglet wanted to read the book, she should first ask politely, then offer suggestions such as taking turns and reading the book together. The second piglet acknowledged these suggestions and was willing to try the new approach to the problem.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 9

Partnerships with businesses and communities support school and community character-building efforts.

To make the most significant, positive difference in children’s lives, schools should try to extend character education beyond the school. Parents, families, businesses, and communities—all can join the effort to develop good character.

Partnerships between schools and businesses are valuable in developing a school’s character initiative. Families, teachers, students, government leaders, business leaders, clergy leaders, and civic organizations can work together to ensure that students are exposed to positive role models. When their overlapping involvement is woven into a child’s life, he or she receives the support needed to grow into a healthy citizen and productive member of the community.

Partnerships give business leaders, civic organizations, and religious affiliates an opportunity to contribute to the character education process. To maintain its efficiency, the partnership should be beneficial to both the school and the outside community. It is

important to recognize that financial gifts, although nice and welcomed, are not the priority of partnerships. What may be most beneficial is the time adults spend mentoring students.

Matching the right activity to the right contributor is essential. Match thoughtfully and with input from the contributor. There are many ways for businesses and community organizations to contribute to schools.

Here are just a few: service projects, internships for students, mentoring, job shadowing, tutoring, participating in career day, holding workshops for parents, sponsoring fund-raisers, providing

resources (school supplies, expertise for staff trainings, incentives for teachers and students, etc.), supporting needy families in the school, and joining the school's character education team or committee.

Partnerships between schools and businesses are valuable in developing a school's character initiative.

Mentoring is a powerful way for communities to support schools, because it provides an opportunity for positive role modeling, academic support, and practice forming relationships with new individuals based on trust and caring. Since character education promotes development of positive behaviors and respectful actions, mentoring is an excellent path to pursue in reinforcing these expectations and goals. It is often said that children learn best by example. A relationship developed through mentoring has as its foundation the principle that the mentor will provide leadership and guidance for the mentored. When volunteers from businesses, civic and religious organizations, and the community are willing to volunteer their time, school staff should work hard to ensure their time and talents are put to effective use. Mentoring's fruits are well worth the labor.

Principle 9 Strategies

Developing and maintaining partnerships

- Develop well-defined, well-managed partnerships that support school initiatives. To ensure consistent, dependable communication, and to respect the time of the community/business representatives, designate one dependable, knowledgeable person to serve as the contact person for the school.

- Carefully match contributors to activities. Communicate with the contributors. Listen to them and ask questions so that you understand their goals, then suggest a match that benefits both school and contributor.
- Set clear expectations for the school and the partner. The chance of a misunderstanding or disappointment is reduced when both parties are clear about each other's role.
- Recognize your partners. It is very important to recognize your partners by inviting them to the school for a special event, such as a breakfast or evening assembly recognizing their support and participation. In addition, set up a partnership page in your school newsletter. This will be a nice advertisement for the contributor and lets the community know who is supporting the school.
- Display a partnership board/tree in the school lobby. Make visible the names of the community contributors.
- Try to avoid dual (competing) contributors. In other words, if you have one ice cream shop as a partner, don't recruit another.
- Monitor and reevaluate partnerships. Develop plans collaboratively to improve or to be more efficient.
- For more resources and ideas, consult The Daniels Fund Web site, www.danielsfund.org. Particularly useful is a chart showing potential pitfalls and ways to avoid them when establishing and working with partnerships in business.

Establishing effective mentoring partnerships

- Identify individuals interested in participating in a mentoring program.
- With the school principal (and other administrators), identify clear expectations for the mentoring program. This is a critical step that can help you avoid potentially embarrassing delays (e.g., a mentor waiting while the school decides how to use him/her).
- Identify a mentoring program coordinator to ensure there is a consistent contact person.
- Ask faculty and staff to identify students they feel would benefit from mentoring.

- Check with local churches, civic organizations, area businesses, area educational institutions, and the Big Brother and Big Sister organizations for leads on potential mentors.
- Contact high schools to identify potential student mentors for middle and elementary students. Many high school students need citizenship or service-learning hours and are eager to participate.
- Be sure to follow the security measures of the school and district. For example, mentors are likely to need to be fingerprinted.
- Match students and mentors thoughtfully, taking care to connect the mentor's skills to the student's needs.
- Train the mentors. Take a day to orient them to the school, explain procedures and expectations, and help them understand what a mentor is and is not, which behaviors are appropriate and which are not (e.g., gift-giving, meetings outside of school).
- Train the teacher(s). Explain the teacher's responsibilities (e.g., ensuring the mentor and child stay in the classroom) and each mentor's duties.
- Create a schedule. Creating a schedule informs all participants of the time and place where the mentor will be working with a student.
- Set clear guidelines. Creating guidelines for both the mentor and the teacher ensures both understand the program's expectations. It is unwise for the teacher to use a mentor for "busy work" such as making copies. Similarly, it would be unproductive for mentors to pursue duties not related to their intent of helping students.
- Obtain parents' permission to have a mentor work with their child. Make clear in writing that any interaction with mentors after school is not supported by the school, and make sure parents acknowledge their understanding in writing.
- Meet regularly with the student, teachers, and mentors (separately) to assess progress and solicit feedback on the program. Continue to monitor and reevaluate the program with the input given.

- Consider removing students who are not making progress over time.
- Evaluate the program; consider checking the grade-point averages and office referrals of mentored students to see if they have improved.

Theory into Practice

Multiple partnerships are used in a variety of ways to carry messages of character at Edgewater Elementary School in Anne Arundel County. Local government officials visit the school each month and are guest speakers on the morning announcements. Speakers are asked to share how their education, and especially personal character traits, made them the leaders they are today, also, how these character traits contribute to their daily lives and actions. Another partnership with a local karate school also focuses on messages of character. The karate school's director, and other business and community leaders, periodically attend the school's quarterly assemblies and speak of the importance of good personal habits and traits, and how they make them who they are. All speakers agree to focus on responsibility, punctuality, attendance, and organization. Additionally, the school has invited a professional soccer team manager to speak at an assembly about the difference between a great athlete and a total athlete, who is not only the best player, but is also cooperative, respectful, and a team player.

In Anne Arundel County, Fort Smallwood Elementary expanded its business partnerships from five to 44 within three years. Initiated and matched to activities by the partnership coordinator, businesses support the school in numerous ways. For example, a local ice cream shop sponsors quarterly incentives to support the reading program. Civic organizations such as the Society of Engineers provide teacher in-services to support math and science instruction. A small computer business offered workshops for parents on how to monitor their child's My Space Web page. A partnership with a clothing store funds programs on safety, nutrition, and character. This partnership also supports the school's fundraising activities for a large service-learning project. Incentives awarded at monthly character assemblies

were funded through partnerships with a local car dealership, catering company, bank, and restaurant. Students recognized for academic and character excellence were awarded a savings bond and a free dinner with their families. In all of these partnerships, matching the business to its potential in servicing the school was vital.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 10

School assemblies emphasize and recognize good character.

“Everybody loves to be recognized. We are all proud when someone gives us credit for our ideas,” says Steve Dixon in the *Elementary School Guide to Character Education* (2001). “When our peers and community share in the recognition, the sense of accomplishment is even greater, and this is equally true for adults and children.”

Remember:

What you celebrate

is what you validate.

In many schools we have assemblies to celebrate excellence. We often celebrate those who have excelled in academics, athletics, arts, vocational education, and other areas; therefore, we should consider holding recognition assemblies for students who are exhibiting good character. Assemblies communicate to all stakeholders that what is being recognized is important.

Of course, schools should not stop holding the more traditional academic and athletic assemblies. These are important parts of the life of a school. But all excellence that is valued within an educational environment deserves recognition. Character is no exception. We should recognize those who spend their spare time serving others. We should recognize students who work hard in student government or in peer mediation. We should recognize students who are working hard to improve their behavior or their academics. In other words, if we value excellence, then we should recognize it publicly and with enthusiasm!

Principle 10 Strategies

- Recognize and celebrate good sportsmanship on the day after a sporting event over the intercom or school television network. This recognition is well-received and appreciated when it is made by the team's coach. Fans as well as players should be thanked for their good sportsmanship.
- Hold assemblies to celebrate improvements in school climate. This may be a good time to have teachers share what they have done as a class to promote a more respectful climate.
- Encourage the music department to develop songs that reflect a character theme. Some of the most effective elementary and middle school assemblies have each grade level present a song about good character. This allows all the other students to recognize and celebrate their accomplishment.
- Reach out to the social, religious, and athletic organizations of your students. Ask these organizations to contact the school when students have exemplified good character. The school can then recognize the efforts of the students outside of the school environment while tying the school to the outside life of the student.
- Consider holding character assemblies at which outside groups present programs on positive themes and reinforce the school's efforts to develop character.
- Inform students of efforts to improve school climate during the announcements and assemblies. Students should know and understand their successes and their failures to help reach the school's goals.
- Take time to recognize the accomplishments of the entire school in your assemblies. It is nice to recognize individual persons, but the efforts of an entire school in meeting social and ethical goals should also be celebrated and recognized.
- In addition to recognizing student athletes with traditional sports awards, such as the most valuable player, recognize student athletes who exemplify the school's character pillars, on and off the field.
- Remember: What you celebrate is what you validate.

Theory into Practice

Montgomery County's Forest Oak Middle School has established a character recognition event, Celebrating Character, based on the school's pillars of character. Each month a different character pillar is promoted throughout the school. In order to spot acts of good character, everyone in the school has the task of observing one another. Each grade level is divided into two teams, and students identify six students from their team as having displayed that month's character pillar. Winning students are featured on the school's television news show along with the principal, who presents them with a certificate. In addition, their pictures are displayed in the main hall display case, and they enjoy an afternoon of pizza, games, and fun at the Gaithersburg Youth Center.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 11

A positive behavior initiative supports the character education initiative.

We believe that Dr. Frank Crane was right when he said, “Responsibility is the thing people dread most of all. Yet it is the only thing in the world that develops us...” Think of what would happen if everyone in the same school would accept responsibility for his or her own actions. As part of the school's character education plan, some type of positive behavior program should be used to help students and adults develop habits of civility that promote kindness, caring, respect, and responsibility. This could be a positive behavior process such as the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process, but it could also be another positive behavior initiative.

Teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff should take responsibility and make time to teach, model, and provide opportunities for students and adults to develop positive habits. All adults should seek to develop continuity in what the specific behaviors, e.g. respect, look like in practice. Students at the school can learn what is expected of them, and, through input and practice, develop positive habits. Students who take responsibility to develop such habits will be recognized and rewarded in a variety of ways.

A school staff, working collaboratively with students and other stakeholders, should agree upon a set of expectations to be followed throughout the building. Every school could then post a code of

As part of the school's character education plan, some type of positive behavior program should be used to help students and adults develop habits of civility that promote kindness, caring, respect, and responsibility within the school.

conduct, as well as behavior expectations by location (e.g., classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, bathrooms, playground). As they are role models for the school, staff members are encouraged to demonstrate the desired behaviors. Sufficient time should be allocated toward teaching and practicing the schoolwide expectations. Explicitly showing students what is expected, and then asking them to practice it, makes following the expectations part of the schoolwide climate. Consistent consequences for not meeting expectations should be established and adhered to for

all students so as to maintain a fair and caring environment for students and staff alike. The ultimate goal is to build a sense of cooperation among all stakeholders. This will lead to an overall positive school climate.

Additionally, a monitoring system should be in place to analyze discipline data in order to respond appropriately to trouble spots. (For example, data may identify a particular location, type of behavior, time of day, or number of repeat referrals as a trouble spot.) This data should be communicated at least monthly to all staff members. This can be done through the school improvement team, committees, or grade-level team meetings.

Many Maryland schools use a positive behavior process to create safer, more effective schools. Such a process can improve a school's ability to teach and support positive behavior, and it can be used in conjunction with character education. It can also generate valuable data on climate, behavior, and other areas that can inform the school's character education initiative.

Principle 11 Strategies

- Commit to making the school a character education/positive behavior initiative site.
- Include the positive behavior initiative in the school improvement plan.
- Form a character education/positive behavior committee and provide members sufficient time during the school day to effectively plan and implement the school's character education and positive behavior initiatives.
- Review data (discipline, attendance, academics, climate surveys, etc.) from the previous year in order to identify what changes need to be made for the school to have a more positive, safe, and orderly environment.
- Include staff surveys in the data collection. The staff should use data to select the behaviors and expectations to be communicated.
- Direct adult stakeholders and students to work together to develop consistent practices. For example, students can discuss what respect looks like and work with teachers to develop several practices that will promote respect within the school.
- Teach specific behaviors and expectations. Students learn from hearing and doing. They should have the opportunity to practice and demonstrate a clear understanding of the expectations (for example, morning routine, hallway behavior, dining room/cafeteria behavior, auditorium behavior, school bus behavior). Consider publishing the behavior expectations in the students' agendas.
- Once the desired expectations have been taught and are in place, implement a system of positive rewards and incentives to recognize students and staff. For students, this may include making phone calls home or awarding them tokens that can be redeemed at the school's store or at area businesses. For teachers, business partners may donate a gift card, or the principal may offer nonmaterial rewards such as leaving 15 minutes early, enjoying an extended lunch period, or a casual dress day.

- Decrease extrinsic awards as the school year progresses and habits of good behavior are developed.
- Consider issuing “positive referrals” that salute students for making good choices or excelling academically. Also consider year-end assemblies and recognition programs to recognize students who have excelled behaviorally. The criteria for this recognition should be introduced to parents and students at the beginning of the school year and reinforced throughout the year.
- In addition to schoolwide expectations, clearly defined consequences should be put in place for inappropriate behavior. The consequences should be tiered to match the varying severity of offenses, and should take into consideration the school board’s policy outlining socially acceptable behavior.

Theory into Practice

Stemmers Run Middle School in Baltimore County has fused its Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process with character education to create a positive school climate.

Each morning after the Pledge of Allegiance, everyone in the school recites the Code of Conduct. Students collect “High Five Stamps” throughout the school day for demonstrating the desired behaviors outlined in the school’s Code of Conduct and Behavior Matrix, which describes the location-specific behaviors that are expected of students as they move through the building. The monthly referral report is used to determine what the character lesson and focus for the following month will be.

Incentives are planned monthly and reward those students who have shown positive behavior changes. The school also holds students accountable for their decisions. The school outlines student consequences on a chart that teachers call the “Tool Box.” Teachers and administrators are encouraged to follow the school’s discipline “Tool Box” with the daily expectations and consequences for poor choices.

Since Stemmers Run infused PBIS and character education into the school environment six years ago, it has seen many positive trends. As the number of office referrals has decreased, overall

academic achievement has increased. This academic progress is a clear indication that as PBIS/character education becomes part of the school culture, everyone benefits.

In Garrett County's Northern Middle School, staff combined all of the individual character education program components into one character education action plan. This action plan has a mission statement with three major objectives: to provide a safe, yet realistic, and more effective school environment, to improve the school's ability to teach and support positive behavior for all students, and to reinforce character education for all students and all staff in all settings. Positive behavior incentives are an integral part of this character education action plan.

Northern Middle School conducts a needs assessment to determine the areas on which it will focus. During the 2006-07 school year, the school focused on respect. This focus was intentionally taught and reinforced on the morning announcements. Then, students who positively displayed this character trait were rewarded with positive incentives and verbal praise for demonstrating respect for self, learning, others, and the environment.



SCHOOL PRINCIPLE 12

Service-learning and reflection are a part of the school's character education initiative.

To be truly meaningful and internalized, character education must be something that is done by all students. It is fine to read about caring and kindness. It is better to develop the habit of caring and kindness via action. Service for others communicates

that the server is capable of putting the needs of another before his or her own.

Service-learning is a natural component in an effective character education program.

Further, service-learning offers numerous

potential benefits for students: improved academic skills, strengthened character, lifelong civic participation, and improved workplace and personal development skills. Service-learning also impacts positively on the community. Ideally, students will become

Service-learning is a natural component in an effective character education program.

more caring, responsible, respectful citizens through service-learning. In fact, character education is built into the implementation of service-learning.

Through the student service-learning graduation requirement, the Maryland State Department of Education has acknowledged the beneficial impact of service-learning on the civic knowledge, civic engagement, academic success, and character and social development of students. The Department has also published *Maryland Student Service-Learning Guidelines*, a helpful booklet that outlines seven “best practices” in service-learning and provides examples of each.

Principle 12 Strategies

- Integrate service-learning into the curriculum and tie it to character education so that students better understand the purpose of helping others.
- Encourage students to reflect on the character traits they practiced by serving others. This can be done via a matrix or through a letter to a teacher. It is equally important that students get feedback regarding their efforts and their insights.
- Name the service-learning coordinator and advisory team to oversee the activities within the school. This team would function within the character education team to link service-learning with existing character development initiatives.
- Encourage staff and students to reflect on service-learning projects, as well as existing practices within the building, and how they relate to the development of character within the school.
- Imbed service-learning within the school’s annual action plan using the same language found in character education initiatives.
- Make in-service opportunities available to all staff to assist in the organization and implementation of character-driven service activities for students.

Theory into Practice

Since 1999, Frederick County's Catoclin High School has hosted an annual Empty Bowls Banquet/Choralfest/Art Show, a beloved event that entertains while it educates the community about local and global hunger and poverty issues, advocates for action to address these issues, and raises money for organizations that fight poverty and hunger.

This interdisciplinary, multi-grade project exemplifies the interdependence of character education and service-learning. Students exhibit not only caring for others but also responsibility. Students create ceramic bowls for the event which are then auctioned off to raise money to combat hunger. Participants are served soup by students and learn about poverty and hunger issues from guest speakers. During the event, students serve soup, collect money and manage the silent auction. Even the students' choral performance celebrates good citizenship, as the students sing songs with themes such as responsibility.

The event is a community project—students, staff, family members, community organizations, and feeder schools all get involved.

Another Frederick County school, Thurmont Middle School, created a unique service-learning project that focused on two aspects of character: citizenship and caring. Students from Thurmont Middle and El Chague, Nicaragua, participated in a sister-school partnership as part of the seventh grade social studies curriculum. Students learned about life in El Chague during classroom lessons and by writing to each other throughout the school year. Thurmont Middle students learned that they had many things in common with the Nicaraguan students, including many of the same challenges. This realization helped broaden the students' view of citizenship to a global perspective.

During this correspondence, Thurmont Middle students discovered the Nicaraguan students' poverty. As a result, the Thurmont Middle students collected school supplies and other necessary materials for their sister school. Through these caring acts, both sets of students learned about each other.

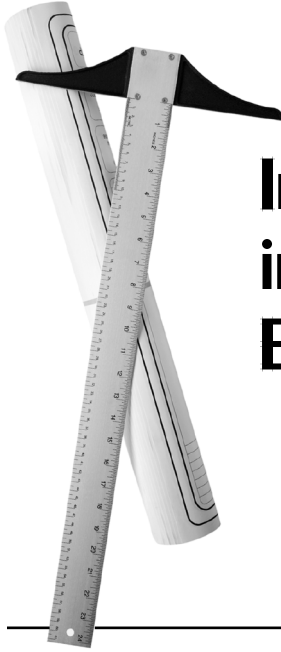
In Anne Arundel County, Bodkin Elementary School has undergone an evaluation of its existing character education

initiatives and has included more student-generated service-learning opportunities. Bodkin developed a working partnership with Rachel Blair, founder and director of Kindness in Action, a nonprofit organization devoted to helping children in third-world countries. Mrs. Blair agreed to work with each of the 26 classrooms (K-5) to, in her words, “plant the seed of kindness.” She exposed students to the real-life circumstances of children their own ages around the world, and rather than exploit the poverty conditions, she illustrated the beauty of their culture. She shared her current projects in India, the Ukraine, and other third-world countries via hands-on activities, kindness ceremonies, and opportunities to experience the dress, language, and practices of these children.

Students began to make connections. In addition to being excited by Mrs. Blair’s presentations, children began to ask, “What can we do to help?” Classrooms began to complete student-generated projects to benefit India (e.g., pencil drives, homemade journals with crayons, letters to children, fundraisers to buy school clothing and supplies). Mrs. Blair returned to Bodkin with beautiful slides of the children receiving the gifts. The slides also depicted the children in India learning about the students and seeing the pictures.

References

- Brown, D.A. (2003). *Growing character: 99 successful strategies for the elementary classroom*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Dixon, S. (2001). *Elementary school guide to character education*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.



Involving Parents in Character Education

William Damon, in his work *Greater Expectations* (1995), writes:

The seeds of the moral sense are sown at conception, and its roots are firmly established at birth. Every infant enters this world prepared to respond socially, and in a moral manner, to others. Every child has the capacity to acquire moral character. The necessary emotional response systems, budding cognitive awareness, and personal dispositions are there from the start. Although, unfortunately, not every child grows into a responsible and caring person, the potential to do so is native to every member of the species. (p. 132)

Therefore, barring any neurological issues that hinder thinking and consciousness, every child is born capable of acquiring the attributes and actions that will result in the development of a respectful, responsible, caring person. But having the wiring—the potential—does not mean the child

will acquire such characteristics. It is up to the family, the community, and ultimately the world to help provide the current—examples, exhortations, and expectations of behavior that encourage the habits of action and mind that define a person of good character. In other words, it takes adults to raise children. However, not everyone has recognized the importance the adults play in the formation of the child's character.

In his book *Emile*, French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that children should not be tainted by the adults or the social structures around them. Rousseau dismissed the importance of the adults in the raising of children, at least through adolescence. He maintained that left to their own accord, children will develop into ethically sensitive individuals through their intuitions, experiences, and feelings. Slowly and through stages, the child begins to mature naturally. Only until the child is between the ages of 12 and 15 should he or she be slowly introduced to what we would consider an education that will help the child fit into society. We can clearly argue that the educational needs of a child in the 21st century far exceed what Rousseau could have envisioned. Not starting formal education until age 12 would leave most children poorly prepared to live and thrive in our modern world. However, we cannot discount Rousseau entirely. He correctly gleaned that there are stages of development, and that the child grows into adulthood and is not born a little adult. We can value Rousseau's insights and the role that intuition, experience, and feelings play in the development of the child. But they are not enough to insure the development of the good, ethically sensitive child. After all, left strictly to one's own accords, one may act the majority of time in one's self interest without considering the needs of others. Rousseau may have also gleaned that children have the seed of morality in them, but he failed to recognize the value of interactions with caring adults, educators, and other students in the ethical development of the child. We want our children to grow and learn, to develop inquisitive minds, to explore and learn on their own. Yet we also acknowledge that

it will take the village to raise a child who will take his or her place as a contributing member of society.

This sounds easy enough. If we all work together, children will get their physical, social, emotional, and ethical needs met. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Many families are broken apart. Some children live in dangerous neighborhoods. Some children come into this world with poor social support and are being raised by young mothers with little or no emotional support or financial help from the biological father of the child. Other parent(s) must work several jobs just to provide the basics for the family. Some children live in homes with a great deal of financial benefits but lack emotional support. All of these children are at risk. Some of these children will find a way out of their malady. Their internal compass, nurtured by a few caring adults, will make all the difference. Unfortunately, most kids will need more support from the adults in their communities. These adults may be religious leaders, scout leaders, coaches, foster parents, business and social organizations and, perhaps most importantly, teachers in the student's life who forge a solid relationship with the parent(s) of the child.

With this in mind, we must acknowledge that schools have a critical role to play in the development of the ethical sensibilities of their students. For at least 180 days a year, students, unless they are sick, are in schools. Children on average spend more awake hours with their teachers, five days a week, than with any other adults. However, we cannot take the place of parents, nor should we try to do so. In the best situations, we can reinforce what caring, ethically sensitive parents are trying to inculcate in their children. Unfortunately in far too many cases, educators are the chief character educators as they assist children in forging an ethical conscience. Yet even in these situations, we can acknowledge that our connection with the homes can result in far higher yields than if we go it alone.

Educators must work to establish a solid relationship with their students' parents. The importance of this is being recognized in the development of "small high schools" that are

limiting the number of students in the school, or large schools that try to become “small” by developing various academies within the larger school. Many of these educators will be working with the students for their entire high school career and become conduits between the school and the home. Even if we are in a larger school, a connection between the educators and home can pay positive benefits for everyone. Still, we must go further than just educators. Schools must work with community groups.

Within every community there are community groups that can be marshaled to help schools and parents with the job of raising good children. Some children may need a “Big Sister.” Other students may benefit from joining a service club or a scout troop. Some parents may benefit from parental support groups that are offered through social agencies. In other words, the entire village needs to be networked through the school. Certainly, this sounds a bit grand. But it also makes sense. The school plays a crucial role in the life of the child and also the family. Any family who has struggled with a child’s academics or behavior will testify that what happens at school can influence what occurs at home, just as what occurs at home can affect the child’s performance in school.

The suggestions that follow argue and present examples on how educators can work with parents. We also provide examples of how communities can work with schools and parents in assisting each of these crucial caregivers in helping students grow up to be people of good character. Together, we can make a difference.

References

- Damon, W. (1995). *Greater expectations: Overcoming the culture of indulgence in America’s homes and schools*. New York: The Free Press.
- Rousseau, J. (2007). *Émile, or On Education*. NuVision Publications. (Original work published 1762)



PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRINCIPLE 1

Effective communication with parents facilitates the character education process.

Communication is key in any relationship, and the relationship between a child's school and family is one of the most valuable relationships that can be fostered. Schools need to be proactively communicating with parents regarding all aspects of the child's school-based education. An important part of any education is educating a child in social and ethical competencies. Now, we must acknowledge that the parent is the first and primary social and moral teacher for the child. But the school has a role to play, working with parents in this effort. School staffs interact with students for about seven hours per day. Therefore, we should communicate to parents our efforts to reinforce good character. Recognizing students individually and also collectively is good news that parents enjoy hearing. It also communicates the good behaviors that are happening and the value that we place on them. This in turn compliments the parents and reinforces everyone's efforts.

School staffs interact with students for about seven hours per day. Therefore, we should communicate to parents our efforts to reinforce good character.

Schools already use various means in communicating with parents. Character education information should be included in the established communication methods. Building on this, the committee that is coordinating the character education effort can incorporate new and creative means of communication.

Principle 1 Strategies

- Publish a monthly school newsletter, which is a simple yet powerful communication tool. When drafting the newsletter, consider these suggestions:
 - Place character education information in a prominent location in the newsletter.
 - Provide monthly “at-home” activities to reinforce monthly character values and traits within the school.

—Include the businesses that are supporting the school's character education efforts.

—Share the newsletter with nonprofit organizations that support character education.

- Consider sharing with parents the character-building strategies provided in Appendix A of this book. The strategies, written especially for parents, are taken from Dr. Helen LeGette's book, *Parents, Kids and Character*.
- Use the agenda book to explain the school's character initiative. Be sure to include the code of student conduct and student expectations, and the school's character pledge, values, and/or motto.
- Maintain current, relevant information about the school's character activities on the school Web site. Work character education into all aspects of the school—arts, athletics, academics. For example, a "Coaches Corner" could highlight the efforts of the coaches and athletes to promote good sportsmanship. Also on the Web site, provide ideas and activities for families to reinforce character education at home.
- Phone calls are a quick, effective way to communicate with parents. During routine phone calls, discuss the school's character education initiative with parents; ask for their support and participation.
- Consider sending parents notes that address their children's social and ethical progress. Positive notes are likely to be read and well-received. School staff should be encouraged to send parents notes citing specific examples of student behavior.
- Character education initiatives in a school can do a great deal to influence positive communication with parents. Some schools provide postcards for office staff to quickly sign and send home with students who display polite behavior in the front office. A simple, pre-printed message is sufficient: "Your child visited the front office today. It was a pleasure to speak to such a polite student. Thanks for what you do!"
- Introduce the character initiative to families who are new to the school. Include character education in the orientation for new students and their families and in the materials provided by the parent-teacher organization.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRINCIPLE 2

Parents/volunteers are trained to promote the character initiative throughout the school.

We all want parents to volunteer in our schools. Their presence sends a message to their children about service and caring, and to other children that people care about them and are willing to give up their time to help. Important for the parent is being part of the mission of the school. In other words, parents should also gain a sense of accomplishment regarding the work they are performing for the school. One way to ensure a positive experience for volunteers is to focus their time and efforts to helping the school meet its academic and character goals. For example, a goal for most schools is to assist students who are struggling academically. A volunteer can offer tutoring as well as a sympathetic ear. Another goal every school should have is to improve its learning climate. There is a simple reason for this: the more time teachers have to teach, the greater the possibility students can learn the assigned material. One way to help build a positive climate is to ensure all volunteers understand and are committed to the character education goals of the school. These goals should involve developing a caring, respectful, and responsible learning environment. In order to help achieve this goal, volunteers should be informed of and involved in the school's character education initiative. Through this training, volunteers learn that they will need to be role models as well as academic tutors. The combination of the two—role model and tutor—will help volunteers develop students' intellectual and social/ethical competencies. It will also reinforce what the educators and other stakeholders in the school are modeling and teaching students. In essence, the volunteer will take an active role in helping the school develop students who are smart and good people. To make sure this happens effectively, the school might establish a parent volunteer coordinator. The coordinator would ensure positive experiences for all volunteers, and work as a stakeholder in helping the school achieve its academic and character education goals.

One way to help build a positive climate is to ensure all volunteers understand and are committed to the character education goals of the school.

Principle 2 Strategies

- Have every volunteer read a description of the importance of character education in the life of the school. This should feature what is expected of students and adult stakeholders.
- Hold trainings, led by the school's character education coordinator, to acquaint volunteers with the school's character-building efforts.
- Provide name tags that designate volunteers in the school as Character Coaches. Being a Character Coach entails encouraging students to move through the hallways in an orderly manner and to practice good manners in the cafeteria.
- Ask volunteers at sporting events to serve as Character Coaches, reminding fans to show good sportsmanship in the stands. This can be done via an announcement or a handout given to each person entering the stands.
- Encourage the school's volunteers to recruit others in the community to volunteer to help the school meet its character education goals. This may include a pamphlet to share or leave in businesses, faith communities, or other social gathering spots.
- Consider developing lesson plans for volunteers to use in teaching students. The lessons should be descriptive and sent to volunteers before they come to the school. A school in North Carolina has developed grade-specific lessons that are tied to the regular curriculum and designed to be delivered by volunteers. The advantage of such an approach is that the volunteers do not have to shoulder the responsibility of developing a lesson plan, and the lesson will be aligned with the State's content standards.
- Designate a person in the office to serve as a volunteer coordinator. This will allow time for preparation on the part of the teacher or other stakeholder in the school who will receive assistance from the volunteer.
- Ask a volunteer to greet children as they come into the school. At the middle or high school level, this person can assist in the office or walk through the school's potential trouble spots.

Another friendly voice or calm presence is always valuable, for staff as well as students.

- Recognize volunteers for their efforts. This recognition should involve the students in the school who have benefited from the work of these coaches.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRINCIPLE 3

The parent involvement program includes parent forums, school social activities, volunteerism, and parent education workshops.

Parent involvement in schools goes much further than PTA meetings and parent conferences. Reaching our parents is more important than ever to the success of our students.

Indeed, the research tells us that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement.

Building and maintaining positive, working relationships with the parents in the school community takes effort and creativity. In order to maintain parents' support, initiatives must foster a positive

outlook on the school and assure parents of the well-being and safety of their children. Indeed, it is imperative for all stakeholders to be focused on common goals in order for all students to reach success.

In order for these efforts to be realized, schools need to go above and beyond the typical strategies of parent involvement. Learning needs to be celebrated. Community members need to learn about and learn from one another through social activities. Family members need to be involved in learning and the educational process of the schools. And, most importantly, parents' capacity to support their children in an ever-changing society must continue to grow. This can be achieved through the following strategies.

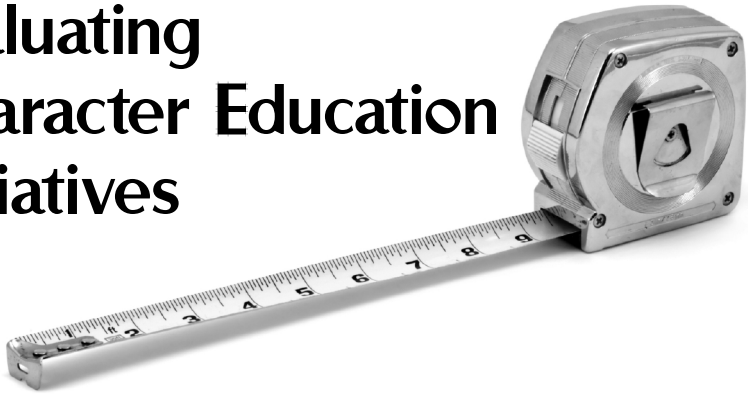
In order to maintain parents' support, initiatives must foster a positive outlook on the school and assure parents of the well-being and safety of their children.

Principle 3 Strategies

- Recognize parent volunteers for their time and effort. This can be accomplished by designating special parking spaces, recognizing volunteers' service to the school in the newsletter, holding a luncheon for them, and highlighting their contributions on hallway bulletin boards.
- Allow parents to share their talents with students by inviting them to speak on career day, co-sponsor a club, tutor a struggling student, or share their expertise in the classroom on a curriculum-related topic.
- Invite parents to be guest readers throughout the year and on special days such as Read Across America Day.
- Invite parents to join school committees, especially the character education committee.
- Invite families to participate in a school beautification day before the school year starts. This makes the school a more inviting place for students and builds a sense of community.
- Invite families to attend social functions at the school. This non-threatening interaction may help parents see the school as a place where they would want to volunteer. Some examples of social nights are a fall festival, ice-cream social, book swap, movie night, and talent show.
- Develop a parent committee that meets regularly with the principal to ask questions and voice concerns.
- Provide training for parents on how to support their children in this ever-changing world. Topics may include planning for college, bullying, and drug and gang prevention.
- Involve parents in celebrating the academic success of their children, no matter how small the success.
- Use events that automatically bring parents into the buildings, like concerts or graduation events, to share pertinent information and reinforce the importance of the school's character-building initiatives.
- Offer childcare and explore transportation options to allow more parent participation.

- Showcase student work in conjunction with a parent program.
- Create a needs assessment to determine what parents want to know more about within the school.
- Provide a forum for parents to share concerns and suggestions with the administration.
- Help parents reinforce the character traits, school norms, and school code of conduct by sharing that information with them.
- Consider using student “ambassadors”—students who serve as greeters when parents and guests enter the building or classroom. When choosing greeters, consider those students who rarely get the spotlight.
- Form a committee to welcome parents who are new to the school. (This could be a subcommittee within a current parental involvement committee.)
 - The welcoming committee should communicate to all stakeholders the rights and responsibilities of the school staff, students, and parents. Communication can be made through newsletters, parent meetings, and personal phone calls.
 - The committee should share with parents the appropriate procedures to follow when entering the building (e.g., signing in, wearing name tags).
 - Office staff should play a key role in this committee. They are often the first people visitors meet in the school.

Evaluating Character Education Initiatives



This section is about evaluation, not research. To do good research one would need a research design. Is the research study experimental or quasi-experimental? Are you using random selection as a means of determining your control and experimental schools? Do your control schools match up well with your experimental? If not, do you have measures to statistically “match them up?” What assessment measures are you using? Are they reliable? Are they valid? Do you have statisticians on board who will be able to interpret your data? Most schools and districts are not prepared to answer these questions, which are prerequisite to a true research study.

If you are like most school personnel, you want to gather and understand data that will help you improve your efforts. Dr. Ed DeRoche in paraphrasing Daniel Stufflebeam (2000) stated, “For school personnel at a school site who want to evaluate their own work and efforts, my opinion is that evaluation is best looked at, not necessarily as a way to prove something, but to improve something.”

This is what good evaluation does. Good evaluation allows us to determine the baseline of where we are as a school—uncover our strengths and weaknesses—and then build instructional or social/ethical strategies to improve our efforts. Appendix B contains three evaluation instruments developed by Dr. Ed DeRoche and taken from his book, *Evaluating Character Development: 51 Tools for Measuring Success* (2004). You have permission to use any of these instruments within your individual schools. How might you go about using these instruments? First—decide if these instruments will enable you to obtain a greater understanding of perceived strengths and weaknesses within the social and ethical climate of the school. Please consider the following steps if you decide to use one of the assessments.

1. Determine a time when stakeholders can take the assessment in a relaxed atmosphere. For adults it may be during the first 15 minutes of a faculty meeting. If the assessment is for students, you may consider giving the assessment right after school starts. Middle or high school students could complete a student assessment during advisor/advisee or homeroom period. Students as well as adults should be encouraged to answer the questions with complete honesty. Assign one student (during class time) or adult (after school) to collect the completed assessments and place them in a large manila envelope. Privacy should be insured for all participants.
2. Take the completed assessments and begin the process of evaluating the data. This should be a fairly easy thing to do. For example, if you choose to use SES 3-1—School Outcomes, you would divide the surveys according to which group (parents, students, teachers, etc.) completed the survey. Then you would number from one to twelve and summarize the data under the headings from (5) meaning major improvement to (1) meaning no improvement. Upon completion of this you would have some solid data that would indicate the success of your efforts. In addition, you could and should compile the short answer or qualitative

aspects of the questionnaire. This can provide additional information for those seeking to gain a greater understanding of the outcomes of their character-building efforts.

3. Once you compile the data, share this with all stakeholders in the building. Note the areas in which you are strong. You must also note the areas that need improvement. Plans should be made to determine the steps needed to make concerns into strengths within the school. What might you need to do to improve the perceived lack of civility in your school? What might you need to adjust to have a greater impact? What training might you need to get more stakeholders on board? The strategies you decide to implement must be descriptive and doable. If you are in a school with many perceived areas of concern, do not try and address all of them at one time. Pick two or three areas to focus your efforts. Why just two or three areas? In reality, trying to focus on more than two or three areas of concern could result in staff burnout. We must do what is doable. Besides, this is not a horse race. If you address two or three concerns a year and turn them into assets, you will radically change your school. Far too often educators try to do too much too quick. A two- to three-year, data-driven effort will pay far more dividends than a one-year effort.
4. The next year you should use the same assessment. Why use the same assessment? Comparing apples to apples will allow you to see the areas you have improved from one year to the next. I would urge you to consider using the same assessment(s) over at least a five-year period. Notice I said assessments. One assessment might not be enough. You may want to assess the integrity of your students using an assessment that focuses on students answering questions regarding their integrity. You may want an assessment just for parents. The key is using the same assessment over a period of years so you can determine if the school's character-building efforts are having a positive impact on the stakeholders of your school or community.

Good assessments are an important tool for any school wishing to determine if its efforts are having the desired impact. The following assessments are yours to use if you believe they could enhance your efforts. However, these assessments are rather narrow in scope. There are other assessments that may provide you additional information to guide your efforts. Just remember, if you know your goals, and you know the data, then you are on the right path. Without good data you are only guessing.

Resources

- Deroche, E. (2004). *Evaluating character development: 51 tools for measuring success*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Stufflebeam, D. (2000). The CIPP model for evaluation. In D. Stufflebeam, G. Madaus, & T. Kellaghan. *Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Resources

Books, guides, articles, and surveys

- Abourjilie, C. (2000). *Developing character for classroom success: Strategies to increase responsibility, achievement, and motivation in secondary students*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Banas, S. (2001). *Caring messages for the school year: 40 weeks of daily discussion ideas on character*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Berger, R. (2003). *An ethic of excellence: Building a culture of craftsmanship with students*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Berkowitz, M. & Bier, M. (2004). *What can work in character education: A research-driven practitioner guide*. Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.
- Berkowitz, M. & Bier, M. (2005). *What works in character education*. Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.
- Bernardo, R.F., Frye, L., Smith, D. & Foy, G. (2000). *Building character schoolwide: Creating a caring community in your school*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Bohlin, K. (2005). *Teaching character education through literature: Awakening the moral imagination in secondary classrooms*. London: Routledge.
- Broome, S., Henley, N. & Mordaszewski, E. (2002). *Teaching character...in the middle grades: 36 weeks of daily lessons for grades 6-8*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Colby, A. & Damon, W. (1992). *Some do care*. New York: Free Press.
- Council for Corporate and School Partnerships. (2001). *Guiding principles for business and school partnerships*. Available at http://www.corpschoolpartners.org/pdf/guiding_principles.pdf
- Daniels Fund. *School business partnerships*. Available at <http://www.danielsfund.org/sevenstrategies/index2.asp>

- Deroche, E. (2004). *Evaluating character development: 51 tools for measuring success*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Dixon, S. (2001). *Elementary school guide to character education*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Dotson, A. & Wisont, K. (1997). *Teaching character: Teacher's idea book*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Gaines, J.L. (2005). *The parent/community connection in the classroom*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Gauld, J. (2003). *Hyde: Preparation for life*. Bath, ME: The Hyde Foundation.
- Gibbs, J.C. (2003). *Moral development and reality*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Josephson, M. (2002). The Six Pillars of Character. In *Making ethical decisions*. Available at <http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/MED/MED-intro+toc.htm>
- Kidder, R.M. (2005). *Moral courage*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Knox, A., Wangaard, D.B., & Michaelson, S.R. (2003). *Service-learning planning and reflection: A step-by-step guide*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Lapsley, D.K. (1996). *Moral psychology*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Lickona, T. (2004). *Character matters: How to help our children develop good judgment, integrity, and other essential virtues*. New York: Touchstone.
- Lickona, T. & Davidson, M. (2005). *Smart and good high schools: A report to the nation*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Lickona, T., Schaps, E., & Lewis, C. (2003). *Eleven principles of effective character education*. Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership.
- Maryland State Department of Education. (2005). *Maryland Student Service-Learning Guidelines*. Available at <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/servicelearning>
- Nord, W. (1995). *Religion and American education: Rethinking a national dilemma*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Pearmain, E. (2006). *Once upon a time...storytelling to teach character and prevent bullying: Lessons from 99 multicultural folk tales for grades K-8*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Power, F.C., Higgins, A., & Kohlberg, L. (1989). *Lawrence Kohlberg's approach to moral education*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Public Agenda. (2002). *Aggravating circumstances: A status report on rudeness in America*. Available at www.publicagenda.org/specials/civility/civility.htm
- Public Schools of North Carolina. (2006). *Character education informational handbook and guide for support and implementation of the Student Citizen Act of 2001*. NC: Available at www.ncpublicschools.org/charactereducation/handbook
- Ryan, K. & Bohlin, K. (1999). *Building character in schools: Bringing moral instruction to life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sizer, T. & Sizer, N. (2000). *The students are watching: Students and the moral contract*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Urban, H. (2003). *Life's greatest lessons*. New York: Fireside.
- Urban, H. (2004). *Positive words, powerful results*. New York: Fireside.
- Vincent, P.F. (1996). *Developing character in students*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Vincent, P.F. (Ed.) (1996). *Promising practices in character education*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Vincent, P.F. (Ed.) (2004). *Promising practices in character education: Volume 2*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Vincent, P.F. (2004). *Restoring school civility*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Group.
- Williams, R. & Taylor, R. (2003). *Leading with character to improve student achievement*. Greensboro, NC: Character Development Publishing.
- Wilson, J.Q. (1993). *The moral sense*. New York: Free Press.
- Winings, K. (2002). *Building character through service learning*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Group.

Websites

Anti Defamation League at www.adl.org/education

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs at www.cortland.edu/character

Character Counts! at www.charactercounts.org

Character Education Partnership at www.character.org

Council for Corporate and School Partnerships at
www.corpschoolpartners.org

Daniels Fund at www.danielsfund.org

Josephson Institute of Ethics at www.josephsoninstitute.org

Knowledge is Power Program at www.kipp.org

Maryland State Department of Education at
www.marylandpublicschools.org

Maryland's PBIS Initiative on the Web at www.pbismaryland.org

U.S. Department of Education, Department of Safe and Drug Free
Schools at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html

What Works Clearing House at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

20 Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character

The following 20 suggestions are excerpted from Dr. Helen LeGette's book, *Parents, Kids and Character*. She brings to the reader knowledge and experiences from her highly successful, 33-year educational career—as a teacher, counselor, and administrator. She knows that children who have limits in the home and whose parents expect good character have a much greater chance at success in school and in a career. Her book offers ideas that can be implemented in any family's home.

Please feel free to share these ideas with parents or community members in your school. Some schools have used these maxims for their newsletters. Other schools have used them on their Web sites and asked parents to share their strategies to develop good character in their children.

1. Model good character in the home.

As William Bennett observes in *The Book of Virtues*, “there is nothing more influential, more determinant in a child's life than the moral power of a quiet example.” It is critically important that those who are attempting to influence children's character in positive ways “walk the talk.”

2. Be clear about your values.

Tell your children where you stand on important issues. Good character is both taught and caught. If we want children to internalize the virtues that we value, we need to teach them what we believe and why. In the daily living of our lives, there are countless opportunities to engage children in moral conversation.

3. Show respect for your spouse, your children, and other family members.

Parents who honor each other, who share family responsibilities, and who resolve their differences in peaceful ways communicate a powerful message about respect. If children experience respect firsthand within the family, they are more likely to be respectful of others. Simply stated, respect begets respect.

4. Model and teach your children good manners.

Insist that all family members use good manners in the home. Good manners are really the Golden Rule in action. Whether the issue is courtesy or other simple social graces, it is in the home that true thoughtfulness for others has its roots.

5. Have family meals together without television as often as possible.

Mealtimes are an excellent time for parents to talk with and listen to their children and to strengthen family ties. Whether the meal is a home-cooked feast or fast food from the drive-through, the most important ingredient is the sharing time—the time set aside to reinforce a sense of belonging to and being cared about by the family.

6. Plan as many family activities as possible.

Involve your children in the planning. Family activities that seem quite ordinary at the moment are often viewed in retrospect as very special and memorable bits of family history. A dad's "date" with a teenage daughter, a family picnic in the park, or a Sunday excursion for ice cream can provide a meaningful time for being together and sharing as a family.

7. Don't provide your children access to alcohol or drugs.

Model appropriate behavior regarding alcohol and drugs. Despite peer pressure, the anxieties of adolescence, a youthful desire for sophistication, and media messages that glamorize the use of drugs and alcohol, the family is the most powerful influence on whether a young person will become a substance abuser. Nowhere is the parents' personal example more critical than in the area of alcohol and drug use.

8. Plan family service projects or civic activities.

At the heart of good character is a sense of caring and concern for others. Numerous opportunities for family service projects exist in every community, and even young children can participate. Simple acts like taking food to a sick neighbor, mowing an elderly person's yard, or collecting outgrown clothes and toys for charity help youth learn the joys of assisting others and develop lifelong habits of service.

9. Read to your children and keep good literature in the home.

Great teachers have always used stories to teach, motivate, and inspire, and reading together is an important part of passing the moral legacy of our culture from one generation to another. Children's questions and comments about the stories offer parents important insights into their children's thoughts, beliefs, and concerns.

10. Limit your children's spending money.

Help them develop an appreciation for non-material rewards. In today's consumerist culture, youth could easily come to believe that image—wearing the “right” clothes, driving the “right” car, etc.—represents the path to success and happiness. Parents can make strong statements about what they value by the ways in which they allocate their own resources and how they allow their children to spend the funds entrusted to them.

11. Discuss the holidays and their meanings.

Have family celebrations and establish family traditions. Abraham Lincoln observed that participating in national celebrations causes Americans to feel “more attached the one to the other, and more firmly bound to the country we inhabit.” Observing holidays and celebrating family traditions not only develop these feelings of attachment to and kinship with others, but they also serve as a special kind of glue that binds us together as human beings, as family members, and as citizens.

12. Capitalize on the “teachable moment.”

Use situations to spark family discussions on important issues. Some of the most effective character education can occur in the ongoing,

everyday life of the family. As parents and children interact with one another and with others outside the home, there are countless situations that can be used to teach valuable lessons about responsibility, empathy, kindness, and compassion.

13. Assign home responsibilities to all family members.

Even though it is often easier to clear the table, take out the trash, or load the dishwasher ourselves than to wait for a child to do it, we have an obligation to help children learn to balance their own needs and wishes against those of other family members—and ultimately, other members of society.

14. Set clear expectations for your children and hold them accountable for their actions.

Defining reasonable limits and enforcing them appropriately establishes the parents as the moral leaders in the home and provides a sense of security to children and youth. It also lets them know that you care enough about them to want them to be—or to become—people of good character.

15. Keep your children busy in positive activities.

Children and youth have remarkable energy levels, and the challenge is to channel that energy into positive activities such as sports, hobbies, music or other forms of the arts, or church or youth groups like the Scouts. Such activities promote altruism, caring, and cooperation and also give children a sense of accomplishment.

16. Learn to say no and mean it.

It is natural for children—especially teenagers—to test the limits and challenge their parents' authority. Despite the child's protests, a parent's most loving act is often to stand firm and prohibit the child's participation in a potentially hurtful activity.

17. Know where your children are, what they are doing, and with whom.

Adults need to communicate in countless ways that we care about children and that we expect the best from them, but also that we take seriously our responsibility to establish standards and to

monitor, chaperone, and supervise. At the risk of being perceived as “old fashioned,” insist on meeting your children’s friends and their parents.

18. Refuse to cover for your children or make excuses for their inappropriate behavior.

Shielding children and youth from the logical consequences of their actions fails to teach them personal responsibility. It also undermines social customs and laws by giving them the impression that they are somehow exempt from the regulations that govern others’ behavior.

19. Know what television shows, videos, and movies your children are watching.

While there are some very fine materials available, a proliferation of pornographic and hate-filled information is easily accessible to our youth. By word and example, teach your children responsible viewing habits. If you learn that your child has viewed something objectionable, candidly share your feelings and discuss why the material offends your family’s values.

20. Remember that you are the adult!

Children don’t need another buddy, but they desperately need a parent who cares enough to set and enforce appropriate limits for their behavior. Sometimes being able to say, “My dad won’t let me,” provides a convenient escape for a youth who really didn’t want to participate in a questionable activity.

Strategies adapted from Dr. Helen LeGette’s *Parents, Kids and Character: 21 Strategies to Help Your Child Develop Good Character*, available from the Character Development Group, Inc., Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

APPENDIX B

Evaluation Instruments

These evaluation instruments are reprinted with permission of the author. School-level staff may use these surveys within their individual schools. Evaluation instruments are taken from Dr. Edward DeRoche's *Evaluating Character Development: 51 Tools for Measuring Success* (2004), available from the Character Development Group, Inc., Greensboro, North Carolina.

SES 3-1 School Outcomes

Respondent:

- Teacher Administrator Student
 Support Staff Parent Central Office Administrator
 Community Partner Other _____

Directions: Since this school has implemented a character education program, what improvements have you seen or experienced? Use this scale:

- 5 = Major Improvement 4 = Considerable Improvement**
3 = Some Improvement 2 = Minimal Improvement
1 = No Improvement

1. The school's image and reputation	5	4	3	2	1
2. Relationships among school personnel	5	4	3	2	1
3. Relationships between teachers and students	5	4	3	2	1
4. Shared decision making	5	4	3	2	1
5. A safer environment	5	4	3	2	1
6. Fewer classroom interruptions	5	4	3	2	1
7. More parent involvement	5	4	3	2	1
8. Better school partnerships	5	4	3	2	1
9. Better relationships among the students	5	4	3	2	1
10. Greater attention to the school's core values	5	4	3	2	1
11. More civil and polite language	5	4	3	2	1
12. More support from the school's administrators	5	4	3	2	1

What has impressed you MOST about this school's character education efforts?

What still needs to be done?

What is the reputation of the school in this community?

What do you like or not like about this school?

SES 3-2

Student Outcomes

Respondent:

- Teacher Administrator Student
 Support Staff Parent Central Office Administrator
 Community Partner Other _____

Directions: Using the following 20 items below, please answer the question that follows. Check one space for each item.

What has happened to students since the implementation of this school's character education program?

1. Their behavior has
 greatly improved improved somewhat not improved.
2. The dropout rate has
 increased decreased stayed about the same.
3. Their attendance rate has
 increased decreased stayed about the same.
4. Their attitudes have
 improved greatly improved modestly not improved.
5. Their service/volunteering has
 increased decreased not changed.
6. Their use of civil language has
 greatly improved improved modestly not changed.
7. Their participation in the school's activities programs (sports, clubs, etc.) has
 increased decreased not changed.
8. Their academic achievement has
 greatly improved improved somewhat not changed.
9. Their motivation to do school work has
 greatly improved improved somewhat not changed.
10. Incidences of student physical violence have
 increased decreased not changed.
11. Incidences of student verbal abuse (bullying, ridiculing, blaming, angering, tormenting, etc.) have
 greatly decreased decreased somewhat not improved.
12. Their involvement in school affairs (rules, policies, taking leadership roles) has
 increased significantly increased somewhat not changed.
13. Student relationships with teachers have
 greatly improved improved somewhat not changed.
14. Student attentiveness in class has
 greatly improved improved somewhat not improved that much.
15. Students seem to be
 more respectful less respectful about the same.

16. The relationships among students seems to have
 improved dramatically improved modestly not changed.
17. Their participation in cooperative learning activities (group work, teamwork) has
 greatly improved improved modestly not improved.
18. Students' critical thinking skills have
 really improved improved somewhat not improved.
19. Their knowledge about the school's core values is
 impressive better minimal.
20. Their application of the school's core values is
 heartwarming not as good as it should be
 leaves much to be desired.

SES 3-3

School Climate: Attitude Scale

Measuring school climate can help us understand what was and what is, so that we can move forward to what could be.

H. Jerome Freiberg, "Measuring School Climate: Let Me Count the Ways." *Educational Leadership*

Strong, positive cultures are places with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn....

Ken Peterson and Terence Deal, "How Leaders Influence the Culture of Schools." *Educational Leadership*

There are many instruments available for assessing school climate or culture. The focus in this one is on a school's climate as it relates to the school's character education efforts. Many of the items are based on the findings and recommendations of James Leming's research work reported in *Character Education: Lessons from the Past, Models for the Future* (Camden, Me.: Institute for Global Ethics, 1993.)

The character education committee may administer this instrument to different stake holder groups at different times. For example, the first time the instrument is used, the committee may wish to survey only the students, and later only the parents. This will depend on the time and resources available to collate, analyze and report the information gleaned from this scale. Remember that climate is to a school what character is to an individual.

Respondent:

- Teacher
- Support Staff
- Community Partner
- Administrator
- Parent
- Other _____
- Student
- Central Office Administrator

Directions: After each statement, circle the number indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree.

- 5 = Strongly agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Neutral
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1. This school is a safe place to be. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2. School rules are clear and fairly applied. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3. Standards for student achievement are clear. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4. Standards for student behavior are clear. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5. There is mutual respect between teachers and students. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6. This school is free from bullying and harassment. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7. Students respect each other in this school. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8. Core values are modeled by adults in this school. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9. Cooperative teaching and learning strategies are used in most of the classes. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 10. Students are really engaged in this school's character education efforts. |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 11. Communication is a real problem in this school. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 12. There are high expectations for positive student behavior. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 13. Most classes are orderly and free of disruptions. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 14. In this school you will find most of us using civil, positive language. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 15. Our school's character education efforts involve parents. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 16. This community supports the work we do to teach, learn, and practice the core values. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 17. The cafeteria is a safe and pleasant place to eat. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 18. There is respect for the property of others. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 19. You won't find graffiti at this school. |
| | | | | | 20. Add other items. |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <hr/> |
| | | | | | <hr/> |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <hr/> |
| | | | | | <hr/> |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | <hr/> |
| | | | | | <hr/> |

SES 3-9 Student Integrity Questionnaire

This sample evaluation questionnaire might be used to gather additional baseline data about student integrity (honesty, cheating, etc.). Depending on the results, it may help focus some of the content/lessons in your school's character education program.

The instrument not only helps the character education evaluation committee (CEEC) gather data, it also informs the students that there is interest by teachers and administrators in such behaviors. For example, in a three-year middle school, first-year students might complete the questionnaire near the end of the year, and then again during their second and third years at the school. At a high school, the questionnaire might be given to a sampling of the freshman class and administered each year as the class progresses through the next three years.

Comparing the findings might be informative and instructive. The CEEC can add any variables they are interested in examining (e.g., gender or achievement level).

This student-integrity questionnaire was brought to my attention by Claire Patin, a character education specialist and math teacher at Francis Parker School (San Diego). It was written for the school by Deborah Bright, an English teacher at "Parker," and has been modified for the purposes of this book with permission from the author.

Directions: Please answer the following questions honestly and openly. Your answers will help us track behaviors that we hope will inform our work in this school's character education program. Place a check mark in the appropriate space following each item. Your name is not necessary.

(Note: CEEC would place demographic data request here.)

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU...

	Never	A few times	Many times
1. copied someone else's homework?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. copied off of a web site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. let someone copy your homework?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. let someone copy off you during a quiz or test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. copied off someone during a quiz or test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. let your parents/family member/tutor or friend do more of your homework than you knew to be appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. gotten questions or answers (e.g., between classes) to a quiz or test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. used notes/crib sheets during a test/quiz?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. given someone questions or answers from a test or quiz?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. missed part or all of a school day because you were unprepared for a test or an assignment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ARE YOU AWARE
OF ANY OF YOUR
FRIENDS OR
CLASSMATES
WHO...**

- 11. copy other students' homework? YES NO
- 12. allow parents/family members/tutor or friends do more of their homework than was appropriate? YES NO
- 13. get answers to tests or quizzes? YES NO
- 14. cheat during a test or quiz? YES NO
- 15. copy from someone else's test or quiz? YES NO
- 16. copy website information and use it as their own work? YES NO
- 17. missed part or all of a school day because they were unprepared for a test or an assignment? YES NO

**IF YOU KNEW
SOMEONE...**

- 18. who was cheating in any way, would you (check all that apply)
 - talk to him/her about it suggesting he/she stop
 - tell a teacher
 - tell a friend
 - tell a parent
 - do nothing
 - do something but it depends on who it is
 - other options (list one) _____
- 19. who makes racist or bigoted remarks, would you (check all that apply)
 - talk to him/her as the remarks are being said about how you feel
 - ignore it, do nothing
 - simply walk away and let the person continue
 - tell someone else how bad such remarks make you feel
 - get advice from your parents on how to handle such a situation
 - get advice from a teacher or counselor
 - ask a friend how best to handle it
 - other options (list one) _____
- 20. who had used drugs or alcohol, or had an eating disorder, or stole things, or cheated, would you (check all that apply)
 - talk to him/her and express you concerns
 - talk to him/her and insist that he/she seek help
 - tell his/her parents
 - ask your parents for advice
 - tell a teacher or counselor
 - do nothing because it's not your business
 - tell some friends so that together you can do something
 - other options (list one) _____

Please indicate whether or not you think each of the following statements is true or false by circling T or F.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21. Lying is a relative thing; it depends on the situation. | T | F |
| 22. A person who lies often enough in “insignificant situations,” may also lie in important situations. | T | F |
| 23. The ends justify the means; that is, as long as the result is what you want, it doesn’t matter how you get it. | T | T |
| 24. Cheating is a relative thing. It really depends on how big the “stakes” are (e.g., a quiz vs. a major test). | T | F |
| 25. Because of parent pressure, most students at this school go after high grades no matter what the cost. | T | F |
| 26. Because of the pressure to get into the “right” college or university, many students at this school will cheat/lie/plagiarize to get good grades. | T | F |

Please answer these questions.

27. How much of a problem is cheating at this school?

28. How much of a problem is stealing at this school?

29. If there is a problem with cheating or lying in test-taking and/or doing assignments, whose fault is it?

30. What is your greatest concern about going to this school?

We as educators are influencing students' social and ethical development whether we claim it or not. The only real question is whether we are making a positive or negative impact. It therefore seems that our job as educators is twofold. First we must work to help children succeed or to become smarter in whatever academic, artistic, athletic, or vocational track they might pursue. In order to establish a foundation where this might occur, we must model and teach, as well as have students practice and reflect upon the importance of establishing habits of kindness, caring, honesty, etc. in their interactions with others. To accomplish this requires that an adult stakeholder in the school recognize that he or she may very well be the compass that will make a difference in the life of the child. To be successful will require that we as adults in the life of the school take seriously the academic and ethical development of our students and treat both with intent and with equal effort.

—From Dr. Philip Vincent's introduction to *Character Education by Design*, a book written by and for Maryland educators and character education practitioners