Character education teaches the habits of thought and deed that help people live and work together as families, friends, neighbors, communities and nations.

—Cicero

Character education is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about, and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, duty, virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society.

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—Benjamin Franklin

Character education is the process of developing character traits—Cicero

Within the character of the citizen lies the welfare of the nation.—Cicero

One of the great education reformers, Horace Mann, in the 1840s, believed to improve instruction in classroom nationwide, advocating that character development was as important as academics in American schools. The United States Congress, recognizing the importance of this concept, authorized the Partnership in Character Education Program in 1994. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 renews and re-emphasizes this involvement of the whole community in designing and implementing character education agendas.

What is character education?

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What is the school’s role in character education?

In school, character education must be approached comprehensively to include the emotional, intellectual and moral qualities of an individual. It offers multiple opportunities for students to learn about, discuss and enact positive social behaviors. Student leadership and involvement are essential for character education to become a part of a student’s beliefs and actions.

To successfully implement character education, schools are encouraged to:

- Take a leadership role to bring the staff, parents and students together to identify and define the elements of character they want to emphasize;
- Provide training for staff on how to integrate character education into the life and culture of the school;
- Form a vital partnership with parents and the community so that students hear a consistent message about character traits essential for success in school and life; and
- Provide opportunities for school leaders, teachers, parents and community partners to model exemplary character traits and social behaviors.

State education agencies, through a collaborative community process, have chosen to incorporate character education into their school improvement plans and state standards. Some states have chosen to implement character education through官方微信，state policies such as the Michigan State Board of Education Policy on Quality Character Education. Many schools have chosen to incorporate character education into their plans for Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities.

From state to state, the following are common threads in character education agendas:

- Involvement of the whole community in designing and implementing character education for its schools and
- Commitment to making character education an integral part of the education process.

Federal resources and support for character education The United States Congress and the Department of Education have expanded support for character education for more than a decade, enabling schools across our nation to implement character education in a variety of ways. The Department of Education provides grants to state and local education agencies to support the development of character education. Since 1995, through the Partnerships in Character Education Program (www.ed.gov/programs/partnerschar/index.html), the Department has awarded 97 grants to assist in designing, implementing and sustaining high-quality opportunities for students to learn and understand the importance of strong character in their lives.

Resources for parents and teachers in character education

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ods/index.html

Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center www.catc.org


Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen View the booklet online at: www.ed.gov/policy/academic/help/citizen/index.html Order by calling (877) 4ED-PUBS.

Character Education—Our Shared Responsibility View the brochure online at: www.ed.gov/admins/lead/character/brochure.html Order by calling (877) 4ED-PUBS.

—Secretary Margaret Spellings

Education at its best should expand the mind and build character.