Character Education Encyclopedia Article

Character Education

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Contents

Character Education Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Character Education.....3

Character Education

Education movement to teach morals and values.

Character education, growing in popularity in the 1990s, is the name given to the effort to teach basic values and moral reasoning to primary and secondary school students. Although most character education initiatives in the United States have developed on the local or state level, they reflect a national trend. In 1995, President Bill Clinton and the U.S. Congress declared October 16-22 "National Character Counts Week." Based on the premise that values can be taught, teachers in character education confront students with moral dilemmas and ask them to formulate and defend courses of action. Proponents and supporters include many prominent educators, politicians, and academics.

Parents and educators who are skeptical about the concept of teaching values point out that there is no documented evidence that character education actually improves character. The American Civil Liberties Union bases its opposition to character education on the grounds that it may enable schools to begin teaching religious beliefs. Some religious groups are also hostile to the idea. They feel that public schools, mandated to avoid teaching of religion, will make character a virtue that is anti-religious.

See Also

Moral Development And

For Further Study

Organizations

Center for the 4th and 5th R's (Respect and Responsibility)
Address: State University of New York—Cortland
P.O. Box 2000
Cortland, NY 13045
Telephone: (607) 753-2011

Character Counts Coalition
Address: Josephson Institute of Ethics
4640 Admiralty Way, Suite 1001
Marina Del Rey, CA 90292
Telephone: (310) 3064868
(Publishes *Ethics in Action* newsletter for members; the stated mission of the Josephson Institute is to improve the ethical quality of society by changing personal and organizational decision-making and behavior.)