

Ideas for Teaching Character



Eight Steps to a Successful Character Education Program

As educators, we are being called upon to meet a growing crisis to prepare our students for the world of work. This crisis is a lack of education in how to behave in the adult world—the practice of common traits we call "character." Good character can be defined in cognitive, affective, and behavioral terms, but perhaps a simple way to define it is:

- knowing what is right and good,
- wanting what is right and good, and
- doing what is right and good.

When we identify persons as having “good character,” we are saying that they adhere to a set of behaviors and beliefs, which our culture commonly holds as desirable. Traits such as honesty, respect, responsibility, tolerance, and self control (along with others) make up the character or integrity of a person.

Integrity is not essentially about winning; it's about staying whole and being worthy of self-respect and the esteem of loved ones. It's about being honorable, not as a success strategy, but a life choice
—Michael Josephson

Taking the lead in Character Education involves understanding the need for character-based learning and accepting the fact that educators have a role in providing it. Such leadership invites us as adults to model good character, to devote time and energy to teaching character, and to work cooperatively with parents and community leaders. In order to meet the growing demands of our culture, we have to go beyond teaching basic academic skills and equip our students to live peacefully in an age of exploding knowledge. This is an awesome challenge, but we are up to meeting this challenge

1. Get administrators on board. A school-wide mandate led by the principal and administration is critical.
2. Use a team approach to shepherd and oversee the implementation of a character education program.
3. Recognize that everyone and everything in the schools affects Character Education.
4. Teach Character Education in every subject area.
5. Saturate the school environment with character messages.
6. Reinforce the character program as a part of disciplining. This will help students become keenly aware of the behaviors they are exhibiting.
7. Connect Character Education with service learning initiatives
8. Involve parents as a key part of your character education program.

Our mutual goal as parents and teachers is to equip our students and children to lead productive lives in society and to become the adults who will make the decisions in our democracy. As John Whitehead said in *The Stealing of America*: “Children are the living messages we send to a time we will never see.” Character education is an important part of preparing students to meet the challenges of the 21st century

- Read about how to establish a successful Character Education program. Order your copy today of *The Character Education Handbook* www.teachingcharacter.com.
- Read about what works at www.whatworks.ed.gov/comingnext/character.html