

# Character Education Instructional Policy

## Purpose

At KKFS, we define Character Education as the deliberate development of our students' ability towards pro-social and respectful citizenship in our society. We strongly believe in developing not only our students academically, but also morally, civically, and behaviorally. This is accomplished through our intentional and proactive character education during the entire academic year. Character education at KKFS helps foster ethical, and , and caring young people by modeling, teaching, and emphasizing universal values. By instilling core ethical values in a variety of ways, our ultimate goal is to prepare students for success not just in school but in life.

## Alignment to KKFS Mission

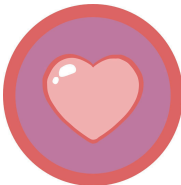
Our character education embodies our school motto of Explore, Reflect, Apply. Students explore the character traits through direct lessons, modeling, and integrated activities at school, reflect on what they've learned and how it relates to themselves and their behavior, and apply these traits with purpose in their daily lives to become more successful members of society.

## KKFS Character Traits



### Grit

- Keep going even when things are difficult
- Keep trying even after you've failed
- The ability to set and achieve your goals



### Empathy

- Understanding the feelings of others
- Sharing the feelings of others
- Taking steps to help others in need



### Self-control

- Being able to control your thoughts
- Being able to control your emotions
- Being able to control your behaviors



### **Integrity**

- Being able to make the right choices
- Being honest
- Being able to take responsibility for your actions



### **Curiosity**

- Having a strong desire to know or learn something new
- Wanting to know more about what you already know
- Wanting to try new things



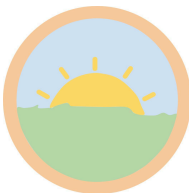
### **Courage**

- Being able to do things even when you are scared
- Being able to be strong even when you are in pain
- Being able to enter new, unknown situations



### **Gratitude**

- Having a feeling of appreciation for the good things in your life
- Having a feeling of appreciation for the bad things in your life
- Having a readiness to return kindness



### **Optimism**

- Having a hopeful attitude for the future
- Believing that with effort, things can get better
- Being able to share your hopes with others

## **Character Education in the Classroom**

### **Instructional Methods**

#### **Role Models**

Role models are the people whom students interact with at KKFS. These are the adults in students' lives. In our school, they are the administrators, teachers, and support staff. These people need to "walk the talk." You do not promote empathy if students overhear you talking negatively about another person. You do not promote gratitude if you do not express appreciation. You do not promote self-control if you often lose your temper.

### **Examples of how teachers can be role models for our Character Traits:**

- **Grit**
  - *Not giving up on students who are struggling*
  - *Not getting frustrated when students don't understand something*
- **Gratitude**
  - *Verbally saying thank you to people around you*
  - *Having students thank their teachers or administrators*
- **Curiosity**
  - *Answering students questions*
  - *Praising students for asking relevant questions*
- **Courage**
  - *Trying new things and verbalizing them to students*
  - *Encouraging students to try new things*
- **Empathy**
  - *Asking students to think about how their actions make others feel*
  - *Explaining how students' actions affect the teacher*
- **Self-control**
  - *Having well-organized desk space*
  - *Not becoming upset or emotional when things do not go as expected*
- **Integrity**
  - *Demonstrating fairness in student interactions*
  - *Grading student work fairly*
- **Optimism**
  - *Believing that practice makes improvement*
  - *Celebrating effort as much as or more than achievement*

## **Direct Teaching**

Teachers use this method when they explicitly teach about one or more of the school's character traits. The aim of this lesson is to directly expand the knowledge of the character trait by explanation, example giving, and possibly applying the trait in some authentic way.

- **ES Literacy Class Example:**
  - *Students receive a mini-lesson from their teacher about integrity. The teacher explains what it is, how we can show it, and provides real-life examples. Students then read a story or watch a short video about someone who exemplified integrity through their actions. Afterwards, students discuss with one another how that person showed integrity. Students are then given some sample situations to discuss with a partner, where they need to decide how they could respond to certain situations with integrity.*
- **MS Math Example:**
  - *The teacher starts the lesson by explaining that students will have to rely on their grit in today's lesson. They explain what grit is and how students can show it in*

*their lives. Then the teacher gives out either difficult problems or a large number of problems for students to solve. At the end of class, students reflect on how much grit they have shown or share some of their struggles with the task. They can also discuss situations in their lives where they may have to do something very difficult or have to do a lot of less difficult things at once.*

- **HS Assembly Example:**

- *At the HS assembly, students give a presentation on curiosity. They explain what it is, why it is beneficial for life success, give examples of real-world curiosity, and have students apply their curiosity by researching something they are curious about and reporting back at the next assembly.*

## **Integration into Core Curriculum**

Teachers are encouraged to meaningfully integrate Character Education into the core curriculum, rather than relying solely on direct instruction. This can be achieved by “mining” existing curricular content for opportunities to highlight character themes. For example, teachers may identify fictional characters, historical figures, or role models who naturally emerge within their subject matter. By intentionally connecting these figures to the school’s character traits, teachers can better integrate core curricula with the character traits of KKFS.

- **ES Literacy Class Example:**

- *Grade 5 is reading the book “Holes,” by Louis Sachar, as part of their novel study. One of the characters, Zero, recklessly charges out into the desert to escape from the counselors at Camp Green Lake. His friend Stanley eventually ventures out into the desert to rescue him. Teachers can then ask questions about these characters or the situation they find themselves in, such as;*
  - *Which KKFS Character Trait do you think best describes Stanley’s actions?*
  - *How could Zero have shown more self-control in this situation?*
  - *Do you think Stanley showed integrity in his actions? If so, how? If not, why not?*
  - *How do you think Stanley will have to show his grit as he ventures out into the desert?*

- **MS History Example:**

- *As part of the 1920s Interwar Era unit, Grade 8 students are covering the Great Depression in their American History class. As they move through the unit, they can reflect on many different aspects of the school’s character traits through the lens of the historical figures involved. Teachers can ask questions such as;*
  - *How did the actions taken by union organizers and workers during this time exemplify courage? What were some of the dangers they faced for their actions?*
  - *How did Franklin D. Roosevelt show courage by introducing some of the controversial programs in the New Deal?*
  - *How did the work conducted by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)*

*show empathy?*

- *Which KKFS Character Trait do you think Dorothea Lange best exemplifies for her work during this time?*

- **HS Science Example**

- *As part of the Biology course, students are learning about the theory of evolution by Charles Darwin. As they follow along and understand how Darwin came up with the theory, the teacher can ask questions such as;*
  - *What stimulated Darwin's Curiosity?*
  - *Darwin did not just observe nature; he showed curiosity by asking deep questions about it. Can you identify three questions that helped Darwin formulate his theory of evolution?*
  - *How did Darwin's curiosity push him to keep studying nature even when others disagreed with his ideas?*
  - *What questions do you think Darwin might have asked himself when he saw new species for the first time?*

## Integration into SEL

*"The best predictor of eighth-grade academic achievement was not third-grade academic achievement but rather indices of social competence" (Caprara, Barbanelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000).*

As we move through our SEL lessons with Second Step in ES and MS and Choose Love in HS, we can make the most of these opportunities by associating them with our school's character traits. Both of our SEL curricula utilize the CASEL 5 Standards. Our School's character traits can also be aligned with these standards, and many of the traits are mentioned directly underneath the CASEL 5 standards.

CASEL 5	KKFS Character Traits
Self-management	Self-control
	Courage
	Grit
Self-awareness	Optimism
	Integrity
Social Awareness	Gratitude
Relationship Skills	Empathy

When teachers are teaching a lesson focusing on Self-management, they can also intentionally connect it with some of our Character Traits, such as self-control, courage, or grit.

## Service Learning

*“Service learning and community service, then, are significant components of a school's commitment to character education. It is justified on the grounds that service significantly transforms moral-civic identity and predicts civic engagement in later adulthood” (Youniss & Yates, 1999).*

When the school runs programs that are meant to be a part of our school's service learning, it is important to link these programs to our Character Traits. This can be seen in the Thanksgiving food drive linked to Gratitude or the Christmas gift donation linked to Empathy. Gratitude can also be seen when HS students tutor younger students. However, it is up to faculty members to connect these events with the Character Traits.

## Schoolwide Events

When we hold schoolwide events, it is important to emphasize and associate certain Character Traits with these events. For example, we can associate Science Fair with Curiosity, Sports Days and games with Grit, Platforms, art shows, and concerts with Courage, and daily mindful breathing and phone-free days with self-control. The goal is to try to show students that our Character Traits are universal values that can be seen in many different places and situations at school and in their lives outside of school.

## Nurturing Relationships

*“The quality of early teacher-student relationships can have a strong influence on academic and social outcomes that persist through eighth-grade” (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).*

While we work towards building and supporting nurturing relationships with students, it's important that we connect this process with the Character Traits of the school. When MS and HS teachers conduct 1-on-1 conversations during MARIO check-ins, teachers are expressing empathy towards their students. When the SENCO meet with students to help them work through their troubles or provide them with a person who genuinely cares for and listens to them, they are expressing a deep sense of empathy. When coaches are encouraging their players to keep pushing even though they are exhausted, they are expressing grit. When teachers share that they will be using a rubric to assess a project, they are informing their students that they will mark the assessment with integrity. In all of these situations, teachers are trying to develop a nurturing relationship with their students and, in the process, are exemplifying the Character Traits of KKFS.