

Ten Essentials of the CHARACTERplus Process

1. Community Participation

Educators, parents, students and members of the community invest themselves in a consensus-building process to discover common ground that is essential for long-term success.

2. Character Education Policy

Character education is a part of the district's philosophy, goal or mission statement, including a formal, written policy adopted by the school board. In this way it becomes a part of the leadership of the school and community. The district policy also should be affirmed and supported at the building and classroom levels.

3. Identified and Defined Traits

Parents, teachers and community representatives agree on which character traits to emphasize and what definitions to use. Developing consensus on the definitions is key and the early involvement of students enriches the process. Once the traits are defined, they should be highly visible throughout the school and community.

4. Integrated Curriculum

Character education is an integral part of the curriculum at all grade levels. Character traits are connected to classroom lessons so students see how a trait might figure into a story, be part of a science experiment, or how it might affect them. These traits are a part of the instruction of the day — in every class and every subject.

5. Experiential Learning

Students are given many opportunities to experience character traits and express them in action. Ample time is also allowed for discussion and reflection. Service learning, cooperative learning and peer mentoring can be an important part of this approach.

6. Evaluation

The character education initiative is evaluated on a regular basis to determine if it is achieving the anticipated results and to validate that the processes and structures being implemented are working. Evaluation data are used to improve the program.

7. Adult Role Models

Children "learn what they live" so it is important that all adults in the school community who interact with children on a daily basis demonstrate positive character traits at home, school and in the community. Adults need to reflect and focus on important character traits and how to model them systematically and intentionally. If adults do not model the behavior they teach, the entire program will fail.

8. Staff Development

Significant time and resources are allocated for staff development activities so that staff can create and implement character education on an ongoing basis. Time for discussion and understanding of both the process and the programs, as well as for creation of curriculum and lesson plans, is an important part of training activities.

9. Student Involvement and Leadership

Students are involved in age-appropriate activities and allowed to connect character education to their learning, decision making and personal goals.

10. Sustaining the Program

The character education program is sustained and renewed through implementation of the first nine essential elements, with particular attention to a high level of commitment from the top; adequate funding; support for district coordination staff; high-quality and ongoing professional development; and a networking and support system for teachers who are implementing the program.

Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education™

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. Character is comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school is a caring community.
5. To develop character, the school provides students opportunities for moral action.
6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation for developing good character.
8. The school staff is a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core value that guides the education of students.
9. Staff and students demonstrate moral leadership.
10. The school recruits parents and community members as full partners in the character-building efforts.
11. Evaluation of character education assesses the character of the school; the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.