

CALGARY BOARD OF EDUCATION

REASONABLE INTERPRETATION FOR ENDS 5: *CHARACTER*

Ends 5: *Character* states:

Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others.

Accordingly, each student will demonstrate:

1. Integrity;
2. Compassion;
3. Decency;
4. Civility;
5. Fairness;
6. Courage;
7. Initiative;
8. Perseverance;
9. Respect;
10. Optimism;
11. Responsibility.

Character development is the deliberate effort to nurture the attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus. These attributes provide a standard for behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable. They permeate all that happens in schools. They bind us together across the lines that often divide us in society. They form the basis of our relationships and of responsible citizenship. They are a foundation for excellence and equity in education, and for our vision of learning cultures and school communities that are respectful, safe, caring and inclusive.¹

A person's character is forever evolving and developing in response to life experiences. The Calgary Board of Education believes school systems can help to guide the ongoing character development of our youth. The eleven qualities identified in Ends 5: *Character* arguably represent characteristics parents wish their children to acquire; and societies would like each of their citizens to hold.

Educators recognize that a focus on character in the learning environment not only benefits each student personally, but provides for the greater good of communities. In this way, Ends 5: *Character* is interconnected with Ends 4: *Personal Development*, and Ends 3: *Citizenship*. In addition, school systems that focus on developing a student's character help to promote safe and caring learning environments that provide opportunities for greater student engagement and higher levels of achievement; in turn, strengthening ethical actions to support the outcomes connected to Ends 2: *Academic Success*.² The interconnectedness between the five

¹ Glze, Avis E., Zegarac, George & Giroux, Dominic. 2008. *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools*. Queen's Printer for Ontario at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/literacy/booklet2008.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Education. 2007. *Mobilizing for Evidence-based Character Education*, p. 3.

CBE Ends, creating the synergy with Ends 1: *Mega End* is undeniable. The *Mega End* represents our ultimate goal of preparing each student for success in life, work and future learning.

The Conference Board of Canada has identified a number of skills associated with character development in its list of Employability Skills 2000+. Having a positive attitude and behaviour, combined with skills in communication, problem solving, working with others, and adaptability, are all listed in their report as necessities for joining the workforce. Adding science, technology and mathematics skills completes the Conference Board list of skills they believe are necessary to achieve success in life beyond high school.³



DeAngelis, Tori. 2010. *Social Awareness + Emotional Skills = Successful Kids*. American Psychological Association, p. 1. retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/04/classrooms.aspx>

³Employability Skills 2000+ at http://www.conferenceboard.ca/Libraries/EDUC_PUBLIC/esp2000.sflb

Character development first takes place within the family. It is here where children initially learn how to *be* in the world. Character development is also a reflection of the culture in which students live. There is enormous diversity among our CBE students based on social, economic and cultural differences -- differences often reflected in parent and family values. Formally and informally, children not only learn their family's rules and values but also how each family member is expected to interact with others and the world around them. This learning occurs as a result of explicit instruction from parents, but also from children observing and doing.

“With an increasingly diverse population there is an opportunity for us to determine the beliefs and principles that we hold in common....The principles and attributes of character development are based in equity and transcend differences.”⁴

School systems are faced with the challenge of guiding learners who come to us with a variety of backgrounds. Given this reality, educators design the environment and the learning tasks. As student observation plays a significant role in character development, it is critical for educators to be aware that their actions demonstrate their own character. An educator's role in student character development is critical as they not only serve as role models, but engage students in understanding contexts, invite them to think critically and encourage their students to act in an ethical manner.

Character development, although ubiquitous in the learning environment, is also taught explicitly through Alberta Programs of Study. For example, the philosophy of the English Language Arts Programs of Study discusses language as essential for forming interpersonal relationships, extending experiences, reflecting on thought and action, and contributing to society⁵; essential components in the development of the eleven qualities found in the Ends 5: *Character* policy provisions.

The philosophy in the Mathematics Programs of Study states that “the learning environment should value and respect the diversity of students' experiences and ways of thinking, so that students are comfortable taking intellectual risks, asking questions and posing conjectures.”⁶ It would seem that this type of learning environment would support students developing greater courage, taking initiative and developing perseverance – explicit Ends 5 policy provisions.

Examples like these can be found in all curricular areas within the Alberta Programs of Study. Alberta Education does not view character development as a separate course or area of study,

⁴ Glaze, Avis E., Zegarac, George & Giroux, Dominic. 2008. *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools*. Queen's Printer for Ontario at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/literacy/booklet2008.pdf> p. 6.

⁵ English Language Arts Programs of Study philosophy, Alberta Education, 2000, p.1 retrieved from <http://education.alberta.ca/media/450519/elak-9.pdf>

⁶ Mathematics Programs of Study philosophy, Alberta Education, 2007, p. 1 retrieved from <http://education.alberta.ca/media/645594/kto9math.pdf>

but rather as an overarching philosophy or solid foundation upon which students, in all subject areas, are being purposefully presented with opportunities for exploring and strengthening their character. This is most evident in the following statement from the Heart of the Matter study published by Alberta Education in 2005:

“Character...education is not a separate subject to be taught in isolation. Rather, it integrates guiding principles into the existing curriculum, and into daily experiences and interactions.”⁷

In the Inspiring Education Steering Committee Summary from January 2010, it is noted that many Albertans’ traditional concepts of education are evolving to include increased cross-curricular connections and learning relevancy for students (Ends 2: *Academic Success*). In addition, there is a growing understanding from school systems around the globe on the need for greater personalization of learning with a focus on the whole child: “emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually and socially.” The very essence of the whole child is her character and how that child is learning to be in the world.⁸

Albertans’ vision for the future of education also focuses on the 3E’s -- developing learners who are engaged, entrepreneurial and ethical. Although being an engaged thinker and housing an entrepreneurial spirit display aspects of character, many of the qualities stated in Ends 5: *Character* speak more directly to the development of ethical behaviours. As noted in Ends 1: *Mega End*, Sir Michael Barber’s equation for a well-educated citizen includes knowledge, thinking and leadership encapsulated within an ethical framework.⁹ Ethics clearly play a primary role in the vision for the future of education in Alberta. As we work to increase the personalization of student learning we focus on the whole child with an understanding of how that child’s actions will ethically serve the future needs of society. Each child’s actions will be guided by the development of his/her character, led by the student’s ability for self-understanding.

As educators, one of the greatest benefits we can provide for our youth is to help them develop greater self-knowledge and, in turn, increased agency for their learning and overall development. Students must first be able to look *within* in order to effectively direct their actions in the world around them. Then, using processes of self-evaluation, students can develop understandings of how their actions affect their world. As students are guided towards attaining the qualities identified in the eleven characteristics of Ends 5: *Character*, work within and across all curricular areas becomes nested inside student beliefs, values and understandings. In this regard, self-awareness and self-assessment are critical to character development.

Learning about oneself can be guided by external forms of assessment. Just as a wide variety of assessment strategies are employed in each of the various curricular areas, multiple forms of assessment can be employed to assess character development. Considering progress

⁷ Alberta Education: Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. 2005. *The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools*, p. 45.

⁸ Inspiring Education Steering Committee, January 2010, *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans*, Draft 3.

⁹ Calgary Board of Education, *Ends 1: Mega End Reasonable Interpretation*, January 19, 2010, p. 6 at <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/trustees/reports/10jan19ends1reasinterp.pdf>

towards student character development requires us to measure more than understandings. We must measure how those understandings are acted upon in daily life. As Ends 5 states, the concept of right thought and action are key components of character: “to do what is right, act morally with wisdom and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others.” Character is viewed as observable in one’s conduct; therefore it must be demonstrated with a balance of thinking and purposeful acting.

Measuring character development within the context of the learning environment involves student self-assessment as well as educators’ assessments of student progress. This is accomplished through formal assessment procedures like tests and assignments along with observations and recordings of student interactions with others and their environment. Student self-assessment may involve students developing e-portfolios or personal learning plans, setting and evaluating learning goals and participating in the creation of their individual IPPs. The assessment process is collaborative, on-going and continuous as demonstrated in the adjustment cycle (Attachment I). As in all areas of learning, both formative and summative assessment strategies are employed to provide educators with a well-rounded picture of student progress.

Outcomes

- Each student will engage in learning with initiative and the willingness to take risks.
- Each student will demonstrate perseverance in learning.
- Each student will treat others with respect; decency, civility, fairness and compassion.
- Each student will make responsible decisions in the learning environment.
- Each student will engage in learning with integrity.

Measures

- Percentage of students who report feeling safe at school. (Accountability Pillar)
- Percentage of students who report being treated well by other students. (Accountability Pillar)
- Percentage of students who believe students at school help each other. (Accountability Pillar)
- Percentage of students who report feeling that students respect one another. (Accountability Pillar)
- Percentage of students who report understanding their responsibilities in using technology with integrity and how it affects themselves and others. (Student survey)
- Percentage of students who report that they persist in solving problems even when they find them difficult. (Student survey)
- Percentage of students who report doing what they believe is right for themselves and society even when it is unpopular or difficult to do so (Student survey)

- Percentage of students who report being honest with themselves and others. (Student survey)
- Percentage of students who balance their own needs with the needs of others. (Student survey)
- Percentage of students who report that they listen to and respond to the needs of others. (Student survey)
- Percentage of students who are reported to engage in learning with initiative, persistence and integrity. (Report cards)
- Percentage of students who are reported to treat others with respect and compassion. (Report cards)
- Percentage of students who are reported to make responsible decisions in the learning environment. (Report cards)
- Qualitative data that highlights student perceptions of their leadership roles within their school communities. (Student survey)
- Qualitative data illustrating students' perceptions of ways in which they have demonstrated the qualities of character within their school communities. (Student survey)

Data Sources

- Alberta Education Accountability Pillar Overall Summary
- Student report cards
- Student survey