

CHARACTER EDUCATION OTTAWA

and The Virtues Project International present Trainings:

From Violence to Virtues: Creating a Culture of Character

For Teachers, Vice-principals, Principals and Parents

Wednesday Workshop Series

Wednesdays May 17, 24, and 31, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Wednesdays June 7, 14 and 21, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Trainings for Teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals

Fee: One hour training ... \$300

Half day training ... \$500

Trainings for Groups of Parents, on request

Fee: 1.5 hours training.... **FREE**

Character Education and The Virtues Project™

The topic of Character Education is increasingly being given special priority here in Canada as well as in the US. The Ottawa District School Board will be hosting a 2-day conference on Character Education on May 11 - 12. At this Conference, facilitator David Andrews will present the background and strategies of how to implement the Virtues Project International. This Project is endorsed by the UN as a model global program for families of all cultures. It provides a better way to bring out inner strengths of character for ourselves, our children, students, partners and coworkers. It increasingly is being used by educators in primary and secondary schools in the Ottawa/ Gatineau areas and by parents with their children. The Vancouver School Board has adopted it. It is endorsed and applied in many other schools throughout the world. The Australian state of Western Australia has endorsed the Virtues Project™ for their schools.

Five Strategies of the Virtues project™

1. Speak the Language of the Virtues

Language shapes the character and self-esteem of our children. It is the main ingredient in creating a culture of character. We use language to acknowledge, guide and correct, and to build conscience. Shaming or blaming language is replaced instead by naming our innate qualities of character. This empowers parents to raise morally conscious youth. It supports educators in dealing with classroom behaviours. We discover, when we name strengths and talents in others, that this has an encouraging and empowering effect. It helps us engage the co-operation of our children and students and it inspires confidence that we can effect positive change in ourselves, our relationships and in the world around us.

2. Recognize Teachable Moments

Teachable Moments help us see challenges and obstacles in our lives as opportunities to learn and develop our strengths of character. These moments occur in the classroom, lunchroom, playground and beyond the school setting, when young people can be helped to master their virtues and to understand the meaning of what they are learning, what they are doing, and how they are interacting with each other. Virtues are the best tools for developing social skills, since they embody the reason one must interact well with others - to be kind, to be caring, to be a good friend, to be respectful and so on. Stumbling blocks can be turned into stepping-stones. Virtues are used rather than negative labels. Children are helped to balance their virtues. Instead of being labeled shy, the introverted child can be acknowledged for his obedience and peacefulness, but encouraged to bring out his assertiveness and courage more.

3. Set Clear Boundaries

Setting clear boundaries offers a positive approach to discipline. Virtues are the basis of rules. Clear boundaries based on respect, peace and justice are like a fence of safety, within which there is freedom. The virtues of peace, justice, respect, caring, kindness and gentleness are like the guideposts of this fence. The consequences are the wire and wood. A young person who breaks through the boundary meets the consequences and is then invited back to the safety of the boundary. Establishing boundaries based on virtues helps to create a safe haven, where youth feel free to learn and teachers feel free to teach, and mothers and fathers feel free to parent. A Virtues Project school offers naming virtues, not shaming, mentorship, not censorship, reflection, not rejection, and restitution, not retribution. When consequences are given, they should be specific and relevant, and educative, not punitive. When children receive consequences, educators and parents should be sure the children understand the reason. As we set limits and boundaries that are more respectful of ourselves and others, we find better balance in our day-to-day life. Setting clear boundaries helps us learn to be more compassionate with ourselves and others.

4. Honour the Spirit

Honouring the Spirit helps us to address the spiritual dimension in a way that respects our diversity. **“Spiritual” in the context of education is that which pertains to a sense of meaning and purpose, beliefs and values, and mastery of the virtues in our character.** It opens up a way of better relating to others from cultures and religions different from our own, and it helps us to find and to be more in tune with our own unique sense of reverence for life. Honouring helps to foster cooperation, collaboration and trust within a family, group, team and community.

5. Offer the Art of Spiritual Companionship

Spiritual Companionship provides an effective tool for counselling, conflict resolution and dealing with disciplinary situations. It allows healing, encourages moral choices and promotes the safe expression of feelings.

Background

The Virtues Project began in the mid 90's on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. Linda Popov is a therapist and former Hospice Director. Her husband Dan Popov is a

child psychologist. They were both concerned with the fact that so many children throughout the world were physically and morally at risk. In seeking to address this problem they realized they could do something to help parents and caregivers. The powerful resource for change they created blossomed into The Virtues Project International.

They researched the ethical and moral literature of the world's many traditions and discovered that running throughout this literature, like a silver thread, were the virtues. These are universally valued by diverse cultures as the content of our character and the qualities of the human spirit.

Resources

At that point Linda and Dan developed The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and Ourselves. Within two months this book was being used in more than 20 countries. They received requests for workshops and presentations from around the world, including an appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show. Later they developed a set of cards, Virtues cards - Reminders of the Gifts Within. These sets of cards are readily available in English and French, as well as an adapted version for use in schools, called Virtues Cards - Reminders of the Gifts of Character. In 2000, The Virtues Project Educators' Guide: Simple Ways to Create a Culture of Character was published. This book gives a full understanding of the principles, strategies and how to implement the strategies of this Virtues Project™ for educators in elementary and secondary schools, and for parents.

Also available for classrooms are copies of a Virtues' poster and a CD of Virtues songs.

The Virtues Project™ mission statement

To provide empowering strategies that inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life. The project offers personal and professional development programs, trainings, and materials which are helping people around the world to create a culture of character in homes, schools, prisons, and corporations, training facilitators, presenting to corporations, schools, diverse faith communities, indigenous communities and prisons.

The Virtues Project™ is being used for healing and community development. It provides a framework for moral education for cultures around the world. The project is not affiliated with any government, educational, or religious organization. It is based on the simple wisdom of the world's diverse sacred, moral and philosophical traditions. The strategies of the Virtues Project™ help us to remember who we really are.

How to contact Character Education Ottawa and register for workshops:

David Andrews, MEd., and Ros Macdonald, MSW, RSW, are both Ottawa based certified Virtues Facilitators

www.charactereducationottawa.ca or Call Ros at 744-4768

For more information on the Virtues Project™ visit

www.virtuesproject.com