



NGA Center for
BEST PRACTICES

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M E M O R A N D U M

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To: xxxxxxxx
From: Liam Goldrick
Re: Character Education

Character Education

Twenty-eight states currently mandate or encourage character education. Below are examples of five state initiatives:

Arizona

In 2000 the state enacted a law giving K-12 schools the authority to include character education instruction and expanding the use of public school funding for character education. The law also provides guidelines for adopting character traits and for activities to reinforce their application.

In 1999, the Governor signed an Executive Order, creating a Character Education Commission—composed of educators and community leaders—to identify ways to fund character education and integrate character education into the curriculum. At the same time, the Arizona Character Education Foundation was formed to facilitate fundraising and provide character education training.

Arizona Character Education Commission

<http://www.governor.state.az.us/charactered/index.cfm>

Contact: Angie Utterback or Tammy Linn, Governor's Community Policy Office,
autterback@az.gov or tlinn@az.gov.

Georgia

The state has developed a comprehensive K-12 character education curriculum based on 29 traits. The state leveraged federal resources to create the Georgia Center for Character Education, an online resource for K-12 educators. It offers lesson plans and organizational profiles for various state and national groups that specialize in character education. The Center is a Georgia Education Initiative—a collaboration between the Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Humanities Council, and the Georgia Power Foundation.

Georgia Center for Character Education

<http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/gei/chared/chared.htm>

Contact: Georgia Learning Connections, (404) 651-5664

Louisiana

A 1998 state law requires the Department of Education to establish a Character Education Clearinghouse and to distribute information to school districts. The state allows districts to offer character education, but does not require them to do so. The state does not endorse a specific character education curriculum or set of character traits. In 1999, the first-in-the-nation “school manners” law passed, requiring students to address all school employees as “ma’am” or “sir.”

A portion of Governor Mike Foster’s foregone state salary is dedicated to funding the Governor’s Character Education Awards. Announced each May, the Awards recognize teachers and other public-school employees that have implemented character education programs, curriculum, and activities.

Louisiana Character Education Clearinghouse

<http://www.louisianaschools.net/DOE/asps/home.asp?I=CHARACTER>

Louisiana Governor’s Character Education Awards

<http://www.gov.state.la.us/educ/character.html>

Contacts: Michael Wang, Governor’s Education Policy Advisor, (225) 219-4557 or wangm@gov.state.la.us; Nikki Clark, Louisiana Department of Education, (225) 342-3989 or NClark@doe.state.la.us

New Jersey

The *New Jersey Character Education Partnership (NJCEP) Initiative* was announced in January 2000 as part of then-Governor Christie Todd Whitman’s *State-of-the State* message. The purpose of this initiative is to assist public school educators to adopt validated character education programs that will meet the developmental needs of students throughout New Jersey by promoting pro-social student behaviors and creating a caring, disciplined school climate conducive to learning. A dedicated state aid line item in the Governor’s FY 2001 budget provided \$4.75 million to public school districts and approved charter schools to be devoted to character education program development and implementation during the 2000-01 school year. The Department of Education administers the initiative and supports implementation of character education programs through professional development and information networking.

During the first year of the project, every school district and approved charter school received a minimum of \$4,000 in state aid to implement a character education program *in at least one school building*. For the second year of the initiative, the Governor’s FY 2002 budget provided \$4.75 million for school district character education program implementation and expansion during the 2001-02 school year.

In February 2002 Governor James McGreevey created the New Jersey Character Education Commission. The Commission plans to gather information on best practices and other efforts currently being undertaken by New Jersey’s public schools. Information will be announced to districts when the Commission completes its review and proposes future direction for Character Education in New Jersey. Currently there is \$4.75 million identified in the Governor’s proposed State Budget for continued appropriation for character education programs.

Governor Announces Creation of Character Education Commission

http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/governor/njnewsline/view_article.pl?id=643

New Jersey Character Education Partnership

<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/chared/>

Contacts: Lucille Davy, Governor’s Education Policy Advisor, Lucille.davy@gov.state.nj.us or (609) 777-2472; Patricia Guazzelli, Character Education Team Leader, New Jersey Department of Education, (609) 984-5968

Texas

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a comprehensive character development program designed to help reduce youth violence, crime, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and other anti-social conduct. CHARACTER COUNTS! was established in 1993 as a project of the California-based Josephson Institute for Ethics. The Josephson Institute partners with over 500 national and local school districts to raise awareness of the need to teach and model core values that are acceptable to liberal and conservatives as well as secular and faith-based communities.

In 1999, as part of then-Governor George W. Bush's Lone Star Leaders Initiative, the state awarded a two-year, \$900,000 state grant to the Josephson Institute to support the expansion of CHARACTER COUNTS! throughout the state. Over two years, the Josephson Institute collaborated with the Texas Education Agency to develop: 40 training programs and seminars for 5,000 Texas educators, coaches, and other youth-development professionals; curriculum development grants for middle- and high-school courses; a series of booklets for parents; and special training for state agencies to help them integrate character education into all state programs dealing with youth.

Texas and Character Counts!

<http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/Texas/press-release.htm>

Other Resources:

CHARACTER COUNTS!

<http://www.charactercounts.org/>

The CHARACTER COUNTS! framework is the most widely used character development strategy in the nation. It is organized around values called "The Six Pillars of Character"—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition is an outgrowth of a three-day conference organized by the Josephson Institute of Ethics in 1993. Today, the coalition is supported and promoted by more than 500 education, youth and community organizations.

Character Education Partnership (Contact: Esther Schaeffer, 202.296.7743)

<http://www.character.org/>

The Character Education Partnership, founded in 1992, is a nonpartisan umbrella organization designed to support the development of school-based character education programs. It currently has more than 100 organizational members, including the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the National School Boards Association.

Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education—Character Education Partnership

<http://www.character.org/principles/index.cgi>

No Child Left Behind: Partnerships in Character Education

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference/5d3.html>

Summary of state activity in the area of character education

<http://www.mindoh.com/docs/StateCEactivity.DOC>