



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work



Ideas for Elementary Schools To Help Students Become People of Good Character

1. Create a Wall of Character to praise and appreciate students involved in positive character traits.
2. During the weeks leading up to Grandparents' Day, have children investigate the question, "What influences do our grandparents and other relatives have on us?" Have students interview, watch films, and read books about their grandparent's generation.¹
3. Hold a family science fair where families are supposed to work together to prepare the display.¹
4. Every two to three weeks, send home "family homework."²
5. Utilize "the class meeting" to create a democratic classroom environment.³
6. Highlight part of the DARE program that emphasizes character traits.⁴
7. Teach responsibility and respect toward animals.
8. Introduce the concept of having Respect by having teachers perform California Raisin skit to Aretha Franklin's RESPECT song.⁵
9. Have a homeless shelter employee as a guest speaker during the "caring" month.⁶
10. Introduce the Six Pillars of Character_{sm} with puppets.
11. Questions a principal/teacher asks any student when dealing with disciplinary issues: "Were you being a kid for character?" "Did you treat the other(s) like you want to be treated?" "Did you stop and think?" "Which Pillar do you think you need to work on to improve your behavior?"⁸
12. Give the "Best Bunch at Lunch" award to the class with the best behavior in the lunch room each week.⁹
13. Celebrate Random Acts of Kindness Week (2nd week in February); put up display that documents all the random acts, e.g., "Kindness Trees" with leaves that list the acts of kindness.⁹
14. Have students make sample commercials or videos on the Six Pillars of Character.
15. Use cooperative learning "T" charts of "what does it look like" and "what does it sound like" to help students learn what actions define the various character traits.

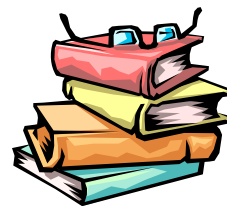


16. Lunch menus give names to food that include the character attributes, e.g., Caring Corn.¹⁰
17. Sit desks in a square, each with a number on it. Every Friday have a “seat lottery” draw number and move to a different desk. This helps students get to know others in the class, helps prevent cliques (us vs. them attitude) and prevents desks from becoming an archaeological dig.
18. To help children deal with being impulsive, teach **STAR**: Stop, Think, Act, and Review.
19. Let students focus on one topic (as they complete many assignments) throughout the school year. They become an “expert on that topic.” For example, a student may know more about whales than any child or adult in that school district.
20. Complete curriculum modules or lessons with special emphasis on Six Pillars of Character or ethical decision-making.
21. Make sure the school handbook, code of conduct, etc. align with the Six Pillars of Character.
22. Include cooperative learning, critical thinking skills, service learning, and various other strategies that foster caring, thoughtful students.
23. Brag FACTS: teachers make sure they have said at least one good thing about each child to their parents (phone call, send home Brag FACT, when see in the grocery store, etc.).
24. Dealing with Halloween; the month’s character trait would be courage or respect. Each child chooses a local hero, someone they know personally. They dress up as that person.
25. When teaching cooperation/citizenship puzzles are donated to the school. When students earn time, they are allowed to go work on the puzzle. Each time they complete a puzzle, the puzzle pieces are secured and the puzzle is displayed in the hall with a sign about cooperation. This same school put a 2500 piece puzzle in the foyer of the school. Parents and others who attended events or picked up kids from practice all put the puzzle together.
26. Cooperative Learning: When teaching character traits, remember not only, “What does it Look Like” and “What does it Sound Like”, but, “What does it Feel Like.”

Ideas for Specific Classes

English/Literature

1. Acquire a list of children’s books arranged by the Six Pillars.
2. Read a story to children. Have them write a story of their own reflecting the same Pillar.
3. Get additional ideas from: “The Elementary School Curriculum as Moral Educator” *Moral Education Forum* (Summer 1983), 1580 Massachusetts Ave., 8A, Cambridge, MA 02138.¹¹



4. *Ethical Values: Lessons for Lower-Elementary Grades To Through Six (A Teacher's Guide)*, by Elizabeth Saenger, The Council for Religion in Independent Schools, PO Box 40613, Washington, D.C. 20016.¹²
5. Use Character Quotes for writing assignments.⁷
6. Class develops a checklist of characteristics that describe a hero and then measure each character in a story to see if he/she meets the established criteria.¹³
7. Write similes, for example: "A kid for character is like a bright sun in the sky."¹⁴
8. First day of school read, *Alexander's Horrible, Terrible, Very Bad Day*.
 - a) Ask if they ever have "Alexander days" [learn we all have bad days]
 - b) Tell children you also have "Alexander days" [all humanity has bad days]
 - c) Tell me when you're having an "Alexander day" [teach them how to deal with bad days]. When a student says he's having an "Alexander day," the first chance you get stop and talk with the student about what's been going on. This process builds an immediate bond with your students.

Science

1. Try ideas in "Teaching Values and Self-Esteem Through the Environment," The Newsletter of Practical Science and Math for K-8 Teachers. Spring 1990. Teachers Laboratory, Inc., PO Box 6480, Brattleboro, VT 1990.)

Social Studies

1. Have students rewrite how some incidents in history might have been different if parties involved had acted with Six Pillar ethics.
2. Read and review weekly reader news articles in light of the Six Pillars of Character.
3. Use lessons from Reasoning with Democratic Values; Volume 1 and 2, by Alan L. Lockwood and David E. Harris, New York. Teachers College Press, 1985.

Art and Music

1. Have each grade level sing a song about one of the Six Pillars of Character at programs or assembly.
2. Write and sing Character Counts! Lyrics to traditional songs.
3. Analyze lyrics of songs to find examples of Six Pillar language.



Work Force Preparation

1. Invite career minded speakers to discuss ethics in the workplace.

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- ¹Lickon, Thomas. *Educating for Character: How our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. (New York, Bantam Books, 1991) p.402.
- ²Lickona. p. 404.
- ³Lickona. p. 135-160.
- ⁴Vincent, Dr. Phillip. *Promising Practices in Character Education, Nine Success Stories from Around the Country*. (Character Development Group, 1996) p. 46.
- ⁵Vincent. p.5.
- ⁶Vincent. p. 76.
- ⁷Turner, Dr. Ginny. *Promising Practices in Character Education, Volume 2: Twelve Success Stories from Around the Century*. (Character Development Group, 1996) p.2.
- ⁸Turner. p.5.
- ⁹Turner. p.6.
- ¹⁰Turner. p.31.
- ¹¹Lickona. p. 174.
- ¹²Lickona. p.175.
- ¹³Turner. p. 4.
- ¹⁴Turner. p. 5

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