



Wake County Public School System Character Education Program

courage self-discipline perseverance respect
responsibility kindness good judgment integrity

Background Information

- The Wake County Character Education Task Force was formally organized on December 13, 1993. School board chairperson, Judy Hoffman, charged the task force with developing a list of core character traits and attendant guidelines that would be integrated into the curriculum. The task force was composed of 32 persons. Parents, teachers, principals, students, and business, religious and civic leaders were selected to represent various geographic areas, races, cultures, and religions in Wake County. Anne Lee, a parent and former educator, chaired the task force.
- The task force met for five months and sought input from the community through public meetings, media exposure, and formal surveys. After compiling a long list of character traits, eight key traits and definitions were chosen by the task force: courage, good judgment, integrity, kindness, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and self-discipline.
- In April 1994, the school system distributed a character education survey to parents, administrators, teachers, and students in grades four, seven, and ten. The school system also invited community members to complete the surveys. More than 28,000 respondents returned the survey, indicating strong support for all eight character traits.
- Following the establishment of the eight traits, the character education program in the Wake County Public School System began to evolve through the administration's leadership and the establishment of a character education coordinator.
- Curriculum, climate, and community involvement were the focus of the character education program. Some of the initiatives that were developed included sample lesson plans, the emphasis on the "teachable moment," student recognition programs, parent and community seminars and conferences, PTA-sponsored grants, business partnerships, PSA's on local television, resource lists, and recognitions of model character education practices.
- A Character Education Community Involvement Committee met monthly to give guidance, suggestions, and support to the system's character education program.
- Numerous awards recognizing Wake County's Character Education programs have been won, including the school system being named a National School of Character in 1999 by the Character Education Partnership and A.B. Combs Elementary School being named a National School of Character in 2003.

Legislation

- 1998: All North Carolina schools were asked to adopt character traits in this legislation. Wake County School's traits and definitions were in the bill.
- August 2001: House Bill 195 is signed requiring schools to implement character education programs and to establish student dress codes. Wake County School System's traits and definitions are included in the legislation.

Current Initiatives and Focus Areas

- The school system has a character education coordinator.
- An eight-page document was created and disseminated to all schools detailing how character education initiatives could be integrated into school improvement plans.
- A 22-member Character Education Committee meets regularly through the school year to provide support and recommendations for the character education program.
- Business Alliances are focusing on character education initiatives and support the system's programs.
- The school system's website features a Character Education Resource Center.
- The Wake County PTA supports character education through a PTA character education chairperson and PTA character education contacts at each school.
- Each school has a character education contact.
- Resources, materials, and curriculum, as well as best practices and character education tools, are disseminated to schools.