

## CHARACTER EDUCATION

The Essex County School Board shall establish, within its existing programs or as a separate program, a character education program in its schools. The character education program may occur during the regular school year, during the summer in a youth development academy offered by the school division, or both. The purpose of the program is to foster civic virtues and personal character traits so as to improve the learning environment, promote student achievement, reduce disciplinary problems, and develop civic-minded students of high character. The program shall be cooperatively developed with students, parents, and the community. Specific character traits emphasized may include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

Character education shall be interwoven into the school procedures and environment so as to instruct primarily by example, illustration, and participation, in such a way as to complement the Standards of Learning. Classroom instruction may also be used to supplement the program. The program shall also address the inappropriateness of bullying, as defined in the Student Conduct Policy Guidelines adopted by the Board of Education pursuant to § 22.1-279.6.

Each local character education program shall

- specify those character traits to be taught, selecting from those which are common to diverse social, cultural, and religious groups;
- be implemented at the elementary and secondary levels;
- provide for relevant professional development and adequate resources; and
- include a method for program evaluation.

Character education is intended to educate students regarding those core civic values and virtues which are efficacious to civilized society and are common to the diverse social, cultural, and religious groups of the Commonwealth. It shall not include indoctrination in any particular religious or political belief. Consistent with this purpose, Virginia's civic values, which are the principles articulated in the Bill of Rights (Article I) of the Constitution of Virginia and the ideals reflected in the seal of the Commonwealth, as described in Va. Code § 1-500, may be taught as representative of such civic values.

Adopted: July 19, 2012

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Legal Refs.: U.S. Const. amend. 1.

Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-208.01.

Superintendent's Memorandum No. 45 (Mar. 10, 2000).

Cross Refs.: IKF Standards of Learning Tests and Graduation Requirements  
INB Teaching About Controversial Issues  
INDC Religion in the Schools