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Character Connections

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Maintaining Momentum in Character Education



Keeping a character education program going long after the initial passion and excitement have worn off can be a tough fight, especially when education is primarily focused on standardized testing and mandated programs. When programs atrophy into simply hanging posters that the staff have forgotten the point of, you need to bring it back to life. Here are some dos and don'ts on how to resuscitate your program.

DO:

- Set up a committee. This will prevent the program from relying on one person. Bring in representatives from various groups (administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, coaches, and other program leaders). A committee helps share the workload, increases implementation, and brings in multiple perspectives.
- Institutionalize the program. Find processes your school already has in place and integrate the values and message of character into them.

Examples:

- Discipline procedures
- Hiring policy and procedure
- Student awards and recognition
- Character reports or assessment forms
- Staff performance appraisals

DO's (continued)

- Embed your message. Weave it into your teacher training and professional development menu. Involve new staff in initial training, and schedule in-service days to bring them up to speed on your character education program.
- Hold built-in events. Make them meaningful and part of your school calendar.
- Annually assess your progress. Set measurable goals at the beginning of the school year, and conduct surveys to see what behaviors are improving (or otherwise). Evidence of change, either way, allows you to react consistently.

DON'T:

- Rely on one person to be the cheerleader. If he or she gets burned out or leaves, the program could collapse.
- Let the message languish. Abandoning your program to letterheads or school mission statements without meaningful implementation and reflection will doom it.
- Expect new staff to know what to do. Involve them in curriculum committees and implementation strategy development. Give them mentors.
- Make your program events-based only. This will defeat sustainability and is an ineffective approach to teaching character.

Source: February CC Chronicle <http://charactercounts.org/chronicle/>

Spring Grant Applications Due April 10th!

Schools can receive up to \$5000 for character education.



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