

her accountable for behaviors and decisions. Most importantly, you are a role model for your child.

You can help your child's school build character by joining the Character Education Committee, becoming a mentor, or volunteering in some other way. Ask your child's teacher or principal for more information on the school's character effort and how you can be involved.

“Discipline, civility, respect for self, others and society, teachers as role models — these things have been a part of education for as long as people have been learning.”

For more information, activities, and ideas for reinforcing character at home, talk to your child's teacher or read “Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen” from the U.S. Department of Education (on the Web at www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/citizen/index.html or by phone at 1-877-4ED-PUBS).

— Dr. Thomas Lickona,
author of *Character Matters*



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Character Education

Schools, parents, and communities working together to develop good character in children



Information for parents

Character education is a responsibility shared by parents, schools, and communities.

Character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue.

Psychologist and author Thomas Lickona defines character education as “the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue.” In a successful character education program, schools, parents, and communities work together to teach children certain core values on which everyone can agree. These core values — sometimes called virtues or character traits — include honesty, respect, responsibility, and fairness.

Core values are the foundation of a good character. With practice, and positive adult role models, children learn to act on these values. That is, they learn to “do the right thing” — make good decisions,

behave responsibly, resolve conflicts without violence, work with others, and show compassion and caring.

Character education supports academic achievement and safer schools.

Research has shown that character education can improve a school's environment as well as academic

achievement. Learning is difficult in an environment of disrespect, bullying, and low expectations for behavior and academics. But learning can thrive when the students and adults in a school have respect for themselves and others, always do their best work, act responsibly, and resolve conflicts peaceably.

Character education cannot solve all of a school's problems, but it does target the negative attitudes and behaviors that contribute to bullying, drug abuse, poor attendance, and violence.

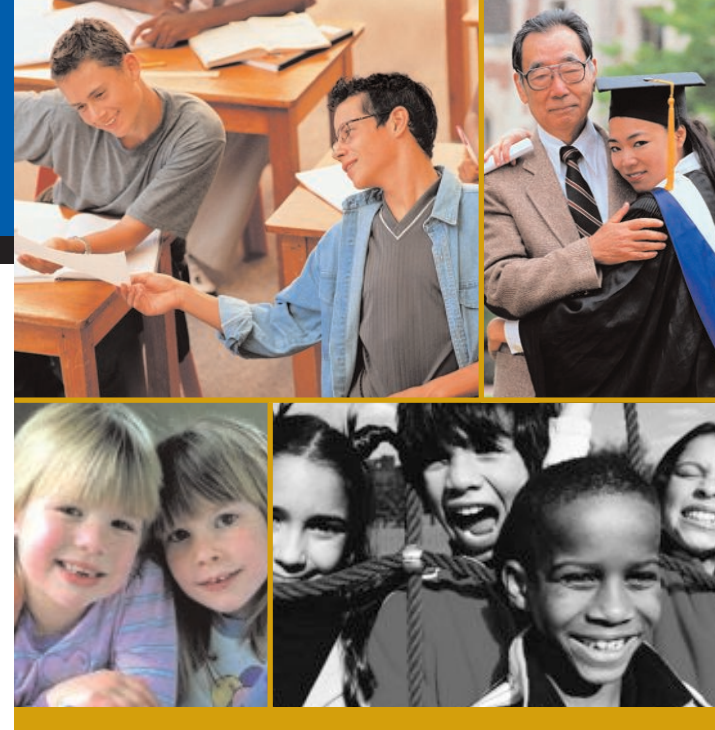
How does a school teach character?

Schools have an important role to play in building character. Schools take a comprehensive approach to character education. This means that character is not something that is discussed briefly and then put away. Successful schools make character part of daily life.

- Character traits and expectations are communicated regularly to students, staff, and parents.
- All of the adults in the school model good character.
- Students are held accountable for their behavior.
- Teachers take opportunities to discuss character when it comes up in the curriculum.
- Coaches expect athletes to show good sportsmanship.
- Schools recognize students who show good character.

“Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.”

— Benjamin Franklin



Parents are, of course, their child's first and most influential teachers of values and ethics. Schools with successful character education programs communicate with parents regularly. They keep parents informed of the school's goals, strategies, and activities. They value parents' opinions and provide opportunities for parents to ask questions or voice concerns. Perhaps most importantly, schools invite parents to get involved in the character development process.

“**Within** the character of the citizen lies the welfare of the nation.”

— Cicero

What you can do to help?

As a parent, you reinforce good character every day when you expect the best of your child and hold him or