

# Learning needs assessment: character education

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Learning Needs Assessment: Character Education Angelica Alston Averett  
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Introduction Character education is a development of creating schools that encourage responsible, ethical, and compassionate individuals by teaching exceptional character with prominence on common values that are shared prominently. According to Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2011) “ It is the efforts of school districts and Commonwealth of Virginia to infuse students with ethical, civic values including respect, responsibility, perseverance, integrity, and self-discipline. ” Character education has the possibility to tackle long-term issues that are affecting our society in regards to ethical, moral, and academic concerns that are in direct correlation with our school environment. What is to be taught? Character Education is an attribute that is learned by an individual, and is not a natural characteristic. Taking into account that what a child is taught within their home is a child’s first education that they receive. If this is true than a child that that has encountered character that is not exceptional then it is believed that they too will follow suit and exhibit behavior that is not appropriate and possess deficient qualities of character. According to Fairfax County Public Schools (2011) “ Each school board shall establish, within its existing program shall be to instill in students 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 higher character. ” A character education program that is included into school procedures and environments will provide students with a variety of incomparable character traits throughout a student’s school day with

examples and qualities of exceptional character by administration, teachers, and faculty/staff. Lickona (1991), " Believes that character education is a partnership between school and parents. " When students are provided with character education instruction they will not only learn exactly what exceptional character traits are, but students will be possess the ability to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. With research from the nation's top character education experts, Character Education Partnership (2009), provides essential fundamentals that are necessary in the application of character education in the school setting which is referred to as the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education are as follows: promotes core ethical values, teaches students to understand care about and act upon these core ethical values, encompasses all aspects of the school culture, fosters a caring school community, offers opportunities for moral action, supports academic achievement, develops intrinsic motivation, includes whole-staff involvement, requires positive leadership of staff and students, involves parents and community members, and assesses results and strives to improve (Teachers as Educators of Character: Are the Nation's Schools of Education Coming Up Short?, 1999). I believe that with the implementation of a character education program these eleven principles are detrimental to the success within a school setting; considering behavioral, moral, and value issues that our schools are faced with everyday. The objective of character education is to teach students how to become model citizens in their community and overall better individuals. If our students lack character our end result would be a world that is deficient of compassion, empathy, and individuals that do not take on their responsibility. According to Woodcrest

School (2009), there is a character education program (Second Step) that offers activities that students are able to participate within the classroom such as role playing a variety of character traits, writing prompts, and comparing and contrasting different character traits. With the consideration that character education is not one the simplest areas that could be assessed. Educators are able to observe students individual character traits. Educator could even hold literature discussions about materials that were presented during instruction time. In addition educators could even conduct student-teacher conferences, this is where the teacher could ask the student questions and evaluate the student's response. Can character education work at all grade levels? Character education can be introduced at any grade level and the earlier the better (Lickona, 1991). However it is imperative to lay a solid foundation during a child's early grades, with the continuation of laying a necessary structure through their secondary grades. I believe that with age appropriate techniques that are practiced can be affective in every grade level. In early grades students may be introduced to social and emotional skills, while secondary students will participate in service learning projects that will benefit not only them but their community as well. In order for a character education program to have any influence through a school there must be full cooperation of the schools environment, which means that administration, teachers, and faculty are all held accountable for exhibiting exceptional character traits. Instead of creating a character education class there must be the implementation of character education in every class not just the general education class. When students become accustom to experiencing and observing positive character traits they too will begin to

demonstrate exceptional character. Conclusion Character education presents many challenges for all involved. There must be a continuing nurturance throughout a school to assure that students develop exceptional character, which then they will become better citizens and individuals. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in a speech at Morehouse College in 1948 " We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character that is the goal of true education. " References Character Education Partnership website. (2009). <http://www.character.org/charactereducationlegislation> Fairfax County Public Schools website. (2011). Character Education: Code of Virginia Instruction: Character Education. (2011). Retrieved June 16, 2011, from [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/character\\_ed/index.shtml#](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/character_ed/index.shtml#) Jones, E. N., Ryan, K., and Bohlin, K. E. (1999). Teachers as educators of character: Are the nation's schools of education coming up short? Washington, D. C. [www.character.org](http://www.character.org) Lickona, T. (1991). Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility. New York, N. Y: Bantam Books. Wiles, J. W., & Bondi, J. C. (2011). Curriculum development: A guide to practice (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N. J: Pearson. Woodcrest Elementary School. (2009). Character Education : [Woodcrestschoo.com](http://Woodcrestschoo.com)