

C.A.T.S.

December 2009



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.

From the Front Lines of Character Education in the Classroom:

****Congratulations to Thomas Jefferson Elementary and Twin Lakes Academy Elementary for making a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution at their schools! Each has dedicated a great deal of time and energy to organizing and training Peer Mediation teams who will help their classmates resolve their conflicts in a calm, safe atmosphere.**

****I also recently walked the halls of Twin Lakes Academy Elementary and this is what I saw:**





ADVERTISING WORKS!
Great job advertising GOOD CHARACTER!

****From Cheryl Lemine, Creative Writing teacher at LaVilla School of the Arts:**

“I am a creative writing teacher at LaVilla and am trying to incorporate the character trait by having a lesson on it and talking about it throughout the month. Last month I had my students write about cooperation and create some acrostics for it.”

Her students will be submitting some of their writing on character for future newsletter issues!

****Durham Bus Company has devoted their November Safety Meetings to teaching their drivers the Foundations method of behavior management. Congratulations on this commitment to excellence!**

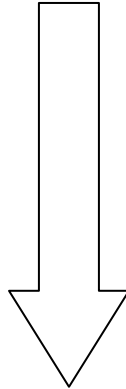


****From Mersad Kadic at River City Science Academy:**

“Let me share how thrilled and excited I am about Character Education this year. The students...are learning, enjoying, and implementing ideas from Character Education into their lives in AND outside school. We get a lot of positive feedback from students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members.”

****Many schools have reported very positive responses to the **Second Step Violence and Bully Prevention** curriculum that has been introduced this year!**

There is room here for YOUR school in THIS SPOT!



Send photos and text about the character education program at your school to Deborah Hansen at debrhan48@comcast.net or hansend2@duvalschools.org.

December:

Kindness: Being considerate, gentle, mild, helpful

Synonyms for kindness: generosity, charity, sympathy, compassion, tenderness

Antonyms for kindness: cruelty, meanness, brutality, harshness

Children exhibit kindness when they:

- **offer to help someone in need.**
- **refuse to make fun of those who are different.**
- **share what they have with those who have less.**
- **think before they act.**
- **watch out for smaller children.**
- **take care of pets.**

Some books that focus on the trait of kindness are:

Elementary:

- **Amos and Boris by William Steig**
- **Ben's Trumpet by Rachel Isadora**
- **Big Al by Andrew Clements**
- **Meanest Thing to Say by Bill Cosby**

Secondary:

- **Pay It Forward by Catherine Ryan Hyde**
- **Something for Joey, Richard Peck**
- **Ryan White, My Own Story by Ryan White**

These books, along with many others, were purchased for your Character Libraries housed in school media centers.

“We are made kind by being kind.”

Eric Hoffer

Building Kids of Character



Teacher Tips

Empathy: Identifying completely with an object or person.

Teaching students to have *empathy* for others is a critical step in learning how to be kind. There are numerous occasions during a typical school day to teach and then reinforce this concept, without adding a separate lesson to your already overburdened day. And by doing so during “teachable moments,” you will not only enhance your students’ day but also your own.

Examples:

****When you become aware of students teasing or bullying another student, conduct a one-minute discussion on what it feels like to be made fun of. Do it indirectly, without accusing or embarrassing students. (Deal with individuals who bully later in a private setting.)**

****Help your students put names to their feelings; this enables them to have the language necessary to demonstrate empathy.**

****Insert personal stories of difficulties you have faced as you see students struggle. Make sure you use the language of feelings.**

All you can do is all you can do!

Parent Tips

“In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.” Mother Teresa

It's easy to tell children that they should be kind to others, that they should show compassion, sympathy, and tolerance to all who come through their lives. The statement is one responsible adults repeat frequently not only to children but also to each other, at least parroting the sentiment when socially required.

The harder question, and one that children often ask, is why? Why should we be kind, attempting to smooth the way for one another in this walk through life? More succinctly put, what's in it for us? It's not a quick and easy answer, either, is it? We can refer to a teaching of a particular belief system if that's applicable to us, but even that can become rote and meaningless through time if it's not truly embraced and practiced.

Children need to be taught that in order to be kind we must first care for others. There's a difference between the emotion and the action. Perhaps it's more easily grasped if we explain it from a more personal angle. If we appreciate what is done for us by others and identify the feelings the kindnesses generate in our own hearts and souls, perhaps we build a greater appreciation for caring for others. We are reflections of one another as we proceed through life. The details of our individual lives may differ, but most of us will face similar difficulties and challenges at some point along the way. We need each other if for no other reason than to lend a hand and a shoulder during those times of stress and uncertainty.

To help our children with this, parents can:

- Teach them to express gratitude.
- Speak gratitude themselves; use details about why we appreciate what others have done for us personally. What were the results of the kindness we received?
- Use words of caring about others rather than words of judgment and condemnation. It's easy to tear each other apart. It's more difficult for some reason to celebrate and extol the positive in others.
- Teach the concept of putting oneself in someone else's shoes. Talk about it whenever possible: “How do you think Bobby felt when he was in the hospital for a week and no one came to visit him? How would you feel?”
- Make service to others a part of your family routine and make it fun. Join with other families to widen the enjoyment as well as the effect.

- Concentrate on your child's intent to be kind rather than the outcome of the kindness. Being kind to others should be an end in itself. Teach them to focus on that rather than any pay off for what they do for others.
- Parents can incorporate movements like *A Random Act of Kindness* and *Pay It Forward* into their homes. A simple internet search will yield a great deal of information on both programs.
- Teach children to listen to others. We've all become so self-involved that it's easy to miss the pain of others merely because we're not listening to what they're saying.

Children have a wonderful capacity for caring for others, yet don't have the maturity to translate that emotion into action. Parents can show their children that small acts of kindness are like stones thrown in a pond. The effects become bigger and bigger as time passes, even if they aren't there to witness the results. We need to build on this concept, laying a foundation of caring for our family and our neighbors. They will become better people and the world will be a better place because they are in it.

Bully Proofing Your School



Fairness is essential!

Students can spot unfairness quickly, can't they? As educators, it is essential that we apply the rules to every student in exactly the same way in their setting. If we don't, we are contributing to a culture of inequality, which then sometimes leads to bullying.

****Listen to each side of the story without jumping to conclusions.**

****Treat all students equally, regardless of race, gender, religion, physical or mental disabilities, etc.**

****Follow the rules yourself.**

****Don't compare students.**

****Encourage discussion about what students perceive as "unfairness" or "inequality."**

****Encourage students to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Teach them how to empathize with others.**

****Talk about your own experiences with unfairness.**

****Discuss the necessity for rules in all aspects of life: At school, at home, in sports, in the community, in our country.**

Students who are not in touch with their feelings and who don't know how to empathize with others, often bully other students who "get in their way."

We must give them the tools to behave differently.

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 2009-10 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.**

Please call Deborah Hansen, Coordinator, at 904-568-0786 to discuss or schedule any of the above, or email her at hansend2@duvalschools.org.



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!

Contact Information:
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