



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
EXTENSION

Helping You Put Knowledge to Work



**Ideas for Schools**  
**Helping Students Become People of Good Character**

1. Teach conflict resolution:
  - a. a planned curriculum that has students think, write, and talk about various kinds of conflicts
  - b. structured skill training that coaches students in conflict-avoidance skills
  - c. use the class meeting to address common conflicts that occur among class members to establish the norm of solving conflicts fairly and nonviolently
  - d. intervening when necessary to help children apply their interpersonal skills at the moment of actual conflict
  - e. making students increasingly responsible for working out their own conflicts without the aid of an adult<sup>1</sup>.
2. Hold a character education training for all faculty and staff.
3. Five components important for comprehensive character education effort <sup>2</sup>
  - a. Be organized, systematic/intentional
  - b. Be literature-based and language rich
  - c. Be integrated -- do NOT make character education an add-on
  - d. Be sure to include all staff, parents, and community
  - e. Be visible in your efforts.
4. Students who know each other are more likely to care about one another.
  - a. help students know each other through activities
  - b. teach students to respect, affirm, and care about each other.
5. Help students develop a feeling of membership in and responsibility for the group <sup>3</sup>.
6. Involve students in setting classroom rules and in taking personal responsibility for following them<sup>4</sup>.
7. Teachable moments: when something happens in the classroom, playground, cafeteria, at a sporting event, or in the community, help students make the connection between the event incident, good or bad, to positive character traits.
8. Greet students with one of the 3 "H's" [hug, handshake, high five], their choice (Hal Urban).
9. Include character education in your school improvement plan.
10. Incorporate character education into state learning standards.
11. Provide a framework, but let each teacher address character education in different ways.

12. Encourage students to develop a character building portfolio.
13. Many character education curriculum highlight famous people who exemplify each of the Six Pillars. Identify local people who exemplify each Pillar and feature them in a people profile, and discussion (Bill Parsons, June 2000, Center for the 4th and 5th R's Character Education Conference).
14. When a certificate is presented to a student identify the positive character trait exhibited and highlight that trait during the presentation and type that highlighting on the back of the certificate; include these features:
  - a. Define the trait
  - b. Give specific illustration of how they demonstrated that quality,
  - c. Describe how this quality, as exhibited in this individual's life, benefit others<sup>5</sup>.
15. Six Elements of a Positive Moral Culture in the School
  - a. moral and academic leadership from the principal
  - b. school-wide discipline that models, promotes, and upholds the school's values in all school environments
  - c. a school-wide sense of community
  - d. student government that involves students in democratic self-government and fosters the feeling "This is our school, and we're responsible for making it the best school it can be"
  - e. a moral atmosphere of mutual respect, fairness and cooperation between students, as well as those between adults and students
  - f. elevating the importance of morality by spending school time on moral concerns
16. Carrying Out An Effective Character Education Program:
  - a. Work toward common virtues:
  - b. Integrating into regular lessons
  - c. Integrating into all aspects of school
  - d. Capturing teachable moments
  - e. Modeling the virtues
  - f. Allowing the students to practice the virtues

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<sup>1</sup> Lickona, Thomas. *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. (New York, Bantam Books, 1991.) p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, Ginny (Ed.). *Promising Practices in Character Education, Nine Success Stories From Around the Country*. (Character Development Publishing, 1996) p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Lickona p.89-108.

<sup>4</sup> Lickona p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> Character First! Training Seminar Workbook, (Character Training Institute, Oklahoma City, OK, 2001) page 35.

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