

The Eleven Principles Abbreviated

The *11 Principles of Effective Character Education* is a framework or “looking glass” by which schools and districts can evaluate their culture and climate. Each Principle forms the basis for evaluation and improvement its own vital area of school culture.

1. The school community promotes core ethical and performance values as the foundation of good character.

...The school makes clear that the basic human values transcend religious and cultural differences and express our common humanity. Examples of core ethical values are caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others. Examples of performance values include diligence, best effort, perseverance, critical thinking, and positive attitude...

2. The school defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and doing.

Good character involves understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical and performance values. A holistic approach to character development therefore seeks to develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dispositions required to do the right thing and do one’s best work...

3. The school uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to character development.

...A comprehensive approach uses all aspects of schooling as opportunities for character development. This includes the formal academic curriculum and extracurricular activities, as well as what is sometimes called the hidden or informal curriculum (e.g., how school procedures reflect core values, how adults model good character, how the instructional process respects students, how student diversity is addressed, and how the discipline policy encourages student reflection and growth)...

4. The school creates a caring community.

...In a caring school community, the daily life of classrooms and all other parts of the school environment (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, sports fields, buses, front office, and teachers’ lounge) are imbued with a climate of concern and respect for others.

5. The school provides students with opportunities for moral action.

In the ethical as in the intellectual domain, students are constructive learners—they learn best by doing. To develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of their character, students need many and varied opportunities to grapple with real-life challenges...

6. The school offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed. ...Effective character educators model persistence, responsibility, and caring as they differentiate instruction, employ a variety of active teaching and learning strategies, and look for ways that character is potentially developed *in and through* everyday teaching and learning...

7. The school fosters students' self-motivation.

...Schools of character work with students to develop their understanding of rules, their awareness of how their behavior affects others, and the character strengths—such as self-control, perspective taking, and conflict resolution skills—needed to act responsibly in the future. Rather than settle for mere compliance, these schools seek to help students benefit from their mistakes by providing meaningful opportunities for reflection, problem solving, and restitution...

8. The school staff is an ethical learning community that shares responsibility for character education and adheres to the same core values that guide the students.

...First and foremost, staff members assume this responsibility by modeling the core values in their own behavior and taking advantage of opportunities to positively influence the students with whom they interact. Second, the same values and norms that govern the life of students serve to govern the collective life of adult members in the school community

9. The school fosters shared leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative.

...In addition, within the school, students assume developmentally appropriate roles in leading the character education effort through, for example, class meetings, student government, peer mediation, cross-age tutoring, service clubs, task forces, and student-led initiatives.

10. The school engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.

...They communicate with families—via newsletters, e-mails, family nights, the school website, and parent conferences—about goals and activities regarding character education. To build greater trust between home and school, parents are represented on the character education committee or through whatever decision-making structures exist...

11. The school regularly assesses its culture and climate, the functioning of its staff as character educators, and the extent to which its students manifest good character.

...The school uses a variety of assessment data (e.g., academic test scores, focus groups, survey results) that include the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents. Schools report on this data and use it to determine next steps...

The *11 Principles of Effective Character Education* is the cornerstone of Character.org in Washington D.C. Character.org internationally recognizes schools and districts for the quality of their character development efforts for students and staff.

For more information about Character.org, the National Schools of Character initiative and a complete download of the 11 Principles documents go to www.character.org

