



SOLUTIONS

Core Values Build Character

by Sarah Swain

PURPOSE:

To help students intentionally evaluate and build character through demonstrating and developing, with peer support, core values and character traits.

OUTCOME:

Students will collectively generate a list of core values that positively influence character. Throughout the year each student will self-evaluate which values from the list they demonstrate and develop. The group can use the list to give positive feedback about character improvements or constructive critique to help support each other's continued growth.

AUDIENCE:

Homeroom, advisory, or class group that can work with an adult to grow individually and together.

“. . . help students intentionally evaluate and build character through demonstrating and developing, with peer support, core values and character traits.”

Initial Activity:

Introduce the idea of character education as it applies to the school community. Use this introduction as an opportunity to share why character education matters to the community rather than define what it is.

Ask students to write down how they would define character. They can write down words or phrases if they get stuck on the idea.

Have students share their ideas.

Use this video as a way to generate deeper conversation about what character is:



Give each student post-it notes to write as many words that are involved in character as they can think of. Post-it storm on a large board. As students add post-its, have them group like terms together.

From the Post-it storm, develop an all-inclusive list of the terms in a shared document.

Have students comment on the list and make suggestions for additions or deletions gaining consensus on the list of core values and traits that make up the whole character of a person. Not everyone has or will develop all the core values, but the comprehensive list will allow for a shared understanding of all the values and traits that might build any individual's character.

On-going Exercise:

Have students self-assess which values and traits they demonstrate (see Self-assessment Questions).

Have students prioritize which traits they would like to develop (see Self-assessment Questions).

With the group, discuss ways to help support each other's growth. Partner or triad groups may be one way to develop support. Use the list as a way to give positive feedback when someone is generous or caring. Also use the list to address behavior within the group when someone could work on developing self-control or modeling good listening and empathy.

Schedule monthly check-ins to reassess traits that are developing.

Self-assessment Questions:

- What actions do you take to help around your house?
- What character traits or core values do you think those actions represent?
- What words do you think your family members would use to describe you?
- Have you ever overheard your parents bragging about something special you did? What character trait or core value did that demonstrate?
- What can your friends always count on you to do? Ex: make them laugh, carry their book bag if they were sick or injured, bring snacks for after school, etc.
- What character traits or core values do you think these actions demonstrate?
- Has a teacher, coach, or mentor ever shared with your family a positive action or deed that you have done?

Have they shared character traits and values they feel you display?

**Use the questions above to generate the values and traits you demonstrate.*

- When your friends or family get frustrated with you, what is it usually about? How have you repaired that relationship?
- What character traits or core values could you work on to have those experiences happen less frequently?
- Who are your heroes/heroines? Which athletes, artists, or successful adults do you admire?
- What character traits or core values do these role models demonstrate?

**Use the last two questions above to generate a list of the values and traits you wish to develop. If certain values or traits are mentioned more often in your answers, this will give you an idea of which to prioritize.*

