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WARNING!

Attitudes are contagious!

When we have a cold or the flu, we have a responsibility not to spread it to others. Similarly, we have a responsibility not to spread a poor attitude to those around us. Encouraging children to take control of their attitude and develop a positive outlook can also help them overcome life's adversities now and as they age. We can begin doing this by teaching and modeling an **attitude of gratitude**. Here are some simple ways to get started:

- Throughout the year, have students share what they are grateful for in discussion or writing. Encourage them to consider non-material things. Teach and model how to **look for things in each day that are worthy of gratitude**.
- Have students **formally recognize the school support staff** including custodians, café workers, bus drivers, etc. Discuss with students the integral role these individuals play in providing them with a great school.
- Teach students and use the phrase "**Make it Great Day!**" Point out that it is up to each one of us to determine the kind of day we have, even if things go wrong.

Picture Books about Gratitude

The Most Thankful Thing by Lisa McCCourt

Feeling Thankful by Shelly Rotner

Character Connections

RESPONSIBILITY November 2008

A Sustainable Future Requires Character

Character and ethics are the foundation for a truly sustainable future. The Arizona Character Education Initiative develops the next generation of consumers, employees and business leaders to understand that long-term success requires more than just personal aggrandizement. It requires an understanding that we are each part of a larger community and world.

That better future will require sound decisions by people committed to being accountable for the pros and cons of their decisions. It will require individuals who understand that their decisions have potential impacts on the larger community and environment. A future that meets our needs and the needs of future generations requires decisions that consider sustainability's triple bottom line: economics, environment and community.

The Arizona Character Education Initiative is the perfect corollary to sustainability, as we seek to develop individuals who will make more sustainable business, political and social decisions. Sustainability is a framework of how individuals and communities can build a better tomorrow and ACEI is a strategy to develop individuals who understand that being trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and a good citizen are the pillars of that better world.

Ed Fox VP, Chief Sustainability Officer
 Arizona Public Service

What's New?

Show your school pride by applying for a
2009 Promising Practices in Character Education Award!
 Click [HERE](#) for application. Due 11/28.



Spotlight on Fairfax High School

Opened in 2007 with freshmen students only, Betty H. Fairfax High School is a new comprehensive high school in the Phoenix Union High School District. Of paramount importance to the staff and faculty of this new high school was the creation of a school culture that was conducive to teaching and learning. Emphasis was made on the importance of developing high expectations in academics, creating rigor and a college-going environment. However, from our discussions, we believed equally as important as developing outstanding students academically was developing outstanding students of character. As a result of our discussions we created a mission statement, although simple, truly encompasses the culture we are creating, which reads, ***"The mission of Betty H. Fairfax High School is to provide all students with an equal opportunity to succeed now and into the future by requiring high academic standards and by building a strong character foundation."***



The character education program continues to be an integral component of our school culture and we have begun to implement activities that embody this mission. For example, we have trained our entire staff with the assistance of the Arizona Department of

Education Character Education and Development division. Although most students, parents, and staff members may associate this program with elementary schools, we have demonstrated when developed in the right context that this program can become a vital aspect of any high school cultural environment. We have blended the aspects of the six pillars across our curriculum and daily routines from the daily announcements, to assemblies and dances, and in school policies and procedures. We have also used character education as a reward incentive for improved academics, attendance, and behavior; for example we honor students from every curriculum department as students of the month based on the criteria of academic excellence and exemplifying the six pillars of character.



In addition, our student government has begun to recognize students through the "Get caught doing the right thing" incentive program where students exhibiting any of the six pillars are spontaneously recognized by student government members and rewarded with various items such as t-shirts and tickets to school and

community events.

Lastly, we recently introduced the Rachel's Challenge program which is a nationally recognized character education, violence reduction and cultural development program designed by the father of Rachel Scott the first student killed in the Columbine High School tragedy in 1999. This program works in conjunction with the six pillars and includes assemblies, student and staff, training, and the creation of a permanent campus club entitled, "Friends of Rachel."

Our long term plan is to continue to infuse these culture changing strategies throughout this school year and beyond because we firmly believe that each student at Fairfax High School can make a positive and lasting difference in our school and community. In closing, I am reminded of a quote that truly sums up our beliefs at Fairfax and that is, ***"The solution to adult problems tomorrow depends in large measure upon how our children grow up today."***

Zachary Munoz, Ed. D.
Principal

