

C.A.T.S.

February 2011
CHARITY



**Character Activities for
Teachers and Students**

**Duval County Public Schools
Jacksonville, Florida**

*“Character Education isn’t one more thing
on your plate. It IS the plate!”*

****The Florida state legislature mandates the character traits that are covered each year.
The order is consistent from year to year for ease of planning.**

1003.42 Required Instruction: Florida State Statute:

(s) A character-development program in the elementary schools, similar to Character First or Character Counts, which is secular in nature. Beginning in school year 2004-2005, the character-development program shall be required in kindergarten through grade 12.

Each district school board shall develop or adopt a curriculum for the character-development program that shall be submitted to the department for approval. The character-development curriculum shall stress the qualities of patriotism; responsibility; citizenship; kindness; respect for authority, life, liberty, and personal property; honesty; charity; self-control; racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance; and cooperation.

Note to teachers and administrators: By using the information in this newsletter each month, you are implementing character education in your school, and thus meeting the intent of the legislation. Our goal is to provide easy to use and flexible tools that will fit within the framework of your school site, in as many diverse ways as possible. If you need assistance, please call Deborah Hansen, Coordinator, Character Education, at 904-568-0786 or email her at debrhan48@comcast.net.

February

Charity

Definition: *Generous actions or donations to aid the poor, ill, or helpless*

Synonyms: *Kindliness, consideration, humanity, sympathy*

Antonyms: *Uncharitableness, unkindness, malevolence*



Children demonstrate CHARITY in a school setting when they:

- **notice when another person is struggling.**
- **assist or get help**
- **share.**
- **participate in charitable acts undertaken by their classmates.**

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Anne Frank

Building Kids of Character



Teacher Tips

Character Education is:

1. *Consciously* teaching students how to take responsibility for their actions and to treat others with respect and kindness.
2. Showing students that there are specific positive payoffs in life for doing those things.
3. Modeling that behavior for students and expecting them to do the same.
4. Creating an atmosphere of safety in which students can practice those behaviors until they become the norm.

Implementation Ideas

1. **“Teachable Moments”**: Classroom teachers infuse character into their lessons every day, most often by utilizing “teachable moments” as they arise. Using this as a foundation, teachers can build on this by intentionally watching for opportunities to reinforce the character trait of the month throughout their day. Using the language of character is one of the most effective methods available to us as educators. Do you have situations arise that reflect cheating, disrespect, irresponsibility? Take five minutes to discuss the problem and use the language of character.
2. **School Climate**: By infusing the language and messages of character into the school’s climate (signage, morning announcements, bulletin boards, banners, etc.), students begin to understand that those messages are important. Remember! Advertising works!
3. **Book of the Month**: Match the chosen books for each month to the character trait of the month. This reinforces the message(s) that is being presented through those teachable moments and the school climate that you are creating. Check the character education section of www.duvalschools.org for books that you already have in your media center for each character trait.
4. **Create opportunities for students to become involved** in the planning and implementation: Students become “vested” in the plan once they are involved in its planning and implementation. They can design and build the bulletin boards, choose the morning announcements, and/or create awards for other students based on the trait of the month. (They are also learning what the traits mean in real life as they go through this process.)
5. **Use the monthly newsletter** provided at www.duvalschools.org to infuse character lessons into your academic area.

Parent Tips

Saplings into Trees: The Benefits of Giving

*Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces,
I would still plant my apple tree.*
Martin Luther

“But, Mom, why do I have to give some of my money to charity? Can’t everyone else earn their own money like I had to? And my \$2.00 won’t make any difference anyway, will it?”

Well, Mom. Can’t they? And will that \$2.00 donation make any ripple in the pool of need that exists around the world? Why plant that apple tree when the sower of the seed knows the end result will never be enjoyed?

Most parents have heard the litany of ways to introduce their children to charitable giving, so we won’t belabor those here. A more interesting question is raised when our kids ask “WHY?” How do we respond to that?

First, we must act it out ourselves in order to sell it to our children. This begins by keeping the giving close to home. Neighbors, friends, relatives, we all have times of need in our lives when those around us can make a huge difference in the quality of our lives. Simple things like taking our trash cans to the curb, bringing in the mail, walking the dog, driving to the store, can be lifesaving actions when someone is ill or otherwise distracted. Do your children see you reaching out to touch others in these small ways? If so, they will witness the impact each of us can have on the lives of one other. It isn’t a big reach from giving to receiving help when it’s needed, the web of interconnectedness enveloping us all.

We all have soft spots in our hearts, and our children are no different. We can tap into those sympathies, thus funneling the donations to those specific charities. Animals, babies, orphans, or whatever seems to touch our child’s heart can be designated as the recipient of those \$2.00 donations. It makes more sense to a ten year old that her donation will buy a bag of pet food, doesn’t it?

Of course, we are laying the mortar work for later charitable gifts to nameless people or organizations on the other side of the globe. It is one thing to do a good deed for a neighbor, but how DOES that \$2.00 get from here to there in any meaningful way, Mom? We need to help our children see the effect that their \$2.00 has when joined with hundreds of other such donations. A simple math lesson might do the job in this case, and could even lead to your child convincing his friends to donate, too.

Another factor in teaching our children the “why” of giving comes from an internal process that happens when doing so. As parents, we know this. We would do anything, sacrifice anything for our children. To do otherwise, would make us miserable. Some say that humans, as communal beings, are “hardwired” to hold the needs of the group over our own. It simply makes us feel good, while ignoring the

needs of others makes us feel bad. Parents can use this fact by pointing out the emotional payoffs their children get from acts of giving.

Planting trees seems like such a futile exercise, doesn't it? Much like donating that \$2.00 to an organization halfway around the world, the giver putting forth the effort with blind confidence that a stranger needs it.

And saplings grow into strong and sturdy forests all around us, planted by someone who had faith in something they would never see.

“I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love.” Mother Teresa



Bully Proofing Your School



Elementary *Second Step* lessons: Empathy relates to this month's trait of charity and is one ingredient in developing prosocial behaviors as well as being able to solve interpersonal problems successfully. Empathy begins with children being able to identify their own feelings and extends to an awareness of the feelings of others. Anger management skills are also a component of the *Second Step* curriculum. Children are taught ways to calm down and then manage their anger.

The lessons in empathy and anger management will lay the foundation for children's acceptance of others, all of which relate to preventing bullying.

Preschool and kindergarten:

Unit 1, Lesson 7: Accidents: Understanding that some actions are accidental.

Grade 1:

Unit 1, Lesson 8: Predicting Feelings: As a result of our or others' actions.

Grade 2:

Unit 1, Lesson 6: Fairness: Recognizing others' rights and offering fair solutions to a problem.

Grade 3:

Unit 1, Lesson 5: Accepting Differences: Understanding that while everyone is different, people are also similar.

Grade 4:

Unit 1, Lesson 7: Expressing concern: Showing concern for others.

Grade 5:

Unit 1, Lesson 6: Intentions: Being aware of not attributing hostile intent.

Middle School:

Level Three, Unit 1, Lesson 1: Understanding the Role of Spectators.

High School:

Ask your students to consider the following scenario: Some states requires students to perform 200 hours of community service in order to graduate. What are the pros and cons of this requirement? How might it affect students' attitudes toward service? Is it ethical to have such a requirement at all? Why or why not?

Have groups of 3-4 students pick research one of the following organizations:

- 1. The Corporation for National and Community Service**
- 2. National Youth Leadership Council**
- 3. Youth Service America**
- 4. Youth Venture**

After the groups have finished, each can give a short presentation on their organization. Students can compare/contrast each organization and its philosophy on mandatory community service in order to graduate from high school.

Welcome to Your Resources **For Character Education**

Florida Statutes require that all schools in the state provide a character development program in all grades, K-12.

However, the most important reason for teaching children positive character is encompassed in our job as educators: To prepare our students to be positive, productive members of society.

The character traits for 2010-11 are as follows:

- **August: Responsibility**
- **September: Respect for authority, life, liberty, and personal property.**
- **October: Cooperation**
- **November: Patriotism**
- **December: Kindness**
- **January: Racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance.**
- **February: Charity**
- **March: Honesty**
- **April: Self-control**
- **May: Citizenship: Living a life of character.**

The DCPS district has supplied the schools with a diverse selection of materials to meet this mandate. The monthly newsletter can help you meet the requirement for character education through its tips for teachers and parents.

The elementary character education curriculum, *Mini-Lessons for Maximum Character*, is found on RiverDeep. (Please look under “Courses” under the Instructional Organizer tab.)

The secondary curriculum, *Connect with Kids*, is a complete set of lessons by trait, accompanied by video clips. Check in your media center.

Additional Resources



Workshops:

- **Infusing character into your school climate and your classroom.**
- **Bully prevention through character development.**
- **Parents building kids of character (available to PTA and other parent groups).**
- **Early release mini-workshops on the above topics.**
- **Training for bus drivers using the Foundations model.**
- **Peer mediation programs/mediator training.**
- **Sessions for bus drivers that service your school! Put together a team to work cooperatively with the drivers.**
- **Fighting Fair for Families: Based on the Peace Education Foundation's work in conflict resolution.**

Please call Deborah Hansen, Coordinator, at 904-568-0786 to discuss or schedule any of the above, or email her at debrhan48@comcast.net



Character libraries were purchased for every school in the district. These libraries consist of approximately 150 books of all genres and should be in your media center.

Use these books to support your “Book of the Month” program!

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