



Tom Horne
 Superintendent of
 Public Instruction
 Arizona Department of Education

Character Connections

APRIL 2009

When asked the question, what should schools teach our children, most people state the three R's – reading, writing and 'rithmetic. And, of course, we all agree these are critical skills students must learn in order to be successful citizens of this country. But, if we were to ask our parents, do you want your children to be taught good character as well? Overwhelmingly, the answer would be yes, of course!

When Superintendent Tom Horne took office, he included character education as one of his top goals for our schools. The Character Education and Development Unit has trained 1500 schools in character education. Our training outlines ways in which teachers can incorporate character education into their daily lessons without becoming an add on to their scheduled class loads. Any teacher can be a teacher of character whether they are math, science, music, P.E. Teachers can also teach character education in a direct approach just like they would instruct a math concept. For example, a character trait like "respect" can be explained and taught through readings, activities, illustrations, case studies etc. Students become engaged in learning the lessons of respect and are taught what characteristics a person must possess in order to demonstrate these attributes with self and others.

As a former high school principal, I had as many conferences with parents dealing with student conduct as I did relative to academic achievement. Parents want their schools to provide an environment free from negative and hostile behaviors. During my ten years as a high school principal, one of my goals was to ensure a positive climate for learning; the second goal was to increase academic achievement. By including character education into the curriculum, our schools will help provide the building blocks necessary for a comprehensive education for our students.



Margaret Dugan
 Deputy Superintendent, ADE

"Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand."

Providing students with opportunities to engage in and serve their communities is a powerful way to put good character into practice AND learn required subject matter. Service projects can take place right on school grounds and often require no expense!

How to get started:

1. Discuss as a class the concept of volunteerism and community service. Why do people volunteer? What does it have to do with good character?
2. Ask for student input on whom they would like to serve and how. Click [HERE](#) for project ideas that integrate academic content.
3. Plan the project. What resources do you need to make it happen? What will students learn through this project?
4. Learn and serve! When complete, celebrate and evaluate your efforts as a class. What did we learn? Did we make a positive impact? Who can we help next?

Books to inspire your students!

- Knitting Nell* by Julie J. Roth (Ages 4-8)
- A Castle on Viola Street* by DyAnne DiSalvo (Ages 4-8)
- Something Beautiful* by Sharon D. Wyeth (Ages 4-8)
- The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara Lewis (Ages 9-12)

"If you want your students to do a good job, give them a good job to do!"



Arizona Department of Education
 Character Education and Development

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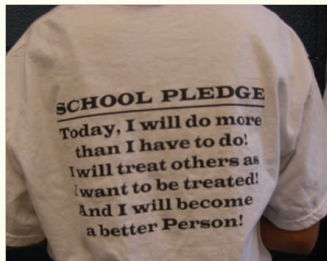
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Spotlight on J.O. Combs Unified School District

The J.O. Combs Unified School District was grateful to receive funds from ADE's matching grant program and has been a proud member of the Character Counts Coalition over the past four years. Implementation of the Character Counts program originated due to the school counseling department and administration partnering together to integrate Character Counts within each of J.O. Combs schools' culture. Character Counts serves as the foundation of J.O. Combs Unified School District's Comprehensive School Guidance Program. The program was designed to increase student achievement by providing: (1) more equitable distributed support services to students; (2) a broader impact on student development concerning moral and performance character; (3) student's satisfaction concerning the relevance of education; and (4) the involvement of a safe, orderly, connected school environment.



School counselors within J.O. Combs have become advocates, facilitators, and leaders of establishing the Character Counts program in the district. Efforts include the newly adopted school guidance curriculum aligned with the six pillars of character in which every student takes part in throughout the school year. In addition, sites have put into action school wide positive behavior systems aligned with Character Counts. Measures to foster staff development concerning the Character Counts program have also been imperative to the establishment of district wide implementation.

An array of Character Counts Workshops have been held throughout the course of the year. The workshops covered how to integrate Character Counts within academic curriculum as well as how to make Character Counts the focal point of classroom management systems. Furthermore, site level parent workshops have been facilitated by school counselors to assist with united efforts between home and school. The purpose of the parent workshops was to provide parents with strategies to establish healthy home systems as well as effective tools to assist with being a parent that promotes and fosters character.



Goals for 2009-2010 include:

- (1) Increase professional development opportunities using out of district professional resources.
- (2) Implement an evaluation tool to measure the knowledge level of staff and parents to adequately provide development to meet the differing needs.
- (3) Enhance collaboration to support the scope and sequence between grade level sites.
- (4) Lastly, continue to build district programs and systems using the Character Counts program as the foundation.

*Maria Ramirez, School Counselor
 Ranch / Ellsworth Elementary*

