Our Founding Fathers understood that our country would survive and flourish if our nation was committed to good character and an unyielding dedication to liberty and justice for all. Throughout our history, our most honorable heroes practiced the values of hard work and honesty, commitment to excellence and courage, and self-discipline and perseverance.

—President George W. Bush

All parents want their children to grow up to be good people and responsible citizens. Just as children must be taught to tie their shoes, read and write, and solve math problems, so too must they be guided to develop qualities of character that are valued by their families and the communities in which they live.

The benefits of encouraging children's positive character development are enormous. Research has shown that children who grow up with strong, positive values are happier and perform better in school. They also are better able to balance their personal development with different values. Research has shown that values are important when choosing a career, choosing a mate, and other momentous life decisions. The qualities of character discussed in this brochure are universally recognized by people of many religions and cultures. Information presented here can be used by parents from various backgrounds and with different values.

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen

Helping Your Child

—President George W. Bush

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes parents' responsibility to help their children develop character traits that will make them good citizens. This brochure presents some suggestions for ways that you can work with your child's teachers and other schools officials to help build character and learn responsibility. The series, “Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen,” which recognizes parents’ role in education.

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

Work with teachers and schools

Below are some suggestions for ways that you can work with your child's teachers and other schools officials to help build character and learn responsibility. Just as children must be taught to tie their shoes, read and write, and solve math problems, so too must they be guided to develop qualities of character that are valued by their families and the schools in which they live.

Helping Your Child early in the school year. Discuss with your child what kind of priorities he or she has for classes and how they will help develop character. The first days of school are critical times to teach your child the importance of self-discipline and responsibility, and to reinforce those values.

If your child's school has a character education program, ask for a description of the curriculum and talk with teachers about how you can help emphasize the lessons at home. The school does not offer a character education program, you can begin with these tips.


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