

100 Ways to Promote Character Education

1. Hang pictures of heroes and heroines in halls and classrooms.
2. Institute a student-tutoring program.
3. Promote service clubs with real missions for the school community.
4. Be vigilant about preventing and stopping scapegoating of one child by other children.
5. Create recognition programs that acknowledge something besides academic, athletics, or artistic achievement.
6. Seriously and thoughtfully grade student behavior and contribution to the community.
7. Create a code of behavior for your classroom (and school) to which students and teacher agree.
8. Invite parents to observe and contribute to your classroom.
9. Choose a personal motto and share it with your students.
10. Promote a “virtue of the month,” study it.
11. Share a personal hero and tell the students why he or she is your hero.
12. Regularly weave into your discussion of stories and history and other subjects asking, “what’s the right thing to do?” and follow up with a discussion.
13. Help students to see that the “good” in students is more than academic success.
14. Treat ethical issues like other intellectual issues—get the facts, gather evidence, weigh consequences, and make a decision.
15. Structure opportunities for your students to do service in the community.
16. Lead by example. For instance, pick up the discarded piece of paper in the hall. Clean the chalkboard out of respect for the next teacher.
17. Don’t allow unkindness of any kind in your classroom.
18. Do not permit swearing, vulgar or obscene language in classrooms or anywhere on school property.
19. Involve parents in student misbehavior through notes, calls, visits.
20. Write, call, or visit parents to praise their children.
21. Make it clear that students have a moral responsibility to work hard in school.
22. Use ethical language with faculty colleagues... “I have a responsibility to...” “the courage of her conviction caused her to...” “my neglect led him to...”
23. Include the study of “local heroes” in your social studies classes.
24. Institute an honor system for test-taking and homework assignments.
25. Create a charity. Collect donations and have the students decide on their distribution.
26. Reinforce the moral authority of parents, urging students to take their moral problems to their parents. Discuss with students why this is sometimes difficult.
27. Have sayings on the wall that encourage good character, such as “don’t wait to be a great person; start now!”
28. Share stories of ethical conflict, especially ones involving students in their present setting. Don’t hesitate to write it and have them struggle to put their views on paper.
29. Celebrate birthdays of heroes and heroines with observance and/or discussion of their accomplishments.
30. Have students write their own sayings of significance and display on walls.
31. Reward students for bringing in articles about ethics and moral issues. Use them in class discussion.
32. Discuss campus “issues of character” on a regular basis (vandalism, good deeds, etc.)
33. Make classroom expectations clear, and hold students accountable for them.
34. Strive to be consistent in dealings with students; avoid allowing personal feelings to interfere with fairness.
35. Admit mistakes and seek to correct them. Expect and encourage students to do the same.
36. Read aloud a “Two-Minute Story” everyday to begin or end the school day. Choose stories that are brief, yet value-centered.
37. Consider ethical implications when establishing classroom and school policies and procedures; be aware of what messages they send to students.
38. Explain the reasons for a particular school or classroom policy, action, or decision. Help students to understand “why,” not just “what.”
39. Have students discuss the ethical and character-developing elements of being a good student.
40. Teach your students about competition, helping them to see when it is valuable and when it is not.
41. Talk to your students about why you are a teacher. Explain how you understand the importance and responsibility of teaching.
42. Let your students know about your community service. Tell them about volunteering in a food bank, coaching Little League, or teaching religion at your temple or church.
43. Teach students to analyze the media critically. To what extent do their messages encourage living a life of character?
44. Bring recent high school graduates back to talk about their successful transitions to college, work, or the military.
45. Invite local adults to talk about how they have integrated the concept of character into their adult lives.
46. Help reinforce student’s empathy. Ask them questions like “how would you feel if no one would play with you?” “or how would you feel if someone made fun of your name because they thought that it was strange sounding?”
47. When conflicts arise at school, teach students the importance of respect, open-mindedness, privacy, and discretion. Do not allow conversations that are fueled by gossip or disrespect.
48. Overtly teach courtesy. Teach students how to listen attentively to other students and adults, and to avoid interrupting people.
49. Read and discuss biographies of accomplished individuals. For students in upper grades, encourage them to be discerning, seeing that an individual may have flaws but still be capable of much admirable action.
50. Assign older students to assist younger ones, such as seniors paired with freshmen, to show them the school.
51. Emphasize from the first day of class the importance of working hard and striving for certain standards of achievement.
52. Encourage high school students to become more active in their community by attending city, town, or school board meetings.
53. During the election season, encourage students to research candidates’ positions.
54. Encourage high school students to volunteer for voter registration drives, and, if eligible, to vote.
55. Teach students how to write thank-you notes. As a class, write thank-you notes to people who have done thoughtful things for the students.
56. Give students sufficient feedback when evaluating their work. Demonstrate to students that you are making an

- effort to communicate to them how they are succeeding and how they can improve.
57. Have older students sponsor a potluck supper for their parents. Have students cook, decorate, and clean up.
 58. Begin a monthly “gift-giving” from your class. Have the class perform some service to the school, such as decorating a hallway.
 59. Work together as a class or school to clean classrooms or school grounds on a regular basis.
 60. Demonstrate your respect for other religions and cultures. Talk to students about the moral imperative to act justly towards others.
 61. Stand up for the “underdog” when he or she is being treated unfairly. Use this as a teaching moment.
 62. Have children in self-contained classrooms take turns caring for their class pets, taking them home on weekends or holidays. Talk to them about the need to care for other living creatures.
 63. Start or expand a class or school recycling program. Talk about the general principles of carefully using what you have, and not wasting.
 64. Highlight certain programs in your school such as S.A.D.D. or the National Honor Society, which may already be emphasizing character.
 65. Have students volunteer to clean up their community. With parental support, encourage students to build a community playground, pick up litter, rake leaves, grow plants, paint a mural on the side of a building, or clean up a local beach.
 66. Dust off the school song (alma mater). Teach students, especially the newest ones, the words, talk about their meaning, and include it in every school activity.
 67. If your school doesn’t have a school song, sponsor some sort of contest for students to write one. As a school community, talk about what kinds of ideas should be included in that song.
 68. Emphasize and teach the significance of school rituals. Talk about the importance of recognizing certain rights as a community and properly acknowledging them.
 69. Encourage students to look in on elderly or sick neighbors, particularly during harsh winter months.
 70. Start a pen pal exchange between your students and students from a distant state or country. Share the information your students learn about their pen pals’ lives. Encourage discussion about how life must be like living in that community.
 71. Use the curriculum to teach character. For example, in language arts class, have students assume a character’s point of view and write about it. Regularly ask questions requiring students to “walk in someone else’s shoes.”
 72. Use constructive criticism, tempered by compassion. Help students do the same with each other.
 73. Emphasize good sportsmanship in sports, games, and daily interactions with others.
 74. When making school policy, allow students’ participation and responsibility in some decisions. Have them research the various ramifications of different policies and present their findings to the administrators and faculty for decisions.
 75. Collect interesting, thought-provoking quotes worthy of reflection, discussion, and writing—such as “the truth never becomes clear as long as we assume that each one of us, individually is the center of the universe.” (Thomas Merton). Ask students to do the same.
 76. Develop a list of suggested readings in character education that teachers and administrators can use as resources.
 77. Develop a school motto.
 78. Institute a character honor roll.
 79. Foster the development of students’ self-esteem by providing opportunities for genuine academic *and* social challenge and achievement.
 80. Include in faculty/staff meetings and workshops discussions of the schools “moral climate,” and the desired goals for the moral life of the school.
 81. Develop a “School Code of Ethics.” Refer to it in all school activity and policy. Disseminate it to all school members. Display it prominently throughout the building.
 82. Begin an “exchange network” or “bulletin board” by which teachers and administrators can share their own “100 Ways to Promote Character Education.”
 83. Include anecdotes of commendable student behavior in the school newsletter to parents.
 84. Start a school scrapbook with photos, news stories, and memorabilia reflecting the school’s history and accomplishments. Include all school members in contributing to and maintaining the collection. Show it off to school visitors.
 85. Publicly recognize the work and achievement of the school’s “unsung heroes”—the custodians, repairmen, secretaries, cafeteria workers and volunteers—who keep things running everyday.
 86. Assign reasonable amounts of homework that stimulate and challenge students while teaching the importance of self-discipline and perseverance in learning.
 87. Design a school pledge that students recite weekly. Include it in school documents, especially those intended for parents.
 88. Institute a dress code, explaining its role in promoting an educational environment conducive to learning, but always emphasize the importance of individuality.
 89. Use homeroom periods for activities that develop school community and cohesion among students, and a sense of attachment to their school.
 90. Create opportunities for parents and students to work together on a school project: for example, a dance, symposium, dinner, or field trip.
 91. Be attentive to the physical appearance of the building. Involve all school members in the shared responsibility of general cleanliness and order.
 92. Seek ways to involve local businesses in the life of the school, perhaps through mentoring opportunities or partnerships with student groups.
 93. Establish a newcomers’ club for newly hired personnel and entering students.
 94. Invite local employers to talk to students about the importance of good moral character in the world of work.
 95. Have athletes and coaches collaborate to develop a code of ethics for athletics.
 96. Sponsor a public forum on character education in your community.
 97. Ask each school organization to design a logo symbolizing a character trait representative of the club’s mission.
 98. Provide a bimonthly occasion for teachers to gather with their colleagues and study a text of literature, history, philosophy, or other subject area that bears on ethics.
 99. Develop for parents a bibliography of books that they can read with their children to stimulate conversation about good character.
 100. Sponsor an after-school reading club for students, with age-appropriate literature focused on enduring moral lessons.