



## CHARACTER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

*“Character education is one of the most, if not the most, important answer in our national crisis of character. We need to implement character education as fast as possible in every school in America as part of any truly effective education reform movement.*”

*Character without knowledge is weak and feeble, but knowledge without character is dangerous and a potential menace to society. America will not be strong if we graduate young people from our schools who are brilliant but dishonest, who have great intellectual knowledge but don’t care about others, who are highly creative thinkers but are irresponsible. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated it well: ‘Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education.’ ”*

*-Sanford McDonnell, Chairman of the Character Education Partnership  
and Chairman Emeritus of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation.*

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER:

The teacher is to serve as caregiver, model and ethical mentor. Teacher must consistently treat students with love and respect, encouraging continuous right behavior, and correcting wrongful actions with appropriate conversation.

#### **Key Ideas:**

- Children need to form caring attachments to adults. These caring relationships will foster both the desire to learn and the desire to be a good person.
- Values are best transmitted through these warm, caring relationships. In schools, as in families, children care about our values because they know we care about them. If children do not experience an adult as someone who respects and cares about them, they are not likely to be open to anything the adult wishes to teach them about values..

#### **Strategies:**

- Teachers must serve as **effective caregivers** by loving and respecting their students, helping them succeed at the work of school and building their self-esteem. They should treat each student as having worth and dignity, and enable students to gain a first-hand appreciation of the meaning of morality by being treated in a moral way.
- Teachers must serve as **moral models** by being ethical persons who demonstrate a high level of respect and responsibility both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can also model moral concern and moral reasoning by taking time to discuss morally significant events in the school and the wider world.

- Teacher must serve as **ethical mentors** by providing direct moral instruction and guidance through explanation, storytelling, classroom discussion, encouragement of positive behavior, and corrective moral feedback - especially one-on-one correction - when students engage in behavior hurtful to others or self.

## THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Established rules shall include strategies to be utilized in cases of sexual harassment between students, moral and ethical disciplinary strategies, developing a caring school community that promotes the core values by example.

### **Key Ideas:**

- The school is a community with a moral culture.
- The moral culture of a school is defined by its operative values, ones reflected in actual school practices and the behavior of the school's members. Do faculty members respect each other? Is attention paid to moral concerns? Does the administration respect the teachers? Is there honesty and integrity in the business practices of the school? Are values enforced? Does the school have a written Philosophy and Code of Ethics?
- The school's moral culture is important because:
  1. It has a powerful effect on the moral behavior of the members of the school.
  2. It affects the character development of the school faculty. If the school is a caring and honest environment, students more readily develop those character qualities. *It is easier to become a good person when you are surrounded by goodness.*

### **Strategies:**

- Creating a positive moral culture in the school involves defining, communicating, modeling, teaching, celebrating, and enforcing or upholding the school's professed core virtues.
- Six elements are important parts of a positive moral culture:
  1. Moral leadership, typically from the school Principal but also from the faculty, staff and students themselves.
  2. Schoolwide discipline that upholds the school's values in all parts of the school environment.
  3. A schoolwide sense of community..
  4. A feeling on the part of students that "this is our school and we are responsible for making it the best school it can be."
  5. A moral climate of mutual respect and cooperation that pervades all relationships, those among adults as well as those between adults and students.
  6. Time spent on moral concerns - reflecting on the quality of moral life in the school.

# CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Character Education Program will be an integral part of the Social Studies program at Highpoint Academy from Kindergarten thru the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade. It will augment the “civic responsibility” component of the regular Social Studies curriculum. The philosophy is to help students “see themselves as part of the larger human adventure in time and place,” and developing “the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.” The main purpose of the program is to help students think about the most fundamental human questions: *How should I live my life? What goals are worth pursuing? How can I be a better human being? What qualities in human beings are admirable and worth emulating? What brings about human fulfillment and what does not? Am I an honest citizen and a decent person? Do I know the difference between right and wrong?*

## PROGRAM:

During the first 10 to 15 minutes of each Social Studies class, students will discuss the core values for that month. Additionally, throughout the day, the values learned will be addressed and identified continuously. It is essential for all Highpoint parents to be aware of what is being done and to integrate this Program into their children’s daily lives.

## STRATEGIES WILL INCLUDE:

- a. Role-playing; practice taking the perspective of the other person to resolve a conflict; discussion of hypothetical moral dilemmas; create scenarios where students have to use their “reasoning skills” and offer resolutions
- b. Cooperative learning in small groups - this must include both interdependence and individual accountability (*although everyone in the group is needed to work cooperatively, each individual student must demonstrate mastery of the value at the end*).
- c. Studying heroes and other examples of persons in history with these values
- d. Bringing examples from real-life scenarios, movies and/or television
- e. Understanding the meanings of the words and their antonyms.
- f. Practicing the values during the school day
- g. Group discussions; having moral dialogues with each other
- h. Asking students thought-producing moral questions
- i. Establishing role-models
- j. Discussing moral issues from the news or from the world around them (current events)
- k. Holding class debates
- l. Respectfully discussing problematic situations such as students cutting in line, put-downs, sexual harassment between students, personal family problems, etc.
- m. Practicing moral reasoning; integrating the concept of what is “right” and what is “wrong” in all subject areas
- n. Having an understanding of “virtues” and how to apply them in concrete situations.
- o. Teacher awareness and positive reinforcement when students are observed properly applying the core value learned
- p. Practicing solving problems cooperatively; have students give suggestions to solve the problem of one student
- q. Get the parents involved in the program; character education must begin at the home and extend beyond the classroom into larger spheres
- r. Share some of the research that shows what powerful influences parents are. These show that what works is love, structure, understanding, direct teaching, good examples, courtesy and discipline.

## **ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE MONTH TO INCLUDE:**

- a. Written essays and oral presentations where students are instructed to solve various kinds of hypothetical conflicts or real-life scenarios that can be resolved using the specific core values learned. *For example: What was the problem? What were the causes? How can this problem best be resolved? What would you do if...? What would be the best way to handle this situation? etc.*
- b. Classroom decorations and displays; special projects.
- c. Journal keeping. Students should keep a "Journal" that includes essays regarding the core values for the month.
- d. During the last "BM Session" (BMS) of each month, one class will be designated to make a presentation of their work relating to the specific core value in front of the student body. *(Please see below for the assigned month of your class presentation).*

## **CORE VALUES THAT WILL BE ADDRESSED EACH MONTH:**

### **OCTOBER: Responsibility & Trustworthiness (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Thinking before acting*
- *Being accountable for your actions*
- *Responding and recognizing your personal needs and the needs of others*
- *Being reliable and responsible*
- *Being discreet and sincere; friends should feel they can trust you*

### **NOVEMBER: Citizenship & Democracy (8<sup>th</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Defining "ethics"*
- *Helping to create a good society by being a law abiding citizen*
- *Helping to build a society with democratic values*
- *Learning why it is important to follow and to respect rules and regulations*
- *Learning to be proud of your heritage; being proud of "who you are"*
- *Defining the needs for Community Service*
- *Being aware of what "freedom" means*
- *Being respectful to the Flags of each Country*
- *Learning about the significance of Laws and of the Constitution*

### **DECEMBER: Caring & Kindness (1<sup>st</sup> Grade BMS Presentation ~ to be done 1<sup>st</sup> wk. in Jan.)**

- *Being nice to other people and being considerate of the feelings of others*
- *Being gentle toward people and other living things (animals, plants, etc.)*
- *Being helpful to those in need*
- *Being compassionate; having the capacity to feel what the other person feels like*
- *Being a loyal friend*

### **JANUARY: Courage & Pursuit of Excellence (6<sup>th</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Having faith in yourself; recognizing your individuality; always doing your personal best*
- *Learning to speak in front of an audience*
- *Standing up for your rights and privileges*
- *Learning to do the best with your individual talents or intelligence areas*
- *Striving toward a goal and not giving up*

### **FEBRUARY: Respect & Self-control (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Showing regard to your own worth and dignity and those of others*
- *Learning to listen to each other and to respect each others rights and opinions*
- *Learning to respect personal property (defining vandalism, graffiti, etc.)*
- *Expressing feelings in a controlled manner when there are disagreements of opinion*
- *Developing anger control techniques (deep breathing, countdowns, time-out, etc.)*
- *Learning how to "think" before acting out impulsively*
- *Developing and applying conflict resolution skills; resolving problems through communication*
- *Respecting your body; learning to say "no" and having others respect you*

**MARCH: Honesty & Integrity (7<sup>th</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Dealing truthfully with people*
- *Learning how to get in touch with and be sincere with your true feelings*
- *Not stealing; not taking something that does not belong to you*
- *Not lying to yourself or to others*
- *Not cheating; learning how to “earn” your things*
- *Taking pride in your accomplishments*
- *Learning how to be true to yourself and to your ideals*

**APRIL: Courtesy & Manners (5<sup>th</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Learning to say “please, thank you, you’re welcome and excuse me”*
- *Waiting your proper turn*
- *Being a good listener*
- *Raising your hand before speaking*
- *Not interrupting conversations*
- *Learning to discuss problems respectfully*
- *Learning appropriate table manners*
- *Acting politely at all times*
- *Learning to recognize common courtesy and proper manners*

**MAY: Fairness & Cooperation (4<sup>th</sup> Grade BMS Presentation)**

- *Treating people impartially; not playing favorites*
- *Being open-minded and learning to judge people fairly*
- *Learning about discrimination*
- *Maintaining an objective attitude toward those whose ideas differ from ours*
- *Learning to work together in a cooperative manner; helping each other*

Character education holds that there are universally important ethical values that must be continuously emphasized both at home and at school on a daily basis. It means living by these core values - understanding them, role-playing them, discussing them, and feeling them.

**“It is character that will conquer materialism, demonstrate respect for life and property, and stem the tide of violence in our land. And it is character that will search for truth and demand diligent scholarship.”**

*-David L. Davenport*