

# FINDING COMMON GROUND: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12



**Key Beliefs and Principles**

**Key Components**

**Finding Common Ground: Discussion Paper**

**Provincial Resource Teams**

**Ministry of Education Support**

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October 2006

reach every student



**Ministry of Education - Ministère de l'Éducation**

**A MESSAGE FROM AVIS GLAZE**

Dear Colleagues:

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools* Discussion Paper. This Kindergarten to Grade 12 initiative is jointly sponsored by three departments of the Ministry of Education: The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, The Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs Division and the French Language Education and Educational Operations Division with George Zegarac and Dominic Giroux respectively.

It is important for us to acknowledge the many schools and boards that already have character development programs. We congratulate these schools and boards and ask them to assist us in making this a reality in all schools across the province. Their experience and expertise will be valuable as they help to build capacity in other districts.

This initiative is coming at the right time in education in Ontario. There is a sense of optimism for the future of education in the province. Students are improving in their achievement. The education sector is confident that we can take student success, in all its forms, to new heights.

This is the time for us to reaffirm our commitment to the potential of our publicly-funded schools to deliver on its promise to educate all children successfully. But it must be recognized that a quality education includes the education of the heart as well as the head; it includes a focus on the whole person – the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of learning. It means preparing students to be concerned citizens who have empathy and respect for people within their increasingly diverse communities. It means providing opportunities for students to understand deeply the importance of civic engagement and what it means to be a global citizen in an increasingly interdependent global community. Character development is education at its best.

This initiative will only be successful if all partners share the responsibility for the character development of students. We call upon all partners in education – students, teachers, principals, supervisory officers, parents, guardians, secretaries, custodians, school councils, bus drivers, trustee organizations, federations, councils, unions, business and community leaders, social service agencies, faith communities and all those who either work or volunteer in our schools or have a vested interest in the quality of our education system and in the calibre of our graduates, to join with us in nurturing the best of the human and universal qualities that our graduates need to be successful in school and in life.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Avis Glaze".

**Avis E. Glaze**  
**Chief Student Achievement Officer, and CEO**  
**The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat**

## KEY BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES



- ✓ Character development is:
  - a primary responsibility of parents and families
  - a cornerstone of a civil, just and democratic society
  - a foundation of our publicly funded education system.
- ✓ Character development supports academic achievement:
  - At its best it develops the whole student – the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains, and as an individual, learner and engaged citizen
  - It contributes to safe, healthy, and orderly school environments that are pre-requisites for learning
  - It creates learning environments that are collaborative in which teachers spend less time disciplining and more time doing what they do best, namely, teaching
  - High expectations for learning and behaviour contribute to academic success by engaging students in their own learning.
- ✓ Character development is not a new curriculum. Neither is it an add-on. It is embedded in all that we do in schools. It is intentionally infused in our policies, practices, programs and interactions.
- ✓ Education at its best is essentially education for character.
- ✓ The principles and attributes of character development are universal and transcend racial, ethno-cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, physical and intellectual ability, and other demographic factors.
- ✓ Ontario’s population is becoming increasingly diverse. There is a growing need to find common ground on the values we hold in common.
- ✓ Character development must be a whole school effort with the expectation that all members of staff will be committed to its effective implementation and will model, teach and expect demonstrations of the attributes in all school, classroom and extra-curricular activities.
- ✓ Student engagement is essential in the character development process. The initiative will not be successful without the meaningful participation and involvement of students.
- ✓ Character development is about community development. Engaging the community in sharing the responsibility for character development is an essential component.
- ✓ Character development respects Constitutional Rights, federal and provincial legislation, curriculum guidelines, and, in particular, the grounds outlined in Ontario Human Rights Code.
- ✓ Character Development strives for an ever growing depth of self-awareness, self-discipline and understanding; it is not about indoctrination or punishment.
- ✓ Because we care about our youth and the future well-being of our communities, we all share the responsibility to model the universal attributes upon which we find common ground.



# CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION FOR ONTARIO SCHOOLS: KEY COMPONENTS

Ontario boards and schools are expected to demonstrate evidence of the following in their implementation of the Character Development Initiative:

- ✓ Board-based consultation with a wide cross-section of the community that reflects its diversity
- ✓ A school-wide commitment to model, teach and expect demonstrations of the attributes in all school, classroom and extra-curricular activities
- ✓ The intentional infusion of the components of the Character Development Initiative into the policies, programs, practices and interactions within the school and board
- ✓ The conditions necessary for student leadership development and opportunities for student voice in the education process
- ✓ Opportunities for student civic engagement and community involvement that reflects the unique needs of their communities
- ✓ A culture which reflects the language and common understandings of character development
- ✓ Character development practices that are holistic in their intent and reflect the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of learning
- ✓ A deliberate focus on character development in board and school plans with specific alignment with other ministry expectations: for example, Safe Schools, Student Success and other initiatives.



# FINDING COMMON GROUND: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12

## Engaging our students, our schools and our communities

DISCUSSION PAPER (OCTOBER 2006)

 Ontario Ontario Education | EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

**S**TUDENT SUCCESS is the fundamental measure of any education system and the ultimate expression of respect for the students in its care. Student success, however, is multi-dimensional. In addition to academic success, Ontarians collectively share a belief in the need to develop character and prepare students for their role in society as engaged, productive and responsible participants.

Over the past three years, the government has introduced a series of initiatives designed to enhance academic achievement for all students in Ontario's publicly funded elementary and secondary schools. Through the Character Development Initiative, the government addresses a complementary and equally critical aspect of student success, focused on developing the whole student as a learner, an individual, and an active member of the school and broader community. The concept of character development is rooted in the belief that parents, schools and communities share in the responsibility for, and the benefits of, the development of our young people as caring, empathetic and involved citizens.

Character cannot be acquired passively. It must be developed through engagement, and supported by dialogue, reflection and action. The Character Development Initiative is grounded in the vision of an education system in which students play a pivotal role, and are actively engaged in their own learning and in the life of the school.

### CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

One of the key commitments of this government was to establish a character development program in every Ontario school. This K-12 initiative will involve all members of the school and community in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that students require to become caring and socially responsible members of society, and will affirm the importance of respect in Ontario schools.

Students are the centre of our school system and must be active participants in this process. Character development can neither be done to them nor can it be successful without them. The commitment of everyone in the school and community to engaging students in building school cultures characterized by positive attributes and habits of responsible citizenship is the foundation of this initiative.

We are counting on all of our education partners to help us create the conditions necessary for students to learn about and demonstrate the qualities that parents nurture in their homes and that are important for success in school and beyond. This is a responsibility that we all share.

**The Honourable Kathleen Wynne**  
Minister of Education



## c o n t e n t s

- Character Development: A Call to Action
- Education at its Best
- The Promise of the Character Development Initiative
  - Academic Achievement
  - Character Development
  - Civic Engagement
- Parents and Community: Partnerships for Success
- The Proposal for Character Development in Ontario Schools

### ■ Character Development: A Call to Action

Our citizens are our province’s best resource. They contribute to nation building and to the continued development of a civil society. Our vision for the province is one that promotes excellence in academic achievement and the best of what it means to be human. As Ontario strives to provide the best possible education, there is a need to re-commit ourselves to the central mission of schooling – namely, to transmit from one generation to the next the habits of mind and heart that are necessary for good citizenship to thrive. To this end, we recognize that character development, which goes hand in hand with a strong academic program, is a natural extension of these efforts.

Developing character is a shared responsibility. There is a need for families and schools to engage cooperatively to encourage students’ learning and maturing as social beings. Students are at the centre of all that we do. Family and school alliances are necessary to create a web of support for the continuous improvement of our schools. Character development, at its best, permeates the entire life of the school as it is woven into policies, programs, practices, procedures, and interactions. It is a way of life. It recognizes that a respectful, safe and orderly school climate enhances learning.

Schools cannot do this alone. For that reason, we call upon all the partners in education – students, teachers, principals, supervisory officers, parents, guardians, secretaries, custodians, school councils, bus drivers, trustee organizations, federations, councils, unions, business and community leaders, social service agencies, faith communities and all those who either work or volunteer in our schools or have a vested interest in the quality of our education system and in the calibre of our graduates - to join with us in nurturing

the best of the human and universal qualities that our graduates need to be successful in our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

We believe in the potential of our students to be responsible members of our communities who will sustain the universal values that we espouse as a society. We want our schools to continue to be safe and to be models of effective human relationships, where students learn about and put into practice attributes such as respect, responsibility, fairness and empathy. We want students to develop self discipline and the personal management skills that will make their communities, workplaces and lives the best that they can be. Together we can make this happen.

We invite all Ontarians to share our optimism for the future success of our students. We urge you to make character development a foundation of our education system. Our students deserve no less.

“Education worthy of its name is essentially education for character.”

Martin Buber

### ■ Education at its Best

A quality education is not only geared toward the intellect, but also toward attitudes, behaviours and dispositions. It emphasizes all aspects of the self and domains of learning – the cognitive, affective, attitudinal and behavioural. It is about the education of the whole person. Character development, which encompasses all these domains, therefore becomes a fundamental goal of education in Ontario.

In its 2003 Speech from the Throne, the government committed to engaging school boards and communities in establishing a character education program designed to strengthen and enhance our students’ educational experience. As well, in June 2006, the following resolution was adopted by all three parties of the Legislature:

*That, in the opinion of this House, the Government of Ontario should declare the Province of Ontario to be a Province of Character by encouraging the citizens of Ontario to foster a climate which promotes, supports and celebrates excellence in character in its schools, businesses, homes and community-based organizations in order to strengthen Ontario’s families and communities.*

The importance of such an initiative is supported by the majority of Ontarians who, in a 2005 Ipsos Reid study, agreed that “kids today don’t learn the basics of character development.”

Many studies, such as *The Schools We Need* (2003), highlight the importance parents place on character development while building strong foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and critical thinking. According to this study, the highest priority for parents is for schools to help students develop as responsible citizens and to learn how to make ethical decisions.

Another Ontario research study indicates that parents are concerned about the character development of their children. In the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Mary Ann Evans of the University of Guelph reported on her comprehensive 2004 study, *Beginning Reading: The Views of Parents and Teachers of Young Children*, in which she surveyed parents who were representative of the demographics of south-western Ontario. These parents were presented with nine domains of learning and asked to rate the importance of each of these in preparing their children for the future. Parents consistently rated character development as a high priority.

Preparing students for the workplace is also an important goal of education. The Employability Skills Profile developed by the Conference Board of Canada presents the perspective of Canadian employers. It states that personal management skills are essential for students entering the workplace. These include characteristics such as honesty, responsibility, integrity, initiative, adaptability and respect for diversity.

Daniel Goleman’s research (1996) on Emotional Intelligence states that the Emotional Quotient (EQ) is more important than Intelligence Quotient (IQ) in determining success in school and life. His writing emphasizes the importance of emotional literacy, (the ability to identify, manage and express one’s emotions in a mature and conscientious manner), in improving students’ academic achievement scores and school performance. Canadian studies (Parker 2003, 2004) also support this correlation.

Howard Gardner, another seminal researcher in the field of education, developed the Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Interpersonal and Intrapersonal are two of the eight “intelligences” that he identified as contributors to effective learning and life functioning (1999).

These researchers agree that characteristics such as respect and empathy form the basis of interpersonal understanding and effective human relationships.

## ■ The Promise of the Character Development Initiative

The Character Development Initiative recognizes that academic achievement, character development and civic engagement are inextricably linked and must be interwoven into students’ educational experience. It provides students with: tools for increasing academic achievement, a solid foundation for ethical decision-making, and more opportunities to use their voices to influence outcomes.

There is a growing body of research evidence that character development, and greater student engagement in the life of the school, is closely linked to academic achievement.

Douglas Willms of New Brunswick’s Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy has advocated that “we need to consider student engagement as an important schooling outcome in its own right” (2002, 2003). A study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which examined data from 42 nations, concluded that one in four students has a low sense of belonging at school. This results in not only lowered academic achievement during the schooling years, but often leads to continued difficulty in adulthood.

The Character Development Initiative is pivotal in creating and sustaining school environments characterized by high expectations for learning. The 4th Pillar of the Student Success / Learning to 18 Initiative, Community, Culture and Caring, provides an essential avenue that leads to higher levels of student success. This pillar focuses on supporting a school culture that develops a sense of community and caring relationships to provide all students with greater opportunities to achieve success. Community, Culture and Caring will connect students to school; support relationships that will engage students, especially those who are disengaged from school; and promote student mentoring and advocacy.

Character attributes will provide students with high standards for behaviour, for making decisions that are personally empowering and for creating quality relationships. This translates ethical knowledge, skills and attitudes into action.

Today’s students need to function effectively not only in a diverse society, but also in a global economy. With increasing ethno-cultural and racial diversity within our communities, the need to find common ground on what our values and beliefs are, as a province, takes on greater significance. Building consensus on what we hold in common is essential for the development of peaceful communities and for more effective and enduring human relationships.

Ontario’s growing ethno-cultural diversity provides our students with a rich opportunity to explore and develop the attitudes, interpersonal and community building skills that this new environment demands.

The Character Development Initiative will provide a powerful means to facilitate students’ growth and development in the context of our diverse schools and communities. Students will be better prepared to relate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. This will ensure success in their communities and workplaces as individuals, community members and contributors to Ontario’s economic prosperity on the global stage. Character cannot be taught in the abstract, solely as a course of study. Students become engaged by engaging – as learners and as members of the community.

### Academic Achievement

Debates about the key purposes of education have persisted over the years. These varied perspectives converge on the belief that schools serve community purposes and that these purposes must be pursued within safe and caring environments which value and support diversity of race, culture, class, gender, and physical and intellectual ability. Indeed, students must be taught to respect all grounds identified in the Human Rights Code.

Academic achievement within a culture of high expectations for **all** students, regardless of circumstances, remains the primary responsibility of schools. A number of researchers report that character development and the creation of caring learning cultures increase student achievement.

Schools are responsible for teaching high level competence in literacy, numeracy and all subject areas and for developing the cognitive and academic skills that are the foundation for learning in school and beyond.

In this regard, research has shown that engaging students as active participants in the learning process and providing

relevant programs and supports are essential for academic achievement.

The government has made improvement in publicly funded education the centre of its mandate. The government’s vision is of an education system that excels provincially, nationally and internationally. Excellence in education includes character development.

“We must remember that intelligence alone is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of a true education.”

Martin Luther King Jr.

### Character Development

Character development is the deliberate effort to nurture the universal attributes upon which communities agree. These attributes reflect a forged consensus on the beliefs and values of families and communities. They transcend socioeconomic, racial, religious, cultural, gender and other factors that often divide people and communities.

It is critical that these attributes be identified through a school board process of family and community consultation. Through this process, communities find common ground on the qualities which schools should foster through systematic and intentional practices.

Exemplary teachers have always fostered universal attributes, explicitly and implicitly, in their classrooms. Likewise, schools have long recognized the need to nurture democratic principles in order to prepare students for their future role as citizens.

Catholic schools, for example, have been founded on the basis of inculcating Catholic values and have programs in place that nurture the academic, social, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of their students. Historically, Catholic Education has stressed community involvement as an important means for students to put beliefs into practice.

It is important also to acknowledge that formal and informal character development initiatives currently exist in many forms in Ontario schools. Many public school boards have implemented character development initiatives as key components of board and school plans.



Studies in character education have demonstrated that, when implemented on a school-wide basis, positive results are realized in the areas of:

- student engagement, motivation and achievement
- self-discipline, behaviour and interpersonal relationships
- preparation for the workplace
- school culture, civility and feelings of safety
- school community partnerships
- volunteerism and civic engagement.

Character development emphasizes the importance of positive interpersonal relationships and the qualities that business leaders identify as necessary for school graduates and their future employees. It is education that prepares students for civic engagement and a focus on becoming responsible members of their communities.

The Character Development Initiative supports student involvement in building and extending caring, positive school cultures. It recognizes the importance of mentorship relationships between students and caring adults. In addition, it aligns with curriculum at both the elementary and secondary levels, which offers many opportunities for teachers to embed, integrate and include character attributes in curriculum and in the culture of the school.

**Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement is a deliberate effort to nurture democratic ideals. It is yet another avenue through which students can further develop respect for self, others, property, the environment, diversity, human rights, and other qualities upon which we can find common ground as Canadians. It creates and expands opportunities for students to learn about, and contribute to, the building of their communities, our nation and the world. It is centred on the concepts of inclusion and respect for diversity.

The concepts of civic engagement are embedded in the Ontario curriculum. For example, Grade 1 students learn about citizenship as they study the relationships, roles and responsibilities in their homes, schools and communities. Grade 10 students learn about informed, purposeful and active civic engagement during studies of the fundamental purposes of democracy and what it means to be an active and responsible citizen.

Ontario’s public education system currently fosters positive and pro-social concepts of civic engagement through Kindergarten to Grade 12 Ministry guidelines and courses, including the community involvement component of secondary school graduation.

The Character Development Initiative challenges students to think critically about their world, anticipate problems, contribute to solutions, and develop higher levels of social responsibility, along with the skills to mediate and resolve conflict.

Civic engagement implies active participation, a strong student voice in decision making, and moving from talking and learning to engaging in activities that reinforce the need to care about others and our world. Students must learn the habit of being involved by using their voices in authentic and constructive ways. They need to engage in the community in real ways, for personally meaningful reasons, and not simply to fulfill a diploma requirement.

Developing an understanding of governance, how organizations function, how decisions are made and the importance of casting one’s vote are vital to students’ education and to the future of our country.

The need to teach the important elements of democracy, to model what it looks like in action and to provide opportunities for involvement in a manner that engages young minds and unleashes their idealism and enthusiasm is critical.

The excerpts that follow were provided by students in a Grade 10 Civics course in an Ontario secondary school when asked what citizenship meant to them:

*To me, citizenship means a lot. It means belonging to a society that has chosen to accept you, and that means both that it is responsible for you and you for it. A society to which you belong is supposed to support you, give you health care, a chance of schooling, fiscal support if necessary – but at the same time, you must pay taxes. Even more than that, though, you need to get involved by voting, protesting what you find wrong and supporting what you do believe in.*

*To me, being a citizen does not mean always agreeing with the current powers, but working with others (or if need be standing alone) to fight peacefully for the things you believe in.*

*Citizenship is fighting for human rights. Being part of a global community is also part of citizenship. Citizenship is like being a member of a gigantic club. It’s getting involved in the politics of your country by voting and protesting.*

In French-language schools, civic engagement also provides an important conduit for students to affirm, celebrate and enrich their Francophone culture and identity.

The government's Aménagement linguistique policy stresses the importance of building students' leadership skills, encouraging their involvement in cultural and intercultural activities, initiating school-community projects that involve a cultural element, and integrating cultural experience into the daily life of the classroom and school. In addition, the policy highlights the value of creating meaningful exchange networks among all partners in education, including students, schools and communities.

Students who develop high levels of civic literacy and engagement during their schooling years are far more likely to develop positive attributes of global citizenship. Understanding their communities and how events and circumstances impact on people and their daily lives gives students a window to the world.

In the future, Ontario's population will continue to become increasingly diverse. People come to Canada, and particularly Ontario, from across the globe. Ontario's population represents the world in miniature.

With increasing diversity, there is a growing need to find common ground on the values we cherish. The values we hold in common enhance our capacity to build community. They also contribute to nation building.

In the early stages of their implementation of character initiatives, some Ontario school boards conducted consultations using inclusive processes to ensure that diverse perspectives were heard and included. Universal attributes were chosen by those many voices as a mandate to refocus what education looks like in our schools.

Our diversity reinforces the need to persist in finding common ground.

Moreover, this inclusion of the multiple perspectives that exist within our communities demonstrates the need to be increasingly responsive to diversity. This, in turn, has the potential to build confidence in our public education system.

## ■ Parents and Community: Partnerships for Success

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for character development, with the support of others in the community.

Business and faith communities work collaboratively with schools to share this key responsibility. Character development is an integral part of many youth, sports and community-based programs. Character is nurtured in cooperative education and work experience programs, reflecting the increasing call from the business community for schools to develop multi-dimensional individuals capable of thriving in a global economy.

There are strong connections between existing character development programs and the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the First Nations culture, which are the basic truths that interweave all natural ways of life — respect, honesty, bravery, truth, wisdom, humility and love. An explicit focus on these teachings promotes harmony and enhances positive interactions in our schools and communities. First Nations, Métis and local perspectives must be honoured in the development of implementation plans for the initiative.

Partnerships will involve all members of school communities in creating cultures that reflect and reinforce the social, emotional, physical and ethical knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that students require to become caring and socially responsible citizens.

## ■ The Proposal for Character Development in Ontario Schools

The Ministry of Education proposes that all publicly funded boards in Ontario implement the Character Development Initiative during the 2007-08 school year. This allows the lead time necessary to consult with local communities. Character Development Resource Teams have been established across the province to facilitate implementation.

Many boards have already developed and implemented programs which address aspects of character education. For these boards, the Character Development Initiative will provide an opportunity to add depth to existing programs, and take academic achievement, character development and civic engagement to new levels.

Curriculum documents for Ontario’s public education system currently include expectations that are geared towards social, interpersonal and citizenship development. The civics, social studies and guidance programs are cases in point. *The Kindergarten to Grade 12 document, Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools* 1999, for example, emphasizes student development, interpersonal development and career development. Regarding interpersonal development, the document states:

*Students will learn to demonstrate self-discipline, take responsibility for their own behaviour, acquire the knowledge and skills required for getting along with others both within and beyond school, and choose ways of interacting positively with others in a variety of situations. They will also learn about thoughtful and non-violent problem-resolution, social responsibility, working cooperatively with others and caring about others.*

Examples abound in other curriculum documents. *The Kindergarten Program, The Arts, Social Studies, History and Geography, Civics, Law, World Religions and Language (Grades 1-8)* to name a few. All include expectations related to the responsibility of schools to develop positive character attributes as an integral part of students’ education.

## ■ Roles and Responsibilities

The following summarizes the proposed roles the Ministry of Education, school boards, schools, teachers, all board and school staff and students will play in making this initiative a reality.

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Ministry will:

- Establish a Character Development Resource Team across the province to share successful practices and provide support for boards.
- Convene a Provincial Symposium with representation from the education sector, students, parents, school councils, and the community to build awareness and share effective practices already in existence.
- Produce a webcast to develop common understandings in support of this initiative.
- Organize forums in geographical regions across the province to engage local communities in sharing the responsibility for the implementation of this initiative.
- Release a Character Development Policy and Program Memorandum which will include key principles and expectations following the dialogue and input at the Provincial Symposium and at regional forums.
- Provide boards with funding and supports to initiate or expand upon their character development initiatives.
- Develop guidelines for data collection and analysis for assessing the success of the initiative at the Ministry, school board and school levels.

- Conduct research and monitor the effectiveness of the implementation and impact of the Character Development Initiative.

### SCHOOL BOARDS

School Boards will:

- Ensure that the Character Development Initiative is aligned with and becomes an integral part of Board and School Improvement Plans.
- Establish a collaborative board-wide process for engaging students, staff, parents and school councils, as well as a diverse cross-section of business and community representatives, in the development and implementation of the initiative, with local trustees playing a key role.
- Ensure that students play a key role at all stages in the development of this initiative.
- Collaborate with the Character Development Resource Teams to develop the processes and practices necessary for successful implementation.
- Include partnerships with local organizations to provide programs which further engage students in the community.

### SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Principals will:

- Ensure that the Character Development Initiative is aligned with and becomes an integral part of the School Improvement Plan.
- Ensure that all members of the school community- students, teachers, parents and support staff- are engaged in school-wide implementation of the initiative.
- Provide a key role for school councils to play in reaching out to and engaging community members in this initiative.
- Embed character development in all subject areas and in all classrooms, extra-curricular and school-wide programs.
- Ensure that the student leadership in their schools reflects the diversity of the Ontario population, and has a voice in providing meaningful input into plans and decisions regarding the Character Development Initiative.
- Ensure that there are opportunities to engage students in general, and disengaged and marginalized students in particular, in the Character Development Initiative.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for members of the school community in the area of character development.
- Expand access to, and opportunities for, civic engagement by all students.
- Monitor and collect data on the effectiveness of their initiative.

## TEACHERS

Teachers will:

- Model the character attributes agreed upon by the board based community consultation process and exemplified in the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.
- Use the attributes identified in Ministry documents and by local communities in a developmentally appropriate way to set classroom behavioural expectations in collaboration with students.
- Ensure that there are opportunities to engage students in the creation of a classroom learning environment that is collaborative, caring and characterized by high expectations for learning.
- Embed character development in their subject areas and in all classrooms, extra-curricular and school-wide programs.
- Assist in creating a school culture that values caring relationships between teachers and students, fosters a sense of belonging, nurtures democratic principles and encourages student voice in decision making.

## ALL BOARD AND SCHOOL STAFF

All staff will:

- Model the character attributes agreed upon by the community in their workplace practices and interactions with others.
- Assist in creating a school and board culture that values positive relationships and service excellence.

## STUDENTS

Students will:

- Have a voice in providing meaningful input into plans and decisions for implementation of the initiative in their schools.
- Actively include the voices of diverse members of the student population in the Character Development Initiative.
- Create opportunities to engage students who are disengaged and who may feel marginalized in the life of the school.
- Identify additional opportunities for meaningful local community involvement and civic engagement.
- Ensure that leadership development opportunities are available for all students.

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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

KEY ACTIONS	TIMELINES
✓ Consult with selected boards to identify effective implementation practices and collect input regarding implementation requirements and challenges.	Spring, 2006
✓ Convene a Provincial Symposium to build awareness and common understanding of the commitment to the key principles of the Character Development Initiative.	Fall, 2006
✓ Produce a webcast for the education sector to support the Character Development Initiative.	Fall, 2006
✓ Establish Character Development Resource Teams to share successful practices and provide leadership for school boards in implementing and extending their Character Development Initiatives.	Fall, 2006
✓ Provide capacity building opportunities for Student Achievement Officers and Student Success Leaders to enable them to provide support for schools as they initiate, (or expand upon), their Character Development Initiatives.	Winter Spring 2007
✓ Organize regional forums to engage parents, community and business organizations and the education sector in sharing responsibility for the initiative.	2006-2007
✓ Release a Character Development Policy and Program Memorandum which will included key principles and expectation following dialogue and input at the Provincial Symposium and at regional forums.	Spring, 2007
✓ Provide boards with incentive funding and supports to initiate or expand upon their character development initiative.	Spring, 2007
✓ Develop guidelines for data collection and analysis for assessing the impact of the Character Development Initiative.	Spring, 2007
✓ Develop a plan for monitoring and conducting research on the effectiveness of the implementation and effectiveness of the Character Development Initiative.	Spring, 2007
✓ Assist boards in aligning and extending policies, practices and programs to reflect the implementation of the Character Development Initiative.	2007-2008

**ABOUT ONTARIO EDUCATION DISCUSSION PAPERS**

These papers are prepared by the Ministry of Education to solicit ideas and solutions to combat challenges facing Ontario students before formal policy decisions are made by the ministry. This initiative will be discussed by the Education Partnership Table, which is composed of provincial representatives from several education stakeholder groups, including parents, students, teachers, trustees, principals, education support workers and other components of the education sector. Members of the table assist in problem solving discussions at meetings and help to disseminate papers to their respective members and solicit their feedback.

The ministry also invites input directly from the public. Parents, students, teachers and those interested are invited to join the interactive Ontario Provincial Education Network (OPEN) online and register to receive electronic updates on important education initiatives, meeting notices and opportunities to provide instant feedback on proposed policies. This way, perspectives are continuously represented from education stakeholders across the province.





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## SUPPORTS: HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

### ■ The Provincial Character Development Resource Teams

There will be seven Character Development Resource Teams established across the province. Five regional teams will represent the geographical areas of the province, one team will represent the Catholic Boards and one team will represent the French language boards. The Provincial Character Development Resource Team members are school board leaders with experience in implementing, establishing and extending character development programs. Their responsibilities to support the implementation and extension of The Character Initiative will include: sharing successful practices; and providing support, advice and leadership.

#### North Western Region:

Leader: Janet Wilkinson – Keewatin Patricia District School Board - janet.wilkinson@kpdsb.on.ca

Leader: Larry Hope – Keewatin Patricia District School Board - larry.hope@kpdsb.on.ca

#### North Eastern Region:

Leader: Lucia Reese – Algoma District School Board - reecel@adsb.on.ca

#### Central Region:

Leader: MaryEllen French – Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board - maryellen\_french@kprdsb.ca

#### Eastern Region:

Leader: Gina Camerano – Upper Canada District School Board - gina.camerano@ucdsb.on.ca

#### Southern Region

Leader: John Havercroft – York Region District School Board - john.havercroft@yrdsb.edu.on.ca

#### Catholic Boards:

Leader: Patrick Cureton – Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board - pat\_cureton@bgcdsb.org

#### French Language Boards

Leader: Bernard Lavallee - Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud - blavallee@csdccc.edu.on.ca

Leader: Suzanne Moncion - Conseil des écoles publique de l'Est de l'Ontario - suzanne.moncion@cepeo.on.ca

### ■ On-line Resources

Look for the *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools* Discussion Paper on the Ministry of Education Website, [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca). Resources related to character development will be posted regularly on this site along with information about the seven Character Development Resource Teams.

### ■ Character Development Symposium Highlights and Webcast

Highlights from the October 15 and 16, 2006 *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools* Symposium, as well as a webcast focusing on character development, will be available soon at [www.curriculum.org](http://www.curriculum.org).

**For further information about the Character Development Initiative contact Lorraine Gruzuk or Jan Kielven at The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat.**

Lorraine Gruzuk  
416 326 1460  
lorraine.gruzuk@ontario.ca

Jan Kielven  
416 314 5965  
jan.kielven@ontario.ca

# FEEDBACK FORM



We invite all participants, individuals or groups, to provide feedback on the content and process of the Character Development Initiative.

1. What is your response to the content of Finding Common Ground: Discussion Paper?

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2. What is your response to the proposal for the implementation of the Character Development Initiative?

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3. What challenges do you anticipate in initiating or expanding on this initiative?

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4. What do you see as the opportunities provided by this initiative?

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5. Are you aware of any programs currently being implemented in your school board to develop character?

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6. Do you have additional comments and recommendations?

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NAME (OPTIONAL)

BOARD/ORGANIZATION (OPTIONAL)

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YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOMED AND SOLICITED. IT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

**THE LITERACY AND NUMERACY SECRETARIAT**  
10th Floor, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M7A 1L2  
[LNS@ontario.ca](mailto:LNS@ontario.ca)  
electronic template available at [www.edu.gov.ca](http://www.edu.gov.ca)



# FINDING COMMON GROUND:

## Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12

*For many students, establishing relationships of respect and care is a necessary foundation for intellectual as well as social development.*

– Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves

**“ Students cannot be part of the school system for 12 years and not have their values profoundly affected by the experience.”**


– Leslie Matula

**“ Development of character is a solution to social problems and a worthy educational ideal.”**

– John Stuart Mill

*L'éducation en langue française promeut le respect des droits de la personne et des droits des francophones en milieu minoritaire ainsi que d'autres valeurs démocratiques telles l'égalité, la justice et la dignité de la personne.*

– Politique d'aménagement linguistique

 Ontario reach every student

