

Report on
Character and Civic Education
Utah Code 53A-130109

Salt Lake City School District
December 19, 2012

Character and Civic education is an integral part of Salt Lake City School District's Student Achievement Plan. Through the efforts of teachers across various grade levels and content areas, students in Salt Lake City School District experience a variety of opportunities that promote and reaffirm the values, qualities, and principles of a desirable and competent citizenry. In addition to teaching and following the Utah State Social Studies Core Curriculum and the Utah Core Standards, we also implement a district wide character education program through the Community of Caring/Character Education Program, all of which provide us a framework to cultivate the fundamental elements of civic and character education. Some specific examples of the ways the Utah Social Studies Core Curriculum and the Community of Caring/Character Education Program is extended to encourage and support students in developing the knowledge and attributes of a desirable and competent citizen include:

At the elementary level, students:

- Reciting and understanding the meaning of the Pledge of Allegiance
- Memorize and recite the Preamble to the US Constitution
- Study and discuss the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, and the Bill of Rights
- Participate in the Kids Vote! Program, an online voting experience
- Study and discuss rights, responsibilities, the purpose of laws
- Followed and studied the election and the election process
- Study symbols important to the United States and Utah including those found on the US and Utah Flags
- Being considerate and respectful of others with different view points
- Acknowledge the respect for diverse cultures, heritage, and traditions
- Engage in study and discussion of the roles and responsibilities of self, family, community, and the systems that provide us with necessary services
- Collaborate with the Utah Museum of Fine Arts to create an exhibit of our community called "FIVE BLOCKS", a three dimensional exhibit showing important structures and explaining necessary facts regarding our community
- Engage in Future Problem Solving activities to study, identify, and problem solve issues and needs facing different neighborhoods or communities
- Visit nursing homes, not only sharing their talents in singing, art and poetry, but also learning about history from a first person account
- Write letters to Veterans and those currently serving our country acknowledging and thanking them for their service
- Make blankets and chew toys for animal shelters
- Read and discuss books based on specific values, such as Interrupting Chicken by David Ezra Stein that demonstrates respect by taking turns talking
- Study and integrate the meaning of various character words concepts such as trustworthiness, courageous, responsibility, hard work, caring, empathy, citizenship, respecting the law, etc.

- Learn about and how to take accountability for making good choices

At the secondary level, students:

- Study notable persons from history who were exemplary citizens and their contributions that reflect strong civic and character values
- Read biographies, autobiographies, and other texts of people who have contributed significantly to the betterment of our state and nation
- Role play to learn about the three branches of government, but also consider the “fourth” branch of government which is citizens
- Visit or communicate with the Legislature
- Observe the legislative session
- Coordinate and fundraise for a trip to Washington D.C. where students explore our nation’s capital, museums, monuments, and other historic sites
- Participate in school wide mock elections after studying about candidates and their positions
- Engage in discussions with guest speakers from a various aspects of the community
- Follow and study the election and the election process. Students in the Current Issues class at Northwest Middle School wrote to the President inviting him as a guest speaker to their class. While President Obama did not indicate if he would come, students were excited to receive a response acknowledging their engagement in civic study.
- Participate in a variety of activities that help bring attention to issues and challenges facing our community, our state, and/or our nation and reach out to professionals and others to help problem solve
- Participate in a variety of writing contests that reflect civic and character values and qualities and which provide students a means to contribute their voices. Some contests include “Do the Write Thing” which asks students to write an essay about the effects of violence on youth; the NAME scholarship essay which focuses on examining diversity in Utah; the USOE Martin Luther King, Jr. essay contest which asks students to examine race relations in our society; the Salt Lake City School District Cesar Chavez essay contest which focuses on social justice; and Scholastic’s Action Magazine, “If I Were President” essay contest, of which the winning entry was written by a student at Hillside Middle School and can be viewed at <http://action.scholastic.com/news/2012/12/meet-our-election-contest-winner>
- Study concepts around manners, industriousness and accountability, to help students understand appropriate behaviors
- Study various forms of literature and other works that reflect character education values such as integrity through the works of Langston Hughes poems, “Dream” and “Mother to Son” and the painting by Charles White titled, “Mother Courage”; examine the “American character” by studying various poetry, sermons, and letters of early settlers; or examine honesty in the book, “Corporate Kid” by Susan Wrathall.
- Engage in an “invisible person” activity where students are tasked with, following strict rules of safety, acknowledging and getting to know one person in their school or

neighborhood community they may have overlooked or not acknowledged. This activity is designed to foster thoughtful consideration of how our actions may impact others.

- Study ethics as it relates to a variety of areas including computer and network usage
- Participate in a variety of community service projects including raising funds and resources to contribute to the Family Resource Center, food banks, and other community based organizations as well as participate in many service learning projects such as the Jordan River clean-up or tutoring.
- Attended a screening of the documentary, BULLY, and engaged in conversations and projects to promote kindness, anti-bullying and other important values upheld

These are a sample of the many and varied ways Salt Lake City School District supports and prepares students to reaffirm the values, qualities, and principles of character which reflects desirable citizenry, standards of worth, and a commitment to the understanding and appreciation of a constitutional republic and principles of representative democracy in Utah and the United States of America.