

POLICY

The Board of Education defines character education as the conscious effort of families, schools and community groups to teach, advocate, and model ethical behavior.

The Board of Education affirms that one of the most important functions of schools is to reflect and reinforce positive character traits and to teach the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. High standards of conduct are closely related to high levels of academic achievement; moreover, such standards are a requirement for effective participation in a democratic society.

Our schools strive to develop behavior which reflects widely held community values, including but not limited to: honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, perseverance and giving to others. In accepting the responsibility to help all students develop their unique potential and character, the district is not usurping the role of families or other institutions in the community, but seeking to work in partnership with them.

In order to maintain a learning and working environment which supports character development, it is expected that Board members, administrators, staff, students and volunteers in the schools will recognize their role as models for others, consistently exemplifying and enforcing high standards of respect and responsibility. Teachers will incorporate character education as it arises naturally in the curriculum, in interactions with others, and in all school activities.

– Adopted by the Board of Education on June 9, 1997



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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Williamsville Central School District, a community characterized by diversity, high expectations and support for learning, is to empower all students

- to develop their unique potentials and character,
- to assume responsibilities of citizenship and leadership, and
- to thrive in a challenging and rapidly changing global community through the commitment of our quality staff, in partnership with parents and community, utilizing visionary programs in a nurturing environment of mutual respect and dignity.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHARACTER EDUCATION...

At the district level:

Contact Dr. Marie Balen, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, at 626-8030 or
Karen Greco, Instructional Specialist, at 626-8033.

At the building level:

Contact the school principal or the chairperson of the Shared Decision Making Team.

Civil Rights Policy - The Williamsville Central School District, its officers and employees shall not discriminate against any student, employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability. It is the policy of the Board of Education to comply with the regulations listed in Title IX of the 1972 Educational Requirements and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any member of the Williamsville Central School District staff or any Williamsville Central School District pupil or parent believing himself or herself aggrieved because of discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability should address questions and complaints to the District Compliance Officer and Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Dr. John McKenna, 105 Casey Rd., P.O. Box 5000, East Amherst, NY 14051; 626-8051.



Character EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND

In October 1995 the Board of Education adopted as a district goal the development of a process to formalize and improve our efforts in character education. This goal was tied to the district's Strategic Plan as well as the New York State K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards and Essential Skills and Dispositions document. A review of research indicated that efforts to promote character education are best accomplished through an infusion of directed activities rather than an "add-on" program. Such activities include school and community projects, cooperative learning experiences, the in-depth study of American history, positive discipline, student participation in rule setting and decision making, and the study of literature.

In March 1996 the Board approved the formation of a District Character Education Study Group representing teachers, parents, students and the Board of Education. The Study Group met during the spring and summer of 1996 to develop an operational definition, collect information on our current activities and review other local and national programs. In November 1996 they submitted a character education action plan to the Board of Education.

The action plan included the establishment of a district-wide Facilitating Group made up of staff and parent representatives from all thirteen district schools.

This group worked on four objectives:

- develop a character education policy
- communicate efforts to the school community
- integrate service learning in grades K-12
- assist building shared decision making groups in planning building level activities that promote both high academic achievement and positive character development.



Questions & Answers

Q: What do you mean by character education?

A: Character education is the term chosen to describe the district's intentional efforts to promote positive behavior and character development. High standards of conduct are closely related to high levels of academic achievement. Character development is an integral part of the mission of the district.

Q: Isn't character education the parents' job?

A: Yes. Parents are their children's primary teachers, especially with respect to behavior and character. The district recognizes the role of parents, and seeks to support families' efforts to develop positive character traits, while teaching the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Q: Which character traits will be taught?

A: The focus of our character education efforts will be on developing positive behaviors which reflect widely accepted community values including but not limited to: honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, perseverance and giving to others.

Q: How will character education be taught?

A: Character development is already integrated in our educational program in a variety of ways. Character building occurs through high academic standards for all students, teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, school and community projects, assemblies and ceremonies which celebrate students' contributions, participation in service activities, and the study of literature. The district's goal in this character education undertaking is both to strengthen what we are already doing and focus attention on our efforts. Individual school building goals for character education will be established by each building's Shared Decision Making Team.

Q: Will additional programs be added?

A: No and yes. The district has decided not to adopt a particular character education curriculum or packaged program. Our goal is not to add to the curriculum that teachers and students are expected to cover each year. Character development will instead be integrated quite naturally — in the current curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and social interactions that occur among all members of the school community. At the same time, particular experiences or activities may be added to the program as deemed valuable and educationally appropriate.

Q: What kind of professional development opportunities will there be?

A: Teachers and other staff members will have character education professional development opportunities through regular building and district offerings. There will also be learning opportunities planned for interested parents and community members, focused on how to improve character education at home and in partnership with the schools. A variety of resources related to character education will be available to staff and parents in each school building.

Q: Who will participate in character education?

A: Everyone. The school community consists of Board members, administrators, teaching and support staff, students, and volunteers in the schools. Every member of the school community will be expected to model and enforce high standards of behavior. Teachers will be expected to seize teaching opportunities as they naturally arise in the curriculum and school activities. Working together as partners, parents, schools and community groups will strengthen each other's efforts.