



“Got Character?”

An Integrated Approach to Character Education

Committee Members:

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Bernards Township Public Schools

Bernards Township Public Schools Character Education Mission Statement

“Got Character?”

“The administration and staff of the Bernards Township Public School District believe that character education is integral to the future success of the students of the community. We believe that good character involves understanding the traits of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, and applying these traits to actions in daily life.

We believe that character education helps students to develop the strength of character they will need to contribute effectively to life in our pluralistic society as ethical adults. We are committed to the achievement of academic excellence and the development of honorable students.

We believe that community support is essential to the success of a character education initiative. In light of these beliefs, the members of the Bernards Township School District are committed to a T.E.A.M. approach that involves: Teaching, Enforcing, Advocating, and Modeling the traits we value in our school communities.

It is with these beliefs in mind, that the Character Education committee recommends the continued development and implementation of a program that infuses character into the educational experience, and integrates it into the curriculum, discipline policies, after-school activities and reform initiatives of the district.”

Committee Recommendations:

The success of the “Got Character?” program is dependant on an ongoing commitment from the Board of Education of the Bernards Township Public Schools. The committee recommends that:

1. The BTPS make a multi-year commitment to character education as a district goal.
2. The BTPS provide staff development on character education through in-service, professional days, pullout training, Staff College courses, and faculty meetings this year and for the next three years.
3. The BTPS develop a framework for the successful implementation of the program to include:
 - ?? A District Character Education Steering Committee to provide for vertical articulation of the program. The Committee Chairperson should serve as a resource for school-based committees and a liaison to community organizations and the inter-school council.
 - ?? School based advisory councils to oversee and formalize the implementation of the “Got Character?” program. Individual school programs should reflect the characteristics of the population that they serve and should seek opportunities to involve community members.
 - ?? School based committees that focus attention on areas such as: curriculum connections, discipline, and public relations.
4. The schools provide recognition for excellence in character on the part of students that is equal in value to the recognition given to students for excellence in academics and athletics.
5. There be a re-examination and re-evaluation of the policies related to participation in extra-curricular activities to emphasize commitment to character.
6. The district support opportunities for key staff members to attend a national character education conference.
7. Community involvement should be considered essential.
8. Excellence in character should be celebrated and publicized through existing mediums such as the district website, newsletter, “Good News” postcards, and similar means of communication.
9. Funds should be allocated for assemblies and speakers for school based programs.
10. Funds should be allocated for transportation related to school sponsored community service projects.
11. Community Service should be a graduation requirement.
12. Schools should designate an area in the media center for parent and teacher resources related to character education.
13. The district should encourage an open dialogue on the obstacles to the success of the “Got Character?” program that include, but are not limited to, societal pressure for academic achievement and competition for extrinsic rewards.

IDEAS FOR CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Definition:

Trustworthiness means living with integrity, being honest, reliable, and loyal.

Classroom Application:

- Review the definition of trustworthiness with your students.
- Discuss as a class how this trait was demonstrated recently by classmates, school personnel or family.
- Generate with the students a list of how this trait can be demonstrated today at school or at home.

Suggested Activities: These suggestions are provided to offer teachers guidance in the development of age appropriate activities.

- ? Brainstorm recent situations in which it was a challenge to be honest or trustworthy.
- ? Students write one way they can be trustworthy in school or at home and illustrate.
- ? Discuss why it is important to be trustworthy?
- ? In an ongoing “Character Journal” create an area for the topic Trustworthy. Each time they are trustworthy, or see someone being trustworthy, record/illustrate in the journal under the Trustworthy section. (There should be a section for each trait studied.)
- ? At the end of each month, have students read their journals and reflect on the traits they’ve demonstrated or observed.
- ? Tell a short story about how one “small” lie can lead to another.
- ? Discuss the consequences of “small” lies.
- ? Have students develop a list of types of dishonesty (ex. Cheating on tests, exaggerating, “white lies”). Discuss if any forms are “OK”. Why not? What action can take place instead? (ex. Study harder for tests, give honest compliments, etc.)
- ? Consider hypothetical value choices: What would you do if...? Teachers may construct their own choice situations or use a resource such as *Tough decisions: 50 Activities in Values and Character Education*, by A. Bourman.
- ? Discuss/write about Historical Figures who were trustworthy or untrustworthy to an idea, person, cause, etc.
- ? Review a current media source: newspapers, magazines, internet- look for examples of trustworthiness in our community, country, or the world.
- ? Discuss/write about Literary Figures who were trustworthy or untrustworthy to an idea, person, cause, etc.

Resources:

Strega Nona, by Tomie de Paola

The Wolf Who Cried Boy, by Jeffrey Dinardo

The True Francine, by Marl Tolon Brown

Corey Coleman, Grade 2, by Larry Dane Brimmer

The Berenstain Bears and the In-crowd, by Stan Berenstain

George Washington and the Cherry Tree

Jack and the Beanstalk

RESPECT

Definition:

Respect means treating others the way you want to be treated, being courteous and polite to others, and discussing problems.

Classroom Applications:

- Review the definition of respect with your class.
- Discuss how this trait was demonstrated recently by classmates, school personnel, or family.
- Generate a list of how this trait can be demonstrated today at school or home.

Suggested Activities: These suggestions are provided to offer teachers guidance in the development of age appropriate activities.

- ?? Utilize stories that demonstrate people motivated by a concern for the rights of others, by self-respect and/or concern for the environment.
- ?? Emphasize when outcomes are the result of individual's commitment to the rights of others.
- ?? Draw attention to actions that improve and maintain the environment and respect the rights of animals.
- ?? Discuss current events that identify people who are respected. Post relevant newspaper or magazine articles/photos.
- ?? Trace students' profiles on paper. Label profiles with words that demonstrate their respect for themselves and respectful actions towards others.
- ?? Create a timeline that demonstrates how respect or lack of respect for the environment impacts society in the future.
- ?? Brainstorm professions that automatically command respect such as Principal, Policeman, Senator or Congressman. Discuss whether respect is contingent upon past and present actions.
- ?? Make connections between healthy life choices and having respect for one self.
- ?? Create a T Chart that categorizes behavior as respectful or disrespectful. Examples of behavior may come from classroom interactions or actions of celebrities.
- ?? Teach the use of manners as an indicator of respect for others.
- ?? Hold a weekly classroom meeting to develop rapport and openly discuss the emotional climate of the classroom. Establish ground rules/guidelines that keeps the meeting positive and productive.
- ?? Hold a culminating Respect Day Celebration that highlights in the importance of respect. Students might create a poem, story, song, dance, banner, etc.
- ?? Help students create a "Coat of Arms" illustrating one's pride in oneself.

Resources-

Educating for Character, Lickona, Thomas, 1991

RESPONSIBILITY

Definition:

Responsibility means being accountable for your actions, recognizing and doing your duty, pursuing excellence, and using self-control.

Classroom Application:

- Review the definition.
- Discuss how this trait was demonstrated recently by classmates, school personnel or family.
- Generate a list of how this trait can be demonstrated today at school or home.

Suggested Activities: These suggestions are provided to offer teachers guidance in the development of age appropriate activities.

- Have students develop a responsibility checklist for school behavior. It should include such items as: Do I complete my work on time? Is my work completed to the best of my ability and something I am willing to share with my classmates? Do I arrive on time? Am I well prepared? Do I carry out my responsibilities in completing my class jobs? Do I follow rules? Do I take home and return all school forms and letters? Do I hand in my homework on time?
- Hold class discussions on responsibility. What is it? Why is it important? How do I show I am responsible?
- Have students develop class rules and consequences. Publish and display the rules. Ask students to become committed to following the rules.
- Have the class break up into small groups. Through role- play the groups will demonstrate the trait of responsibility.
- Look at recent comics that deal with family life and have the students identify characters that are and are not acting responsibly. Have the students create their own comic about responsibility within family life.
- Write an advice column (a.k.a. Ann Landers or Dear Abby) regarding problems with responsibility at school or at home. Students should respond by giving advice about questions or concerns.
- Use current events to discuss positive and negative examples of responsibility throughout the community. What made the act positive or negative? How did it influence the community?

Resources:

Educating for character, Lickona, Thomas, 1991.

FAIRNESS

Definition: Fairness is playing by the rules, taking turns, and sharing. Fair people are open-minded and listen to other people's opinions. They don't take advantage of others and don't blame others carelessly.

Classroom Application:

- Review the definition of fairness with your students.
- Discuss as a class how this trait was demonstrated recently by classmates, school personnel or family.
- Generate with the students a list of how this trait can be demonstrated today at school or at home.

Suggested Activities: These suggestions are provided to offer teachers guidance in the development of age appropriate activities.

- ? Brainstorm recent situations in which it was a challenge to be fair.
- ? Students write one way they can demonstrate fairness in school or at home and illustrate.
- ? Discuss why it is important to be fair?
- ? Write about a time you were treated unfairly. Describe how the situation could have been resolved fairly.
- ? In an ongoing "Character Journal" create an area for the topic Fairness. Each time they are fair, or see someone being fair, record/illustrate in the journal under the Fairness section. (There should be a section for each trait studied.)
- ? At the end of each month, have students read their journals and reflect on the traits they've demonstrated or observed.
- ? Identify and discuss moments in History that demonstrate unfairness. How was the event historically solved? What might have been a better solution?
- ? Review a current media source: newspapers, magazines, internet- look for examples of fairness in our community, country, or the world.
- ? Create a classroom environment that simulates a lack of fairness. (i.e. Students that are right handed receive certain privileges over students that are left- handed.) Discuss the feelings of all the students.
- ? Discuss/write about Literary Figures who were fair or unfair to an idea, person, cause, etc.

Resources:

The Doorbell Rang, by Pat Hutchins
Happy Birthday Martin Luther King, by Jean Marzollo
Katie Did It, by Becky Bring McDaniel
Spotty, by Margaret Rey
I Am Rosa Parks, by Rosa Parks with Jim Haskins
Teammates, by Peter Golenbock
The Value of Fairness: The Story of Nellie Bly, by Ann Donegan Johnson
Felita, by Nicholasa Mohr
My Name is San Ho, by Jayne Petit

CARING

Definition: A caring person is compassionate, considerate, and unselfish. A caring person shows appreciation, forgives others, and helps people without expecting anything in return.

Classroom Application:

- Review the definition.
- Discuss how this trait was demonstrated recently by classmates, school personnel, or family.
- Generate a list stating how this trait can be demonstrated today at school or at home.

Suggested Activities: These suggestions are provided to offer teachers guidance in the development of age appropriate activities.

Teachers can create a caring community in the classroom by helping students to:

- Know each other as individuals, i.e. “sharing circles.”
- Respect, care about and affirm and compliment each other—and refrain from peer cruelty.
- Have students participate in written affirmation activities highlighting each other’s talents or caring attributes.
- Students could study heroes and other examples of caring and courageous people in history and the news – then find everyday heroes in their communities and tell their stories.
- Students should create commercials that advertise their school as a caring community.
- Create an “Acts of Kindness” box where students can acknowledge each other as caring individuals.

CITIZENSHIP

Definition:

Citizenship is doing your share to make your school and community a better place. They cooperate with others, obey laws and rules, and respect authority. They also protect the environment, stay informed, and vote.

Classroom Application:

- ?? Review the definition of citizenship with your students.
- ?? Discuss how this trait was demonstrated by classmates, school personnel, or family.
- ?? Generate a list of how this trait can be demonstrated today at school or home.
- ?? Discuss how this trait relates to a quote, text or other current topics of discussion.

Suggested Activities: These suggestions are provided to offer teachers guidance in the development of age appropriate activities.

- ?? Do the pledge of allegiance every morning as a class/school.
- ?? Since you take the time to honor the flag each day, save a few minutes to honor some important people too. Select a student(s) to choose a person that he/she would like to honor and explain why he/she chose that person. Soon the students should be recognizing parents, coaches, school staff, doctors, friends, as well as nationally and internationally known individuals.
- ?? Review the “Rights and Responsibilities” code of conduct with your students.
- ?? Use the quote of the week as a writing prompt and allow the students to share their entries.
- ?? Sidewalk sweepers – Invite each class in your school to choose an area of the school’s sidewalk and outdoor areas to “adopt”. Then have the participating classes care for their adopted areas daily. Post a small sign that lets everyone know which class is maintaining each area of the school grounds.
- ?? Seek ways to involve local businesses in the life of the school, perhaps through mentoring opportunities or partnerships with student groups.
- ?? Involve you class in community service projects (ex. Collect shoeboxes and turn them into first aid kits for local businesses, create goodie boxes for senior citizens’ homes, participate in Earth Day related activities, etc.).
- ?? Write letters to local or national officials and businesses about laws and concerns.
- ?? Send a thank you note to the president of the United States or your local mayor and community helpers (ex: police department).
- ?? Emphasizing and teaching the significance of school traditions. Talk about the importance of recognizing certain rites as a community and properly acknowledging them.
- ?? Lead by example and model qualities of a good citizen. For instance, pick up the discarded piece of paper in the hallway.

- ?? Discuss the real meaning behind the national holidays. Work on projects and assignments that connect the theme with various holidays, such as Veteran's Day (Valentines for Vets).
- ?? Discuss less fortunate countries and their needs. Include in your discussion the less fortunate citizens of the United States. How can your students help them?
- ?? Research and discuss current events and how it relates to the theme of citizenship.
- ?? During election time, discuss the importance of voting. Compare and contrast our voting policies with other countries' policies.

Resources:

Teaching Character, by Anne C. Dotson & Karen D. Wisont
Developing Character When It Counts(Grades 4-5), by Anne L. Steele
Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle, by Chief Seattle
Dinah for President, by Claudia Mills
Mama, by Lee Bennett Hopkins
Project Wheels, by Jacqueline Turner Banks
Tanya's Big Green Dream, by Linda Glaser
Portrait of America: New Jersey by Kathleen Thompson
Immigrant Kids by Russell Freedman
Presidents' Day by Laura Alden
Coming to America: The Story of Immigration by Betsy Maestro
Papa Gets Elected (Berenstain Bears Series), by Stan & Jan Berenstain
Lily and Miss Liberty, by Carla Stevens
Civics for Today, by Margaret & Coombs Branson
Civics: Citizens & Society, by Allan O. Kownslar & Terry L. Smart
Our Country's Freedom, by Frances Cavannah
The Statue of Liberty, by Society for Visual Education
Take Off Your Hat When the Flag Goes By, by Scott Perry & Grant Hulet
Patriotism, by Linda Johnson
Patriotism, by Nancy Davis
What is Patriotism?, by Staff Greenhaven
The Value of Patriotism, by Rosen Group
Flags, by William Crampton, Karl Shone, & Martin Plomer
The American Flag, by Ann Armbruster
Patriotism, patriotism, patriotism, by Helen Hoke

Other Resources:

Filmstrip: "The Story of the Star-Spangled Banner"
 Assembly: "Flags Around the World"
 Songs: "America"
 "You're a Grand Old Flag"
 "There are Many Flags in Many Lands"
 "God Bless America"

CHARACTER EDUCATION AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

We recommend staff introduction of the program and involvement through the Principal's Faculty Advisory Council.

We recommend parent introduction and involvement through the Parent's Advisory Council.

School Wide Recommendations:

Promote a school wide common language of character education.

Emphasize good manners and courtesy.

Tie school wide problems to character education, i.e. lateness to school, gun chewing, honesty.

Promote student involvement through student government and peer helpers programs. Emphasize character during school elections.

Curriculum Integration:

Connect character education to the existing interdisciplinary units

Sixth grade- environmental studies (respect and responsibility)

Seventh grade- Holocaust studies and Conflict Resolution- "Days of Respect" (respect, responsibility, caring, fairness).

Eighth grade- reword tolerance goal to "Respect and Responsibility" or "Kindness and Justice"

Take advantage of cooperative learning activities to reinforce character traits.

Physical education- integrate team building activities and activities such as Project Adventure.

Technology- address the ethical use of the internet and other technologies.

Guidance Units- continue to focus on appropriate character traits, especially those not covered specifically by other disciplines.

CHARACTER EDUCATION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

In order to foster an environment in which good character is emphasized at the high school, the committee has suggested the following:

1. That teachers can serve as good character role models by:

- ✍✍ Enforcing consistent behavioral expectations for students regarding punctuality, cheating, documentation, manners, etc. (see # 2 below)
- ✍✍ Maintaining proper decorum during class interruptions.
- ✍✍ Greeting students by name as they enter the room.
- ✍✍ Attending extracurricular activities.
- ✍✍ Using good manners such as “please,” “thank you” and “excuse me”.

2. That students exhibit good character by:

- ✍✍ Greeting teachers and administrators by name.
- ✍✍ Using good manners such as knocking before entering a classroom, and saying “please,” “thank you” and “excuse me”.
- ✍✍ Coming to class on time.
- ✍✍ Coming to class prepared with notebook, writing implement and text, if required.
- ✍✍ Handing assignments in on time.
- ✍✍ Using proper documentation when required.
- ✍✍ Not interrupting other speakers.
- ✍✍ Fulfilling assigned roles in group activities.
- ✍✍ Fulfilling school attendance requirements.
- ✍✍ Keeping desks, classrooms, hallways and bathrooms free of garbage and graffiti.

3. That administration can support character education by:

- ✍✍ Maintaining its long-term commitment to character education.
- ✍✍ Enforcing school policies.
- ✍✍ Keeping classroom interruptions to a minimum.