

# Getting Started in Character Education

*“All glory comes from daring to begin.”*  
—Eugene F. Ware

If you are new to character education, getting started can feel overwhelming even as it feels exciting. What do you do first? Second? Third? As with any new venture, the best place to start is with your own preparation. By researching the subject and figuring out logistical details, you can help the initial committee meetings run more smoothly. You’ll also need to establish a group of people who will help carry out the program’s implementation—this is not something one person can accomplish on his or her own. Establishing the character committee and getting support from the administration are key parts of beginning a program. A final component of getting started is to explore your role as committee chairperson. How will you lead the program?



## Doing Your Homework

One of the first steps in getting started is to prepare yourself, to “do your homework.” A good place to begin is to read what you can on the subject. Several helpful books are available describing the theory and history of character education and providing examples of its successful implementation in schools. A number of character-related organizations have formed around the movement, and they usually have literature available. Some states have their own clearinghouses of character-related information, particularly those states with large federal grants or mandated character programs. Numerous resources are available through the Internet as well. For a list of suggested materials and Web sites, see the Resource Guide. As you read, take time to gather copies of pertinent materials to share with members of the character committee at your first meeting.

Another part of doing your homework is to find out some details about the proposed character program at your school. You’ll want to investigate several issues before you go into the first committee meeting. Use the following questions as a guide:

- Is there funding available for the program? If so, how much of it is available to the committee? What are the restrictions on how the funding is to be used?
- What kinds of resources are available to the committee? Is there a district-wide coordinator who could provide assistance or materials?
- Who or what is driving the implementation of character education in your school? Is it resulting from a district- or state-wide mandate?
- How much authority does the committee have in determining the particulars of the program? Are you being provided with a pre-written program that you are expected to implement or will you create your own program?
- Is there a school nearby that could serve as a model for your program?
- How does your school administration feel about the character education program? Are they fully supportive of its implementation?

### Recruit committee members who:

- Have positive attitudes
- Are honest and trustworthy
- Are dependable
- Take responsibility
- Care about the school
- Listen well and communicate effectively
- Are decision-makers
- Are willing to learn and grow

**Success Tip:** Try to limit the committee to about 8-10 persons. The larger your committee, the more difficult it is to conduct meetings effectively. If your school is very large, you might want to have a larger committee with active sub-committees. However, you’re probably better off starting with fewer people and involving others as needed for particular projects.