



<i>The Classical Academy</i>	<i>Policies and Procedures</i>
Policy Name:	Character Education
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. While parents are the primary and most important educators of their children, the school and community should reinforce parental efforts. Character education is a deliberate effort to help students, parents, and staff members understand and act in accordance with core principles of behavior.

1.2. Each TCA school, under the direction of the principal, with assistance from the Deans of Educational Philosophy, will develop and implement a character education program based upon our Core Values, the Titan’s Creed, the Classical concepts of virtue, and the framework outlined in this policy. Core principles of behavior are those ethical behaviors that time and Classical philosophy have shown to support the ideas of truth, beauty, and goodness and are reflective of the community that are supported in the school. Programs will be designed to help students cultivate skills, habits, and qualities of character that will promote a good life, ethical citizenry, and better prepare students to become positive contributors to society. Each staff member shall model and promote the principles of behavior for students to follow, at all times, in each class, throughout the school, and at all TCA activities. The Classical Academy has implemented a variety of opportunities to integrate character into the curriculum and daily life of students.

1.3. The goal of our character efforts at TCA is the development of virtuous character amongst our student population to further the exemplary citizenry we desire to produce.

## 2. OUR PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH TO CHARACTER

2.1. David Brooks in a *New York Times* editorial titled “The Character Factory” wrote “character development is an idiosyncratic, mysterious process.” He also explained: “People who have studied character development through the ages have generally found hectoring lectures don’t help. The superficial ‘character education’ programs implanted into some schools of late haven’t done much either.”

2.2. At TCA, we do not believe that a prescriptive, lesson-planned, mandatory-type character lesson is generally an effective tool in the classroom. Such efforts do have a place

and can be effective when used by the right teacher, for the right reason, in the right environment. In and of themselves, however, prescriptive, mandated character lessons with little autonomy are not effective and generally counterproductive. We are looking for an organic versus prescriptive approach to character – a natural outgrowth of the community of staff, the Core Values, Mission Statement, and Titan’s Creed. We as leaders do our best to hire principals and staff that believe in the importance of character development in our students. A non-prescriptive approach does not mean a free-for-all. Topic ideas are presented to staff via principals, the educational philosophy staff, and individual campus character leads – a buffet of ideas/approach to interact on character topics.

2.3. Most students, especially at the upper grade levels, know the “right answer” to topics related to character – give them a situation and they will spout out the “correct” response or the answer they think adults want to hear. We strive to go deeper. The personal relationships our staff develop with our students is *where real character development lies*. There is a saying that character is “caught not taught” and the underlying truth embedded in those three words rings true to us.

2.4. For the student in the classroom this approach means that he/she will be exposed to a myriad of character related opportunities: discussions from classroom teachers/coaches (both suggested topics – the buffet – and naturally developing discussions), opportunities to be involved in character efforts within the school and between schools, Titan Teams, assemblies, community service days, student-led activities, graduation requirements, and examples provided by administrators, staff, and other student leaders. Our efforts entail that leadership from the TCA President down through the principals and classroom teachers are engaged in the character dynamic of TCA’s unique approach to education.

2.5. In Lauree Beth Stedje’s, *Nuts and Bolts of Character Education: A Literature Review* she notes: “Lawrence Hohlberg and Richard H. Hersh wrote, ‘Whether we like it or not, schooling is a moral enterprise. Values issues abound in the content and process of teaching.’ Whether designated to a specific time in the classroom or fully integrated into a school’s curriculum does not negate the fact that children learn character by observing how teachers and administrators handle conflict, interruptions, disruptive children, disrespectful students, schedule changes, and the myriad situations that occur each day.”

### **3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

3.1. TCA’s schools operate on a site-based leadership model, meaning the principals are responsible for the activities at their school. Guidance and direction are provided by the TCA President and cabinet in a multitude of areas to help keep us all headed in the right direction, and to try and maintain consistency, as much as possible. Leeway is granted in

such a model for unique elements at the schools. How principals engage in incorporating their character efforts into the life of their school will ultimately be reflected in their individual annual evaluations.

3.2. The TCA President, Director of Academic Services, individual school principals, deans of educational philosophy, school character leads, classroom teachers, coaches, and other staff that interact with students all have a role to play in instilling and modeling character for our students.

## **4. THE KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR CHARACTER FOCUS**

### **4.1. MISSION STATEMENT AND CORE VALUES**

4.1.1. TCA's mission statement created in the first year of our school identifies our reason for being: "The Classical Academy exists to assist parents in their mission to develop exemplary citizens equipped with analytical thinking skills, virtuous character, and a passion for learning, all built upon a solid foundation of knowledge."

4.1.2. The five-page TCA Core Values document was the culmination of a two-year process involving a board subcommittee comprised of board members and administration. The committee sought input from TCA's original founding board, past and present board members (at the time), and all of TCA's current (at the time) administrative leadership. The document was adopted and approved in December 2010 by the TCA board. The Core Values effort touches on many key themes and topics related to character and culminates with the "fruit" of our efforts – the vision of exemplary citizens

### **4.2. THE TITAN'S CREED**

4.2.1. The Titan's Creed is a tool that helps shape a positive school culture and reflects TCA's Core Values. It was developed via a year-long process with input from students, staff and parents. The creed was officially adopted by the TCA Board in March 2014. The creed contains universal principles to guide daily decision making, behavior, and reflections.

#### **A TITAN'S CREED**

*Titans recognize and endeavor to pursue truth, beauty and goodness.*

*Titans celebrate virtue in scholarship, relationship and citizenship.*

*Titans take ownership of and find joy in learning.*

*Titans value our responsibilities above our rights.*

*Titans love, respect and protect one another.*

*Striving to be our best, do our best,*

*and give our best to the world, in*

*Mind, Body and Spirit.*

*We Are Titans!*

### 4.3. CHARACTER STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES

4.3.1. In late 2013, TCA adopted use of the 24 character traits based on the work of Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman book *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. The traits and definitions are classified under six broad virtue categories. The listing below is from Peterson and Seligman's work. The italicized items, if different than the main descriptive trait, is the term utilized by the VIA Institute on Character at [www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org).

#### **Wisdom and Knowledge:**

Creativity [originality, ingenuity]  
Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]  
Open-Mindedness [*judgment*, critical thinking]  
Love of learning  
Perspective [wisdom]

#### **Courage:**

Bravery [valor]  
Persistence [*perseverance*, industriousness]  
Integrity [authenticity, *honesty*]  
Vitality [*zest*, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]

#### **Humanity:**

Love  
Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]  
Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]

#### **Justice:**

Citizenship [social responsibility, loyalty, *teamwork*]  
Fairness  
Leadership

#### **Temperance:**

*Forgiveness* and Mercy  
*Humility* and Modesty  
Prudence  
Self-regulation [self-control]

#### **Transcendence:**

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]  
Gratitude  
Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]  
Humor [playfulness]  
Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER K-12**

5.1. At every level character is both integrated into curriculum and intentionally taught during time set aside for character discussions. Students also have the opportunity to participate in community service at every level, and are required to complete 40 hours of community service during high school.

5.2. The Classical Academy has implemented a variety of opportunities to integrate character into the curriculum and daily life of students.

### **5.2.1. Elementary Schools**

5.2.1.1. The elementary schools follow an established list of assigned monthly virtuous character traits. Classroom teachers exercise freedom and creativity in how they teach the meaning of these traits and foster understanding of each trait's value in the human experience. Many teachers use literature books, wise sayings, articles about heroes, and other activities, such as role playing, as the basis for these discussions which occur at least three times a week in each classroom.

5.2.1.2. All elementary teachers, including classroom and specials teachers, are encouraged to look for opportunities to integrate character discussions throughout the curriculum. These may occur spontaneously as “teachable moments,” or be specifically planned into the schedule.

5.2.1.3. Elementary Principals, teachers, and tutors handle discipline issues as character issues. Discussions with offending students focus on the pursuit of virtues that could help avoid negative situations in the future. In addition, principals ask for students displaying exemplary virtuous character to be referred to the office for positive recognition.

5.2.1.4. Sixth graders attend an all-day TCA on-site camp where activities focus on teamwork and care for others. Character coaching – elementary teachers are encouraged to look for opportunities to invite junior high and high school students into their classrooms in order to facilitate positive interaction between these grade levels. Secondary school students are encouraged to consider themselves to be role models in these situations as they help with the events planned by the elementary teachers.

### **5.2.2. Secondary Schools**

5.2.2.1. Integration of character discussions throughout the curriculum is the emphasis at the secondary level. Additionally, specific character topics are also taught and discussed during small group meetings (Titan Teams/Grade level and small group Advisory Meetings). In this way, students continue to perceive the emphasis on character from teachers in all subject areas. Teachers are encouraged to use wise sayings throughout their

lessons, to recognize famous as well as unsung heroes, and to apply performance character to student's daily work and attainment of goals.

5.2.2.2. At various grade levels, students participate in essay writing contests which focus on topics such as freedom, service, heroism, peer pressure, and integrity. Students articulate their thoughts and experiences regarding the grade level topic. At College Pathways, students pursuing a more independent extension of their learning, participate regularly in service level projects designed to apply their performance character and ethical character in real world settings (at PPCC, Community service projects, internships, and student council).

5.2.2.3. As in the elementary school, secondary principals and assistant principals and teachers focus on character issues when discussing discipline matters.

5.2.2.4. Junior High – During the 7th grade year, junior high students attend an all-day event focusing on team building, character, and leadership development. 8<sup>th</sup> grade students serve as mentors and help communicate to the 7<sup>th</sup> graders as role models. These students are then paired up with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders throughout the new school year in the 87s program. In the 7th and 8th grades at both Junior High and College Pathways, students participate in social skills training in areas such as first impressions, communication, dining etiquette, being a respectful houseguest, and the negative effects of gossip. Presentation of this material is first given to all 7<sup>th</sup> grade and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in a large group setting, and then followed with discussions and role playing in small groups. An 8<sup>th</sup> grade dinner-dance takes place at the end of the year to allow students to practice the skills learned in a formal environment. In the fall of the school year, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Junior High students attend Mountain Lab School. Teachable moments about character arise as students participate in activities such as survival training, repelling, ropes course, and archery. All 8<sup>th</sup> graders participate in a presentation and follow-up discussion on heroism and moral courage.

5.2.2.5. High School – High school teachers and staff are encouraged to work with elementary staff in facilitating opportunities for high school students to serve as character coaches. Some of these areas are:

- Cross-country team members act as coaches and event workers for the elementary running clubs.
- Literature and theater classes perform for the 1st – 6th grade classes.
- Fourth through sixth grade students participate in the Veteran's Day assembly.
- Seniors assist in elementary classrooms.
- Sophomores and Juniors run activities at the elementary Field Days in the Spring.
- Spanish classes sing carols to elementary Spanish students.
- High School choir and band perform for elementary students.

- Senior high students participate in various character and leadership development programs off campus, with some being modeled after the United States Air Force Academy's Character Development Programs.
- Seniors: Character seminar focus on inspirational leadership, finances after high school, and alumnae panel on college and work after high school.
- Panel discussions for college orientations – older students mentoring younger.
- Mentors for internships and shadowing experiences.
- Small group pre-collegiate discussions on college life and walking with integrity and purpose at PPCC.

5.2.2.6. As a graduation requirement, all high school students must perform at least 40 hours of community service.

5.2.3. TCA's school-wide efforts in proactively engaging on the *24 Character Strengths and Virtues* listed in item 4.3.1. above are annotated in a **grade level character trait grid** in attachment 1.

5.2.4. This TCA Policy is consistent with ASD20 Board Ends 1.2 Character and C.R.S 22-29-103 *Character Education*.

## 6. MEASUREMENT OF CHARACTER AT TCA

6.1. The age-old question is *how do you know your character efforts are making a difference?* This question can be difficult to answer. Yes, we have anecdotal comments from those who visit our school or are new to our staff on how well our students behave, the integrity exhibited, etc., and that is an important consideration, but how do we delve deeper.

6.2. Character.org (formerly Character Education Partnership) defines successful schools of character by evidence of – suspension/expulsion rates, disciplinary referrals, standardized test scores, academic achievement, academic integrity, graduation rates, school climate (safe, welcoming, connected, bullying), attendance and truancy rates, teacher retention/satisfaction, and parent satisfaction/engagement.

6.3. Additionally, varied surveys are available – the *Gallup Student Poll* touches on engagement, hope, and positive school cultures; the Mark Liston *Character Growth Index* survey is one of the only research validated character measurement surveys available – it touches on 16 of the 24 character traits we focus on at TCA. There is some reluctance to specifically measure an individual student's character traits for the fear of some that we are trying to classify a child or giving a "character score." The challenges with surveying students on character has been discussed at length with the leadership team at TCA and this newly emerging field is one that we are not ready to venture into at this time. Some have strong reservations about such an approach.



6.4. The Classical Academy Board Strategic Plan states in **Strategic Goal 1 – Core Values and Education**: Thoroughly integrate TCA’s Core Values into all aspects of our academic curriculum, character program, and school culture. The first objective in the Strategic Plan requires “TCA’s Character Education Program will be intentionally integrated into each of our seven schools.” To assess this objective data supported character measures will be presented annually to the Board.

6.5. The twelve measurement areas utilized by Academic Services to assess the character efforts at TCA are listed below and based upon the recommended measures from Character.org outlined in item 6.2. above.

6.5.1. [All Schools] Question 6 on the annual Parent Survey: **“TCA successfully partners with parents to develop virtuous character in its students.”**

6.5.2. [All Schools] Question 1 on the annual Parent Survey: **“If I were to name the best thing overall about TCA, it would be.”**

6.5.3. [All Schools] **Attendance and truancy rates** at TCA compared to District 20 and other measures, as available.

6.5.4. [All Schools] **Discipline rates** at TCA compared to District 20 and other measures, as available.

6.5.5. [All Schools] Question 3 on the annual Parent Survey: **“My child feels safe at school.”**

6.5.6. [Secondary] Questions 1a, 1b, and 1c on the annual Student Climate Survey related to **bullying at TCA** compared to available state and national averages.

6.5.7. [All Schools] Question 4 on the annual Parent Survey: **“TCA’s classes and grade level coursework are appropriately preparing my child academically.”**

6.5.8. [All Schools] **Academic achievement snapshot** from annual State Assessment report to specifically include Area 1: Accreditation Rating, Area 2: Overall Assessments; Area 3: Overall Achievement.

6.5.9. [Secondary] **Graduation rates at TCA.**

6.5.10. [All Schools] General **overall parent satisfaction** taken from the annual Parent Survey analysis document provided by the Director of Academic Services.

6.5.11. [All Schools] **Teacher retention and satisfaction** measures taken from the annual staff Climate Survey.



6.5.12. [All Schools] Student **attrition numbers** at TCA and general trends.

Attachment:

24 Character Strengths and Traits by Grade Levels at TCA

**Legal References:**

C.R.S 22-29-103 Character Education

**Cross References:**

ASD20 Board Ends 1.2 Character

IIAC-TCA Selection of Instructional Materials and Textbooks

**Policy Revision History**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Revision Details</b>	<b>Revised By</b>
4/1/2010	Original Character Education policy on file.	TCA President (approved)
1/30/2016	Revision proposed. Not adopted.	Director of Character Education & Development
4/26/2017	Rewritten to reflect current character education guidance at TCA.	Director of Academic Services

**24 CHARACTER STRENGTHS AND TRAITS by GRADE LEVELS at TCA**

SCHOOLS	Elementary/CSP						JH		CP-JH		HS				CP-HS				Trad/Non	Trad 7-12	
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	9	10	11	12	Totals	%
Creativity			X				X*			X										2/3	78%
Curiosity	X				X*					X		X*	X							4/3	72%
Open-Mindedness (Critical Thinking)						X*	X			X	X			X*				X		4/4	70%
Love of Learning		X	X*	X	X*	X	X			X			X*							7/7	74%
Perspective (Wisdom)							X*	X				X*		X			X		X	4/3	77%
Bravery		X			X*			X							X*	X				4/3	67%
Persistence (Perseverance)	X	X	X	X	X	X*		X				X	X*						X	9/7	85%
Integrity (Honesty)	X		X*					X			X	X*	X	X*	X					7/3	82%
Vitality (Zest)				X*						X					X					2/2	58%
Love	X*		X					X	X		X		X*							5/3	59%
Kindness	X	X*	X*	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X*	X*					X		11/9	77%
Social Intelligence			X		X		X*			X		X*	X	X*				X		6/5	64%
Citizenship (Teamwork)		X*					X	X									X			3/3	89%
Fairness	X*			X				X				X				X				4/3	67%
Leadership							X*	X						X*		X		X		3/3	78%
Forgiveness		X						X							X	X			X	3/3	61%
Humility					X	X*					X				X			X		3/4	46%
Prudence				X*		X*									X	X			X	3/4	69%
Self-Regulation (Self-Control)	X*	X*						X	X	X		X*	X*	X*	X			X		8/4	76%
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence		X*										X			X	X				3/2	80%
Gratitude	X*			X*		X		X			X						X		X	5/5	56%
Hope			X*			X		X		X				X					X	4/4	53%
Humor				X*						X			X							2/2	73%
Spirituality					X*										X		X			2/2	47%

\*=intentional focused attention at elementary / most pertinent topics at grade level in HS as determined by staff  
**Totals** = number of times discussed across all grade levels separated out by traditional/non-traditional  
**Trad 7-12 Column** = % of courses that directly discuss this topic within the curriculum in traditional secondary (out of 85 courses)