

The Gee Whiz Education Approach to Character Education



What is Character Education?

Character education or character development is a very important part of any early childhood curriculum. After all, the first five years of a child's life sets the stage for the future. Teaching children about character should be an integral part of everything that occurs in early childhood settings. From routine times such as meals to playing games together, modeling and talking about aspects of character education should be an integral part of all activities.

The term, "Character Education" refers to the characteristics we all strive to demonstrate as individuals. These characteristics include:



Responsibility: helpfulness, self-discipline, self-regulation

Respect: courtesy, fairness, justice, loyalty, tolerance

Kindness: empathy, generosity, love, trust, friendship

Honesty: justice, self-discipline

All of these aspects of character education or character development fall under the realm of Social/Emotional Development. This area of development is critical! Children who have issues with self-regulation, for instance, often have issues with social skills as well. As educators, it is important to recognize that ALL activities have social/emotional components in them. For instance, when playing a group game, children must practice cooperation, following directions, self-regulation, kindness and respect. Because social/emotional growth is directly tied to character development, these aspects all work together. The point is simple...character education and social/emotional development should be a part of EVERY activity EVERY day.



What is Your Role?

Your role in a Character Education or Character Development is extremely important! There is one key word you need to remember:



The children watch, and listen to, everything you do every day. If you model helpfulness, the children will be helpful. If you model courtesy, the children are much more likely to be courteous as well. The key concept is to remember that YOU are the role model for the behaviors you want the children to adopt.

What Is...?

Responsibility

- Helping others
- Doing what you are supposed to do
- Taking care of one's own needs
- Doing simple chores

Respect

- Following simple rules
- Being aware of personal space
- Using good manners
- Using words to solve problems

Kindness

- Being nice to others
- Helping others when they need help
- Showing compassion
- Including everyone

Honesty

- Following simple rules
- Always telling the truth
- Being trustworthy
- Keeping promises

Daily Tips for Promoting Character Development

As mentioned earlier, promoting character education and social/emotional development should be a part of every activity every day. Just look how easy it can be to do this in your program!

RESPONSIBILITY

- Let children try to do things on their own before stepping in to help.
- Give toddlers and twos simple tasks to complete such as passing out napkins at snack.
- Teaching children the skills they need to dress themselves.
- Having a chore chart for older children that includes chores they can do independently.



RESPECT

- Expecting children to listen while others are speaking.
- Reminding children about personal space when playing group games, dancing, running outside, sitting in a circle, etc.
- Saying, "Please" and "Thank You" and expecting children to do the same.
- Reminding children to use words when they are angry instead of hitting or kicking.

KINDNESS

- Inviting children to tell others what they like about their creations.
- Giving "high fives" and "thumbs up" to others.
- Modeling how to comfort someone who is a upset or hurt.
- Inviting children to join in activities.
- Making sure everyone who wants a turn gets one.



HONESTY

- Inviting children to share their true feelings about what they like and don't like.
- Keeping promises you make to the children.
- Reminding children to always tell the truth.
- Making sure that you model telling the truth as well.

How Does the Gee Whiz Curriculum Address Character Education?

As mentioned earlier, character education/character development should be a part of EVERY day through the Social/Emotional area of development! The Gee Whiz curriculum models this belief. Cooperation, taking turns, respecting personal space, sharing feelings and much more are built in to the activities included in the curriculum.

For instance, all Social/Emotional Development activities or experiences are identified with the picture ♥ symbol. When you see this symbol, you will know that the activity addresses one of the following skills:

- *Demonstrates a secure relationship with caregivers or other adults as well as positive interactions with other children*
- *Demonstrates a positive self-concept by sharing preferences, expressing feelings freely and displaying confidence*
- *Demonstrates self-regulation by handling emotions in an appropriate way and following simple rules*
- *Demonstrates a range of appropriate emotions*

These skills are all a part of character development. In addition, when you see the children holding hands symbol with an experience or activity, you will know that there is specific information within the experience that explains how it addresses either kindness, responsibility, respect or honesty.



Character education has always been a big part of the Gee Whiz curriculum. We hope that this booklet, along with our new picture symbol, will help you continue to emphasize this key part of early childhood education in your program.

If you have any questions or need additional clarification about how Gee Whiz addresses character education/character development, please feel free to reach out to us at customerservice@geewhizeducation.com.