

HOMER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHARACTER  **COUNTS!**

K-12 Character Development Program

 **PRIDE** Partnership • Respect • Integrity • Diversity • Excellence

OCTOBER 2013

Homer Mission

The Homer Central School District is committed to excellence for all students. Our mission is to graduate responsible and productive citizens who embrace life-long learning. We work together as a team of dedicated, effective, and well-supported professionals to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Homer Vision

PRIDE—Partnerships, Respect, Integrity, Diversity and Excellence— is the foundation for the Homer Central School District.

Partnerships promote collaboration among students, staff, families and the community to support student learning.

Respect grows through mutual kindness, compassion for others, and the development of strong moral character in a student-centered environment.

Integrity guides our actions so that they are honest and open and fair.

Diversity enriches our opportunities to create multiple pathways for learning and to foster independent intellectual growth.

Excellence, through rigorous learning experiences, empowers students to become critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and responsible citizens.

Homer graduates will embody PRIDE as:

- Effective communicators and creative problem solvers
- Motivated, active citizens with a sense of community who have an appreciation for learning and the arts
- Critical thinkers who possess a broad foundation of literacy skills
- Self-aware individuals who make good choices
- Emotionally and socially independent young adults who embrace diversity and contribute to our global society

March 6, 2012

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Homer Central School District's mission and vision statements establish high, and yet reasonable expectations for children and adults in our school and larger community. The District has met the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) expectation of "creating policies intended to create school environments free from discrimination and harassment, and to create guidelines relating to the development of non-discriminatory instructional methods." We understand that DASA is **NOT** a zero tolerance policy, but rather a law and an opportunity for our District to increase safety, acceptance and academic growth.

Academic gain occurs best and with higher frequency in schools that are safe, that have clear and consistent expectations for students and adults, and that rely on the three R's: Rigor, Relationship and Relevance. Homer Central School District has agreed to:

- Model and reward respectful, responsible, kind, and compassionate behavior;
- Use consistent language and protocols within our district that are simple and effective;
- Set the same tone and expectations for adults and children in human interactions in classrooms, hallways, common gathering areas, sporting events, and celebrations of the arts;
- Employ kind and healing language and actions in conjunction with logical consequences (rather than punitive practices and punishments.)

(Please note: The Dignity for All Students Act and CR Part 100.2 (c) is law. Briefly stated, it says that classroom instruction needs to support development of a school environment free of discrimination and harassment. Instruction is expected to raise awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.)

RATIONALE

Successful character education relies upon character development that is explicit and consistent. It acknowledges that fair is not always equal, and it understands that development is a process that takes time. The Homer Vision Statement articulates the five necessary ingredients to develop character. They are expanded upon herein to speak directly to this document's purpose.

PARTNERSHIPS: School personnel, community members, organizations, parents/guardians and children, need to communicate and collaborate to create effective partnerships.

RESPECT: All members of the greater Homer community need to be respectful toward each other. All members of the greater Homer community need to be “up standers” when they witness disrespectful, unkind or hurtful behaviors. Adults are held to the same standard as the students. They have the responsibility of modeling the behaviors they expect from students. The adults set the tone by modeling inclusive, kind, respectful and compassionate behaviors.

INTEGRITY: All members of the greater Homer community need to act/ behave in honest and open and fair ways, holding themselves and others accountable.

DIVERSITY: All members of the greater Homer community need to accept differences, find effective means for talking about differences and how to act with kindness and compassion toward all. At Homer, all students belong; all students can learn and achieve mastery; all students need to have opportunities to be independent and to be generous.

EXCELLENCE: Through rigorous learning experiences, students are empowered to develop their intellect and their moral character, while becoming critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and responsible citizens.

DISTRICT PLAN FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Character education and character development are foundational to student empowerment, student achievement, peaceful communities for learning and living, and life after school. In the 21st century, political systems, communities, the work place and families will need to have cooperative students who have multiple forms of literacy:

- Print and media literacy: being able to read print and images critically;
- Emotional literacy: knowing how to read situations and circumstances, interpret people’s body language, faces, and tone and pitch of voice;
- Behavioral literacy: being able to correctly interpret a series of cultural shifts and rules in order to function appropriately in multiple settings;
- Financial literacy: knowing how to save, expend and keep account of money;
- Cultural literacy: having the broad understanding of how cultures are similar and different and being able to show respect in multiple cultures.

In order for students to be successful, they will need to have competency in all forms of literacy. All instruction, all the time, must include explicit instruction in these areas. Students and staff will need to make the cultural shift from being bystanders

2.) **THINK**—an acronym used in various classrooms to encourage reflection prior to speaking:

T: Is it truthful?

H: Is it helpful?

I: Is it inspirational?

N: Is it necessary?

K: Is it kind?

3.) **Rachel's Challenge**

HCSO began the Rachel's Challenge initiative in academic year 2012-13 to emphasize kindness and compassion as essential parts of daily life in public schools in America. Individual acts of kindness are recognized within the school community. www.rachelschallenge.com

STRUCTURES

STRUCTURE FOR THE HOMER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARACTER EDUCATION COMMITTEE:

Committee Membership: The District Team will include membership from a variety of stakeholder groups, (i.e., community members, teachers, administrators, secondary students, and staff).

The Role of the District Team:

1.) The role is to provide leadership, raise questions, give feedback and work collaboratively to grow the Homer Mission and Vision of PRIDE. In so doing, the District Team will explicitly support the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). They will use the lens of Rigor, Relationship and Relevance to inform their decision-making and nurture a climate of respect and compassion that supports all students and all adults in the Homer Central School District.

2.) In addition, the District Team will review the building level plans for each school (Homer Elementary, Hartnett Elementary, Homer Intermediate, Homer Junior High School, and Homer High School.) These plans will be submitted to the District Team in the fall of each academic year. The buildings will employ the SMART template to write the goals, (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant—results oriented—and Time Framed.) (See attached). The District Committee will also review progress toward the goals midyear (January) and again at the end of the year (June).

Meetings: The District Team will meet regularly as determined by the Superintendent of Schools. The District Committee meets the second Wednesday of every month.

STRUCTURE FOR THE HOMER CENTRAL SCHOOL BUILDING LEVEL CHARACTER EDUCATION MEETINGS:

Committee Membership:

The Building Level Teams will include membership from a variety of stakeholder groups, (i.e., community members, teachers, students, as appropriate, administrators and staff). An efficient way to operate the Building Level Team is to have it be part of the Site Based Team.

The Role of the Building Level Team:

- 1.) The role of the Building Level Team is to provide leadership by creating an **annual action plan**. This plan will use the SMART Goals Template (see attached) to set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant—Results oriented—and Time Framed.
- 2.) The action plan will be submitted to the District Development Team in the fall of each academic year.
- 3.) The District Character Development Team will provide leadership to the buildings by reading the action plan, raising questions, and giving feedback focusing on if the Building Action Plan supports the Homer Mission and Vision Statements as well as the Dignity for All Students Act?

The Building Level Team Meetings:

- 1.) Building Level Teams meet every 4-6 weeks beginning in September. The annual action plan using SMART goals is written in September.
- 2.) The SMART goal plan will be reviewed at the mid-year point, early January, to gauge progress. The Building Team will report progress made and make any adjustments. Progress will be reported to the District Team.
- 3.) The Building Committee will review the SMART goal action plan

to becoming “up standers.” Up standers step in to assist people who are being bullied.

We must model and live “the power of yet,” a phrase coined by noted psychologist, Carol Dweck. The power of yet is a “no quit” model where it is understood that to get to success, we usually fail several times. Adults need to encourage, model, and instruct students in a growth mind set (instead of a fixed mindset). We need to teach “both/and” thinking. We have to live a “never quit” life. Adults have to model appropriate risk taking and forgiveness.

Our goal in the Homer Central School District is for all members of the greater Homer community to work cooperatively to promote personal respect and responsibility through student empowerment, student and adult accountability, student achievement, and student and adult kindness and compassion. We will commit to using the lens of Relationships, Rigor and Relevance as the three R’s that guide personal conduct, expectations and purpose.

PROTOCOLS

Homer Central School District will employ a template for building level committees to write a yearly action plan. Each building will:

- **State the actions it will take to provide character development;**
- **Name the people responsible for initiating the action;**
- **Establish the time line for the actions;**
- **Provide evidence of the actions taken and the outcomes achieved.**

By creating a concrete plan employing this template, progress and areas for growth can be measured. The plan will be created in the fall; it will be reviewed at mid-year, and at the end of the year. The site based team at each building will participate either in whole or in part. Suggested time frame to have this in place: October 1, 2015.

The District will consider the following protocols, such as:

1.) PRIDE--Homer Central School District’s Vision acronym, which stands for:

**Partnerships,
Respect,
Integrity,
Diversity and
Excellence**

SMART Goal Setting

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Relevant and Realistic

T = Timely



When we are developing goals that we want to reach, evaluate them to ensure they fit the criteria of a **SMART goal**:

Specific

Goals should be straightforward and emphasize what we want to have happen. Specifics help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what we are going to do.

WHAT are we going to do? Use action words such as direct, organize, develop, plan, build, etc.

WHY is this important to do at this time? What do we want to ultimately accomplish?

HOW are we going to do it? (By...)

Measurable

If we can't measure it, we can't manage it. Choose a goal with measurable progress, so we can see the change occur. How will we know when we reach our goals? Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal we set. When we measure our progress, we reach our target dates and experience a sense of achievement.

Attainable

A goal needs to stretch us slightly so we feel it is achievable.

Relevant and Realistic

The goals are aligned with current tasks and projects, and are focused in one defined area. Include the expected result.

Timely

Set a timeframe for the goal: for next week, in three months, by the end of the year. Putting an end point on our goals gives us a clear target to work towards. Time must be measurable, attainable and realistic.