

C.A.T.S.

November 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.**

October:

Patriotism: *Devoted love, support, and defense of one's country; national loyalty.*

Children demonstrate patriotism by:

- 1. being knowledgeable about our country's history and government.
This includes understanding the reasons behind national holidays and celebrations.**
- 2. being involved in their communities; being part of the process, beginning with their family, their neighborhood, their school.**

A child's idea of being patriotic: "Patriotic means the love of or for someone's country. Patriotic can also be helping when your country's in need. Some ways to help your country would be to go out and pick up trash to help clean up your community, start a food drive for needy people, or just do whatever you can to make things better.

There are many things you can do to be patriotic that are fun, like going to a fair to see fireworks. I like putting up and taking down the flag of freedom at school because I am in Student Council and it is one of my jobs.

There are days during the year when we celebrate patriotism. Veteran's Day, Independence Day, and President's Day are just a few.....

Being patriotic isn't something you think about occasionally when there is a holiday and you get the day off from school. Patriotism is an attitude that should be with you every day. It shows in the way you speak about your country, in the way you care about your community, and in how you treat people in your every day life."

Source:

<http://www.ask.com/bar?q=what+does+it+mean+to+be+patriotic%3F&page=1&qsrc=0&ab=4&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.strainjapan.com%2F01vfw.htm&sg=ryY%2BZX%2B6ajGRwFk5GA0JmCRIIgZe%2BUBTpgKcOuh5ao%3D&tsp=1255697050613>

Suggested Activities

1. Read the passage above, “A Child’s Idea of Being Patriotic.” Ask your students to discuss this child’s opinion of patriotism. Do they agree? Disagree? Why?

2. Students can research the history behind Veteran’s Day or President’s Day, or other U.S. holidays that relate to our past in some way. Give them a choice of presentations:

- a. Poster
- b. Video
- c. Story
- d. Essay
- e. Skit

3. Encourage students to begin their own community service project. It might be for their class, their school, or their neighbors in some way.

4. Use the following quote to generate further discussion:

“Well, you know it’s just our country, it’s....the greatest country in the world. It has given us so many opportunities, and it’s just a sense of pride that you have; that you say ‘You know what? Our country is the best!....I feel great about it, and I’m not ashamed to say it. I mean, this is a tremendous honor.’”

Kobe Bryant, August 2008



5. Does being “patriotic” mean supporting one’s country, right or wrong? Discuss this issue with secondary students. Debate format is an excellent way to illustrate that issues are often more complicated than a “right” vs. “wrong” stance allows. You will be giving your students a valuable tool to use for the rest of their lives.

Building Kids of Character



Teacher Tips

Lessons From the Classroom: Hal Urban:

www.halurban.com

Good teachers have two important goals for their students:
Intelligence *and* character.

Four obstacles to character education:

1. **“Whose values are you going to teach?”**
Response: The virtues that we all share.
2. **“My plate is too full; there is no time for add-ons.”**
Response: Character education IS the plate. It is neither new nor an add-on.
3. **“We’re under intense pressure to raise test scores. There is no time to run a character education program.”**
Response: Test scores and all other measurements of academic success will improve in schools that have a solid character education program in place.
4. **“Our principal has no interest in character education.”**
Response: There are two ways in which character education can be implemented without the leadership of the principal. First is by committee and the second is by using the “island technique.” YOUR classroom can be an “island” of good character.

**Remember: All you can do is all you can do!
Just do something!**

Parent Tips

As parents, it's past time to answer the hard questions about the kind of society in which we want to raise our children. Why aren't we all more outraged at the pervasive and worsening chaos that surrounds our children each day as we try to build families of faith and character? Despite our best efforts, it seems as if our young people are pawns in the struggle between those efforts and the world outside our front doors. Listening to the news, watching television, or even eating out in public exposes all of us, adults and children alike, with shocking examples of poor character and just plain bad behavior. Do we give in to all of this chaos, becoming exhausted at trying to fight it all, or do we stand up for our children and our families?

There is no doubt that it is easier to throw our hands up in frustration, but parenting isn't for the fainthearted. Our children have a tough world to maneuver in each day, and it is our responsibility as parents to teach them the ropes. But we also have a responsibility to each other to stand firm in the face of this struggle for their very hearts and souls. The majority of parents want desperately to raise children who are good people and citizens who will contribute in a positive way to the society that they will inherit.

It won't be easy, and that's why it is essential that we all begin to speak up and out. We must support each other, and begin comparing notes with other parents about what we all will and won't allow, regardless of what the media or corporate America wants us to believe. Our children must be supervised more effectively, and we must not release them before they are ready into a world that is not kind to adults, much less children. Let's start small and build our confidence!

- All recent studies show that teens' brains are still growing and maturing, and they are not ready to deal with decisions that involve long-term consequences. Therefore, they must be better supervised than we've allowed in recent years. If you have already bought your teen a car and released your responsibility, take the keys and the responsibility back. Monitor when they drive and with whom, distances, and destinations. Make it a privilege to use it even occasionally.
- Have curfews for your teens and enforce them. Will your teenager be upset? Of course, so expect it and be prepared for the attack. Smile and nod, and stand firm! Don't give in to what "everyone else" is doing. This is why it's important for parents to talk to each other.
- Plan family activities, such as trips to carefully selected movies, outdoor hikes or bike trips that will occupy your children's time while building community in your family.
- Involve your children in providing service to others. This is not only a way to make sure they are supervised, but they are also learning that they are not the center of the universe. Check with your house of worship or senior centers to determine if they can use the help. Many businesses use teen help as interns. Don't give up until you find something positive for your child to do.

- If your television has parental controls, use them! If it doesn't, call your cable or satellite company to inquire. If you haven't watched some of the television your kids are watching, you need to do so, and then determine what is acceptable to you. You may be shocked at what they have been watching.
- Enforce a bedtime for your children. Related to use of controlling television content, much of the programming that is on in the middle of the night is intended for adults, and is often pornographic. Children who are allowed to wander the house at night or watch in their rooms alone are exposed to this and you don't even know it.
- Pool resources with other families, especially that golden resource of time. If some of the families are single parent units, or both parents work, team up with those that have other schedules or one parent at home, and share the responsibilities. Figure out ways to allow all the adults to have some free time while making sure all the kids are supervised. Yes, it infringes on adult time, but are your children worth it?
- If your children already have cell phones, teach them proper etiquette. It isn't acceptable to disrupt a meal or a conversation with someone else to take a phone call. If they don't have one yet, seriously consider why they need one, and make sure to set boundaries with teens about using a phone while driving. Don't forget to role model this yourself!

Obviously, it's much easier to raise children with these rules and expectations from the time they are very young. Once we have allowed other patterns to be established, it's like putting water back in a bottle, but we must regain control of our homes. Hopefully, we still have enough respect from our children that we can make this happen. We have fallen prey to convenience, technology, and the media's warped sense of reality at the expense of our children, and it's our responsibility to stop it.



Bully Proofing Your School



1. Teach ALL students the Rules for Fighting Fair!

- *Cool Down!**
- *Identify the problem.**
- *Focus on that problem.**
- *Attack that problem and not the person.**
- *Listen with an open mind.**
- *Treat each person's feelings with respect.**
- *Take responsibility for your actions.**

2. Use the rules yourself! Model them for your students.

3. Discuss the rules in the context of every academic area during the day, and do it often:

Example: Scientific discoveries would not happen if scientists did not listen with an open mind.

4. Also teach the “Fouls” to positive conflict resolution:

- *Blaming *Name Calling *Threats *Bossing**
- *Put-downs *Making excuses *Getting Even**
- *Bringing up the past *Hitting, punching, etc.**
- *Not listening *Not taking responsibility**

Could we reduce bullying by using these rules?

From the Front Lines of

Character Education in the Classroom:

“Monday morning I received the most magnificent flower arrangement—imagine that! My students and I have been admiring the flowers each day and this mystery gift has been the focal point of our 5 sense lessons this week. The children cannot stop smelling and touching them. Whenever anyone enters the classroom, they enjoy telling the visitor about the flower mystery. Of course, this unexpected gift has led to several character education discussions this week.” Harriet Bryan

This quote illustrates that the development of our students’ character flows around us all day. The mystery flowers could be used to teach children about:

- *caring**
- *community, and thus citizenship**
- *self-control**
- *respect**
- *charity**

Character education isn’t ONE MORE THING ON YOUR PLATE! It *IS* the plate!

How is the plate doing in YOUR classroom?



Welcome to Your Resource

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.

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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How is YOUR school building kids of character?
Send your class/school photos for publication in this
newsletter!

