

Character Education is for Everyone!

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At a recent in-service training program for teachers, John Doyle, Miami-Dade County Schools' Administrative Director for the Division for Social Sciences, made the case for character education. He reminded teachers of the growing consensus about the need for character education in the face of increasing concerns about student behavior and negative societal influences. He pointed out that despite people's differences over cultural, social, and political issues, core values such as respect, responsibility, and honesty are universal. Moreover, in Miami-Dade County, character education is the law! The Pupil Progression Plan of Miami-Dade County Public Schools requires character education, as based on the districts' nine core values, for all students, grades K-12.

According to a leading character educator, Dr. Thomas Lickona, the question is not whether to do character education, but whether to do it well. For that reason, the Division of Social Sciences co-sponsored the recent teacher in-service with Living Values Education. This program is a global collaborative of educators who seek to create educational environments where all the participants' children, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and others' feel valued, respected, cared about, and appreciated. Begun as a project in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations and now supported by UNESCO, UNICEF, and several well-regarded peace organizations, this project is currently operating in nearly 70 countries world-wide, and has recently been introduced to Miami-Dade County. The Miami Shores/Barry University Connected Learning Community Charter School has agreed to become a national demonstration site, and nearly 100 teachers from schools throughout the district participated in the recent character education in-service program.

The Miami-Dade School District has designated a focus value for each month during the school year. The value for February is INTEGRITY. Everyone can participate in this character education initiative by becoming 'living values'. Think about what integrity means and how it is demonstrated throughout your day. Is integrity one of your specialties? Would students learn integrity by watching your behavior? What happens when people don't exhibit integrity?

Character education is just another program unless those values come alive in all of us. 'Practice what you preach' is a simple axiom, but it is the reason that Living Values has worked so well all over the world, and will now support Miami-Dade County Schools' character education initiative.

For information about the Miami-Dade Public Schools' Character Education Program visit the website at

<http://www.dade.k12.fl.us/socsci/mandates/charactr/index.html>

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