BUILD CHARACTER
BUILD SUCCESS

Respect   Responsibility   *Empathy*

Kindness & Caring   Teamwork   Fairness

Honesty   Co-operation   Integrity   Perseverance

Character Development in Action
Toronto District School Board

Character Development is in all of our schools. The purpose of this guide is to share and integrate effective existing school programs and initiatives and present them in a Character Development context.

In 2007/2008, the Toronto District School Board identified ten character attributes to be infused into our curriculum and practices. Students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members participated in the selection of these attributes, which were announced at the Character Development Showcase in March of 2008.

This resource, along with the Principal Resource Package (Fall 2007), is meant to assist all school teams with the implementation of their Character Development programs. The implementation of Character Development may involve reaffirming already successful school practices, and/or assessing the effectiveness of existing programs. We hope that this package will provide helpful resources for this process.

> For more information on Character Development in Action, go to the following online sources:
> - For all viewers – www.tdsb.on.ca/character
> - For staff – TDSBweb > Program, Teaching & Learning > Guidance Program & Services > Character Development
> - For staff – TEL > TDSB Conferences > Student Services > Character Development
> - To forward a Character story to *TDSB: Great Things Happening*, go to the address below and put "Character" in the title.
>   <www.mytdsb.on.ca/survey/XsurveyAD817.asp,DanaInfo=tdsbweb+?id=817>

Character Development

Introduction

"If peace is both destination and the journey, then what we teach and how we teach... must not be separated in our preparations for working with pupils."

— Patrick Whitaker, British Educational Adviser and former teacher

Visionary leaders look at education in the twenty-first century with a new view of excellence. They see schools that are focused, not on preparing students for a life of tests, but rather, on "preparing young people for the tests of life" (Elias, 2001). Clearly, educating students is not just about academic achievement; it is also about emotional development and self-awareness. Education is about cultivating the need for students to "...become active and committed citizens of their classrooms, schools, families, communities, and workplaces" (Bencivega & Elias, 2003, p. 60).

Student success is dependent on a safe, caring, inclusive learning environment, where every student feels valued... Much of this starts with teaching our students about the value of character—respecting themselves and each other, making positive contributions to their school and community, thinking critically and creatively. By supporting the heart and art of teaching and learning in our classrooms, hallways, and our communities, we are nurturing the joy of learning. From there, everything is possible (Gerry Connelly, 2007).

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What Are the Key Beliefs and Actions of Character Development?

Character Development:
- nurtures attributes in our students that can help them break down barriers that divide people
- develops community
- helps students learn and practise character attributes that encourage them to be and do their best
- creates safe, caring, and inclusive schools, families, and communities
- is a shared responsibility among family, community, and schools to co-operatively encourage students to become mature social individuals
- permeates the entire life of the school as it is woven into policies, programs, practices, procedures, and interactions
- leads to a respectful, safe, and orderly school climate that enhances learning
- instills belief in students' potential to be responsible members of communities
- helps students develop self-discipline and personal management skills that that can be transferred to communities and workplaces
- is the cornerstone of a civil, just, and democratic society
- is the foundation of our publicly funded education system
- at its best, develops the whole student (heart, head, and hands)
- contributes to a healthy, safe, and orderly school environment
- creates a collaborative school, where teachers spend less time on discipline and more time teaching
- leads to high expectations for learning and behaviour
- encourages students to become engaged in their learning
- is embedded in what we do
- is universal and transcends ethnocultural, socio-economic, and other demographic factors, such as sexual orientation
- instills respect for the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Constitutional rights, the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines, and the Ontario Human Rights Code
- promotes student and staff understanding of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB's) Prohibited Grounds for Discrimination as stated in the TDSB Human Rights Policy. These include:
  - Age
  - Ancestry
  - Citizenship
  - Colour
  - Creed/Faith
  - Disability
  - Ethnic Origin
  - Family Status
  - Gender
  - Gender Identity
  - Marital Status
  - Place of Origin
  - Race
  - Same-Sex Marriage Partnerships
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Socio-Economic Status
- encourages students to strive for greater self-awareness, self-discipline, and understanding
- helps us share the responsibility of modelling the universal attributes upon which we find common ground

What Character Development Is Not!

- A new curriculum
- An add-on
- Indoctrination and punishment

The Character Development Initiative in the TDSB

The Character Development Initiative in the TDSB recognizes that academic achievement, character development, and civic engagement are inextricably linked and must be interwoven into a student's educational experience. Character development provides students with the tools for improving their academic achievement, for building a solid foundation for ethical decision making, and for using their own voices to influence outcomes.

When Character Development is implemented on a school-wide basis, positive results are realized in the areas of:
- student engagement, motivation, and achievement
- self-discipline, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships
- preparation for the workplace
- school culture, civility, and feelings of safety
- school–community partnerships
- volunteerism and civic engagement

Character attributes encourage students to set high standards for behaviour, to make decisions that are personally empowering, and to create quality relationships, thus translating ethical knowledge, skills, and attitudes into action. In turn, positive action and decision making create individuals who have attained the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become responsible members of a democratic society. Lickona and Davidson (2005) believe that "becoming a person of civic character ... requires the development of ethical thinking, moral agency, and a battery of social and emotional skills" (p.178).

It is our role as educators to foster in our students the belief that they are valued and should therefore value others. This will lead students to see their role in society as one that brings with it positive and necessary change—change, which in turn, will create a community made up of emotionally literate individuals who make positive choices and interpersonal connections. Without the opportunity for students to delve into their feelings and personal issues, they will be given an education that ignores the very part of them that makes them learn—their feelings about themselves and the world around them. Students need to understand that emotions are not something that is separate from ability and that success is not solely measured according to the results of a written test or how well an essay reads; rather, success comes from the potential that students have for dealing with life—the very life that will lead them to make choices and decisions. The reality is: ***loving to learn needs to come from learning to love***.