



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION



Helping You Put Knowledge to Work

100 Ways to Promote Character Education

1. Hang pictures of heroes and heroines in halls and classrooms.
2. Institute a student-tutoring program.
3. Promote service clubs with real missions for the school community.
4. Be vigilant about preventing and stopping scapegoating of one child by other children.
5. Create recognition programs that acknowledge something besides academic, athletic, or artistic achievement.
6. Seriously and thoughtfully grade student behavior and contribution to the community.
7. Create a code of behavior for your classroom (and school) on which students and teacher agree.
8. Invite parents to observe and contribute to your classroom.
9. Choose a personal motto and share it with your students.
10. Promote a "virtue of the month", study it and give an award to the student who makes the greatest progress in the virtue.
11. Share a personal hero and tell the students why he or she is your hero.
12. Regularly weave into your discussion of stories, history, and other subjects the question asking, "What the right thing to do?" and follow up with a discussion.
13. Help students to see that the good in students is more than academic success.
14. Treat ethical issues like other intellectual issues-get the facts, gather evidence, weigh consequences, make a decision.
15. Structure opportunities for your students to do service in the community.
16. Lead by example. For instance, pick up the discarded piece of paper in the hall. Clean the chalkboard out of respect for the next teacher.
17. Don't allow unkindness of any kind in your classroom.
18. Don't permit swearing, vulgar, or obscene language in classrooms or anywhere on school property.
19. Involve parents in student misbehavior through notes, call, and visits.
20. Write, call or visit parents to praise their children.

21. Make it clear that students have a moral responsibility to work hard in school.
22. Use ethical language with faculty colleagues..."I have responsibility to..." "The courage of her convictions caused her to..." "My neglect led him to..."
23. Include the study of "local heroes" in your social studies classes.
24. Institute an honor system for test-taking and homework assignments.
25. Create a charity. Collect donations and have the students decide on the distribution.
26. Reinforce the moral authority of parents, urging students to take their moral problems to their parents.
27. Have sayings on the wall that encourage good character, such as, "Don't wait to be a great person. Start now!"
28. Share stories of ethical conflict, especially ones involving students in their present setting. Don't hesitate to write them and have them struggle to put their views on paper.
29. Celebrate birthdays of heroes and heroines with observance and/or discussion of their accomplishments.
30. Have students write their own sayings of significance and display on walls.
31. Reward students for bringing in articles about ethics and moral issues. Use them in class discussion.
32. Discuss campus "issues of character" on a regular basis (vandalism, good deeds, etc.).
33. Strive to be consistent in dealings with students; avoid allowing personal feelings to interfere with fairness.
34. Admit mistakes and seek to correct them. Expect and encourage students to do the same.
35. Read aloud a, 'Two-minute Story" everyday to begin or end the school day. Choose stories that are brief, yet value-centered.
36. Consider ethical implications when establishing classroom and school policies and procedures; be aware of what messages they send to students.
37. Make classroom expectations clear, and hold students accountable for them.
38. Explain the reasons for a particular school or classroom policy, action, or decision. Help students to understand "why", not just "what."
39. Have students discuss the ethical and character-developing elements of being a good student.
40. Teach your students about competition, helping them to see when it is valuable and when it is not.
41. Talk to your students about why you're a teacher. Explain how you understand the responsibility and importance of teaching.

42. Let your students know about your community service. Tell them about volunteering in a food bank, coaching Little League, or teaching religion at your temple or church.
43. Teach students to analyze the media critically. To what extent do their messages encourage living a life of character?
44. Bring recent high school graduates back to talk about their successful transitions to college, work, or the military. Ask them how good moral habits have helped in their adjustment.
45. Invite local adults in to talk about how they have integrated the concept of character into their adult lives.
46. Help reinforce students' empathy. Ask them questions like: "How would you feel if no one would play with you?" or "How would you feel if someone made fun of your name because they thought it was strange sounding?"
47. When conflicts arise at school, teach students the importance of respect, open-mindedness, privacy and discretion. Do not allow conversations that are fueled by gossip or disrespect.
48. Overtly teach courtesy. Teach students how to listen attentively to other students and adults and about interrupting people.
49. Read and discuss biographies of accomplished individuals. For students in upper grades, encourage them to be discerning, seeing that an individual may have flaws but still be capable of much admirable action.
50. Assigning older students to assist younger ones, such as seniors paired with freshmen, to show them the school.
51. Emphasize from the first day of class the importance of working hard and striving for certain standards of achievement.
52. Encourage high school students to become more active in their community by attending city, town, or school board meetings.
53. During the election season, encourage students to research the candidates' positions.
54. Encourage high school students to volunteer for voter registration drives, and if eligible, to vote.
55. Teach students how to write thank-you notes. As a class, write thank-you notes to people who have done thoughtful things for the students.
56. Give students sufficient feedback when evaluating their work. Demonstrate to students that you are making an effort to communicate to them how they are succeeding and how they can improve.
57. Have older students sponsor a potluck supper for their parents. Have students cook, decorate, serve, and clean up.

58. Begin a monthly "gift-giving" from your class. Have the class perform some service to the school, such as decorating a hallway.
59. Work together as a class or school to clean classrooms or school grounds on a regular basis.
60. Demonstrate your respect for other religions and cultures. Talk to students about the moral imperative to act justly towards others.
61. Stand up for the "underdog" when he or she is being treated unfairly. Use this as a teaching moment.
62. Have children in self-contained classrooms take turns caring for their class pets, taking them home on weekends or holidays. Talk to them about the need to care for other living creatures.
63. Start or expand a class or school-recycling program. Talk about the general principles of carefully using what you have and not wasting.
64. Highlight certain programs in your school, such as S.A.D.D. or the National Honor Society that may already be emphasizing character.
65. Have students volunteer to clean up their community. With parental support, encourage students to build a community playground, pick up litter, rake leaves, grow plants, paint a mural on the side of a building, or clean up a local beach.
66. Dust off the school song (alma mater). Teach students, especially the newest ones, the words; talk about their meaning, and include it in every school activity.
67. If your school doesn't have a school song, sponsor some sort of contest for students to write one. As a school community, talk about what kinds of ideas should be included in the school song.
68. Emphasize and teach the significance of school rituals. Talk about the importance of recognizing certain rites as a community and properly acknowledge them.
69. Encourage students to look in on elderly or sick neighbors, particularly during harsh winter months.
70. Start a pen pal exchange between your students from a distance state or country. Share the information your students learn about their pen pals' lives'. Encourage discussion about what life must be like living in that community.
71. Use the curriculum to teach character. For example, in language arts class, have students assume a character's point of view and write about it. Regularly ask questions requiring students to "walk in someone else's shoes."
72. Use constructive criticism, tempered by compassion. Help students do the same with each other.
73. Emphasize good sportsmanship in sports, games, and daily interaction with others.

74. When making school policy, allow students' participation and responsibility in some decisions. Have them research the various ramifications of different policies and present their finds to the administrators and faculty for discussion.
75. Collect interesting, thought provoking quotes worthy of reflection, discussion, and writing, such as "the truth never becomes clear as long as we assume that each one of us, individually, is the center of the universe." (Thomas Merton) As students to do the same.
76. Develop a list of suggested readings in character education that teachers and administrators can use as resources.
77. Develop a school motto.
78. Institute a character honor roll.
79. Foster the development of student' self-esteem by providing opportunities for genuine academic and social challenge and achievement.
80. Include in faculty/staff meetings and workshops discussions of the school's "moral climate," and desired goals for the moral life of the school.
81. Develop a "School Code of Ethics." Refer to it in all school policy and activities. Disseminate it to all school members. Display it prominently throughout the building.
82. Begin an "exchange network" or "bulleting board" through which teachers and administrators can share their own, "100 Ways to Promote Character Equation."
83. Include anecdotes of commendable student behavior in the school newsletter to parents.
84. Start a school scrapbook with photos, news stories, and memorabilia reflecting the school's history and accomplishments. Include all school members in contributing to and maintaining the collection. Show it off to school visitors.
85. Publicly recognize the work and achievements of the school's "unsung heroes – the custodians, repairmen, secretaries, cafeterias workers, and volunteers – who keep things running every day.
86. Assign reasonable amounts of homework that stimulate and challenge students while teaching the importance of self-discipline and perseverance in learning.
87. Design a school pledge that students recite weekly. Include it in school documents especially those intended for parents.
88. Institute a dress code, explaining its role in promoting an educational environment conducive to learning.
89. Use homeroom periods for activities that develop community and cohesion among students and a sense of attachment to their school.
90. Create opportunities for parents and students to work together on a school project. For example, a dance, symposium, dinner or field trip.

91. Be attentive to the physical appearance of the building. Involve all school members in the shared responsibility of general cleanliness and order.
92. Seek ways to involve local businesses in the life of the school, perhaps through mentoring opportunities or partnerships with student groups.
93. Establish a newcomers' club for newly hired personnel and entering students.
94. Invite local employers to talk to students about the importance of good moral character in the world of work.
95. Have athletes and coaches collaborate to develop a code of ethics for athletics.
96. Sponsor a public forum on character education in your community.
97. Ask each school organization to design a logo symbolizing a character trait representative of the club's mission.
98. Provide a bimonthly occasion for teachers to gather with their colleagues and study a text of literature, history, philosophy or their subject area that bears on ethics.
99. Develop for parents a bibliography of books they can read with their children to stimulate conversation about good character.
100. Sponsor an after-school reading club for students, with age-appropriate literature focused on enduring moral lessons.

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"100 Ways to Promote Character Education" was developed by the staff of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character (CAEC) at Boston University's School of Education. For more information about the CAEC, please visit their website at <http://www.bu.edu/education/caec>

S:Judy/Character Counts/100 Ways to Promote Character Education

