

Ho-Ho-Kus School Character Education Program 2017-2018

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters
compared to what lies within us.”*

*— Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, philosopher and poet
(1803-1882)*

At the beginning of each new school year, it is always a primary goal to set the stage for the best possible climate and culture. One of the greatest things about this profession is that each year we get to start with a “blank canvas”. We come together once again to do important work serving among a population that includes but is not limited to ... 102 staff members, 645 students and their families. It is an awesome responsibility each day ... but ever so meaningful!!!

Surrounding this culture is a “Promise” which hangs in each and every room of the school. The Promise is taught to students, explained to new staff and community members at the beginning of each school year, and it is the expectation and tone for all who enter the building.

Our Promise

- Respect Yourself
- Respect Each Other
- Respect This Place

The overall goal is that the school will take on a wonderful feeling that really cannot be described, but can clearly be felt. Margaret Wheatley describes this as “Field Theory” ...referring to organizational fields and metaphoric thinking. We can never see a field, but we can easily see its influence by looking at behavior.

Our overall philosophy and teaching goals are as follows:

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Socrates defined education as helping students gain both knowledge and virtue, to become both smart and good. This is the primary goal at Ho-Ho-Kus School. Our kindergarten –eighth grade staff are committed to helping our children gain the virtues, the embedded habits that constitute good character.

Philosophically, we follow the wisdom of Thomas Lickona, developmental psychologist and author of Educating for Character. Lickona asserts that “...character must be broadly conceived to encompass the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality. Good character consists of knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good. Schools must help children understand the core values, adopt or commit to them, and then act upon them in their own

lives.” We are certain that our “Value of the Month” program systematically and sequentially moves us toward this goal.

The framework around which this program is designed allows us to incorporate a specific value each month. We selected nine values to be featured over the course of the 2017-2018 school year. Every classroom, instructional setting, and office will display a large educational poster highlighting the “Word of the Month”. All teachers are given a unit of study for each value. The units include: definitions, purpose, discussion questions, thoughts for each day, heroes and heroines, related literature, action based activities and community outreach projects.

During the 2017-2018 school year, all students will study:

September	Responsibility
October	Respect & Acceptance
November	Compassion
December	Generosity
January	Commitment/Self-Discipline
February	Friendship/Loyalty
March	Cooperation/Fairness
April	Environmental Awareness
May	Honesty
June	Humor & Joy

Our teachers integrate each value into their already existing programs of study. This guarantees a connection and smooth infusion between state standards and our character education initiative. In addition, our School Counselor, Assistant Principal, Supervisor of Curriculum and classroom teachers will plan lessons for all classrooms at all grade levels. The Principal and Student Council representatives will recite a daily “character message” over the PA system each morning.

The Principal has implemented a K-8 Class of the Week incentive. This practice will provide a great measure of the positive influences of our character education program and promote outstanding citizenship skills. Certificates are presented weekly.

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”

— Martin Luther King Jr., American civil rights leader (1929-1968)