

Get the Conversation Started:

1. How does it make you feel when you see adults make decisions rooted in poor character? How does it make you feel when they seem to hold you to a higher standard than they hold for themselves?
2. What will the benefit be to your life to build character excellence into who you are?
3. By choosing a path toward character excellence, what kind of influence do you think you can have on others?
4. Why do you think it is a good idea for teens to be good character role models for younger children?
5. What is the effect on our nation when famous people behave with choices rooted in poor character?
6. How might you “aspire to inspire” character excellence in others?
7. Why is it important to set noble goals in our lives?



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Quick Start Guide

To Character Clubs & Initiatives

~Building it together piece by piece



Champions for C.H.A.N.G.E.

Character Has A Noble Goal...Excellence!

Character Council of Western New York

www.charactercouncilwny.org

"Good character is more to be praised than outstanding talent. Most talents are to some extent a gift. Good character, by contrast, is not given to us. We have to build it piece by piece—by thought, choice, courage and determination." — John Luther

A great place to begin to build good character is in your own school. The goal is to help all individuals in your school community take responsibility for their own personal character growth. Good character does not happen by chance but, rather, is intentional. These three keys will help guide you to a purposeful character initiative in your school.

- **Emphasize-** Bring awareness of character qualities, their meanings and purpose through the use of posters and the integration of character education into daily school life.
- **Model-**Evaluate your actions, attitudes and words to be sure they are in alignment with the 49 Character Qualities.
- **Recognize-**Everyone enjoys being recognized and praised. It is important to look for examples of good character in others and recognize the character qualities that are responsible for those actions. This will encourage others to engage in positive behaviors.

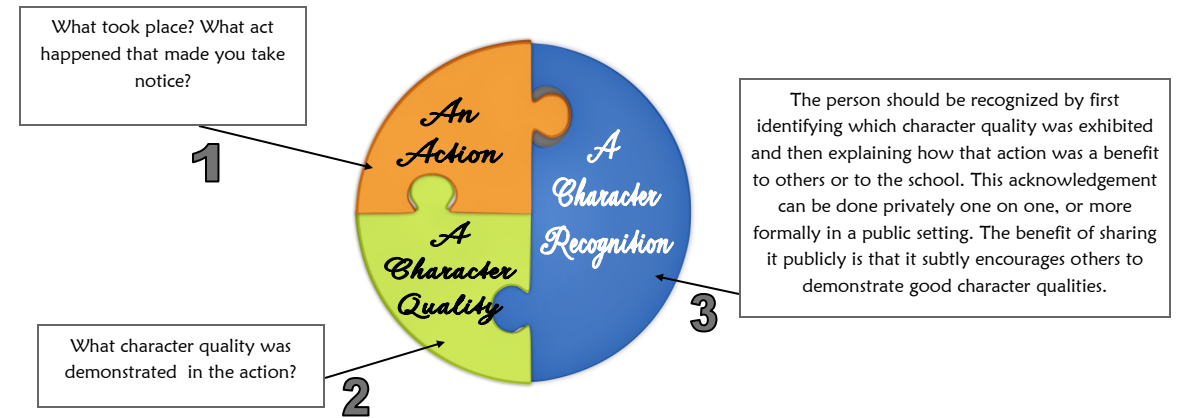


How to Further a Character Initiative in Your School

- Develop a Noble Goal for Yourself
- Create or Strengthen an All-Inclusive Character Council
- Organize an Extra-Curricular Club or Multiple Clubs
- Establish a Character Recognition Policy or Program

A Character Recognition can be formal or informal. What is most important is that there be some form of public recognition within the school community for demonstrating positive character. The method in which this would take place would be for your School’s Character Council to decide. It could be a monthly assembly in which a certificate is given to someone in recognition of the Character Quality of the Month. It could be a weekly or daily PA Announcement that someone has received a Free Homework Pass for being caught doing something good. The type of recognition is totally up to what works best for your school environment and your goals.

An effective character recognition must have three things



The sample form below may help you to understand how to write a Character Recognition.

Give it a try! Think of someone in the past week that you could recognize.

Person Being Recognized: _____ Grade Level: _____

Which Character Quality is being Recognized: _____

What is the definition of the quality? _____

Describe what action was noticed that led to this recognition? _____

When/Where did this action take place? _____

Who Nominated this Person: _____

How did or does this character trait benefit others: _____

How Do I make it happen? If a Character Council is too big of an undertaking right now, you might want to start with a character club. The first step is to find an advisor. Look around. Who is the teacher who truly walks the talk? Is there a teacher who mentions character, or focuses on the virtues in his or her classroom? Approach the teacher, recognizing that forming a club is a big commitment for a teacher to make. Again, work on being persuasive—come prepared with a list of students who want to join the club and the ideas you’ve brainstormed. Dazzle the teacher with the great service projects you have in mind, and the fabulous new ideas you are having as you recognize the value of character. The more prepared you are to be a leader in the club, the more likely the teacher will agree to be the advisor.

ESTABLISH A CHARACTER RECOGNITION POLICY OR PROGRAM



The Purpose: Recognizing an act of good character emphasizes to the community that this is a model behavior and one that the members of the community support. The last, and perhaps most important part of building a school culture of character, is to recognize good character when it happens. We’ve all heard that some people will do anything for attention. Well that is true, and by recognizing positive behavior you encourage not only that person but others to behave similarly.

Who is involved? You will need people to look for and recognize actions of good character. This can be anyone, students, teachers, staff, even parents. Next you need people to be recognized. This is easy. Everyone on your campus is eligible to receive a recognition for good character.

How Do I Make It Happen?

The tricky part is learning to look for the underlying character quality in the action. This character quality is what you will want to recognize.

Example John is walking down the hall and another student drops his or her books all over. John stops and helps them pick up the books and says “Hey everyone has one of those days.” Someone sees this and wants to recognize John for this action. However instead of John being rewarded for stopping to help, John should be recognized for the underlying character trait that prompted him to act. There are several character qualities that the nominator could choose from for the character recognition. It could be argued that John demonstrated the character qualities of Compassion, Availability, Alertness, Initiative, Responsibility or Virtue. An effective character Recognition would pick one (maybe two) of these qualities. The story of the action is then used to illustrate the manner in which the trait was put into action.

DEVELOP A NOBLE GOAL FOR YOURSELF



This is the hard part... but the part that is *the most important!* You know about goal-setting, you know about doing the right thing, but to truly be committed to improving the culture around you, Mahatma Gandhi said it best:

“You must be the change you want to see in the world.”

This means as a bystander you can intervene when someone is being treated unfairly. It means that you do not make or forward hurtful messages though social media. It means that there are no “losers” in your school—only people who are alone and haven’t met *you* yet. It is being a hero for someone else. It is becoming *other*-centered instead of being *self*-centered. This goal will require you to act more maturely than your age. But it is a *Noble Goal*, a goal that aims beyond your individual self. Are you ready for a challenge like that? It won’t be easy, but teenagers around the country are making the commitment to make character personal, so that they may be a part of changing the world for the better! Consider how you might build the *noble goal* of character excellence into your life’s mission.



How will you start? How can YOU make a difference and lead by example?

CREATE OR STRENGTHEN A CHARACTER COUNCIL IN YOUR SCHOOL

The Purpose of a *Character Council* is to integrate character education into the culture of the school community. A Character Council is dedicated to fostering the teaching of **individual character qualities** and to using “character language” in every aspect of the school community. Learning the meaning of the 49 qualities helps individuals make those qualities part of who they are.



Where do you see an opportunity to do this in your school?

Who Is Involved? A *Character Council* needs to represent all facets of a school community... from individual students and teachers, to entire groups such as the sports teams, support staffs, extra-curricular clubs, and administrators.



Who do you think would want to be involved? What kind of skills can you offer to starting an initiative? Are you a good organizer, a people person, good with technology etc...

How Do I make It happen? You will need to first speak with your principal about your vision for a *Character Council* at your school. *Is there one already or does one need to be created?* Because a character council will involve the entire school, you can help get the ball rolling by generating interest. One thing that would certainly get your principal excited would be a list of students and adults who would like to participate. Additionally, providing the princi-

pal with a list of activities, goals, and plans for the character council would be really impressive. Search the internet for speakers, programs, and examples of schools doing character education. Create a Power Point, make a movie, interview students, write a brochure—use your “school skills” of persuasion along with your creative skills to deliver a message that **KIDS WANT CHARACTER TO COUNT** on a school-wide level!

ORGANIZE A CHARACTER CLUB

The Purpose: A *Character Club* is the extra-curricular part of a school’s character education focus. A *Character Club* engages in service-learning projects that are designed to make the **individual character qualities** come alive through group activities, special events, and community outreach. Based on your school’s interests and needs, you may end up with multiple character clubs focusing on different issues but all with a common noble goal of character excellence.



What project ideas do you think your school could do? Are there special needs or focuses you would like to see addressed?

Who is involved? A *Character Club* is made up of students and an advisor.



What teachers in your school model and value good character? Make a list of potential Character Club Advisors. How would you recruit students to join you?