

# CHARACTER COUNTS!®

## PARENT GUIDE

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a comprehensive, values-based system for school improvement and student development. Parents, guardians and caregivers are an integral part of the CHARACTER COUNTS! model. The *CHARACTER COUNTS! Parent Guide* is a quick reference guide for ideas on how to continue to promote youth character development at home. The suggested ideas are organized by the Three Domains: Academic, Social/Emotional and Character. Remember, CHARACTER COUNTS! everywhere, all the time.

### **Academic Domain: This domain is concerned with learning-related beliefs, values and skills. How can you support your child's development in the Academic Domain?**

- Join and participate in the parent-teacher association or parent-teacher organization at your child's school.
- Call or meet with your child's teacher(s) and introduce yourself. Be available and engaged to your child and his or her teacher(s).
- Become a school volunteer; serve as a chaperone on a class trip.
- Read the books your child is studying in school. Discuss the books with your child.
- Reserve a quiet space in your home for your child to complete his or her school work.
- Review your child's homework assignments, offering feedback and support.
- Ask your child to share something interesting or challenging he or she learned in school that day. Have a family discussion on the topic.
- Check your local listing for cultural fairs and family days at museums to attend with your child.
- Watch and discuss current events with your child.
- Set aside time each day to turn off electronic devices (e.g., cellphones, PDAs, television, computers) and for your child to focus on learning.
- Create a ready-for-school checklist to review each morning with your child. The checklist items could include a homework assignment, lunch money, permission slips, school agenda, etc.

### **Social/Emotional Domain: This domain is concerned with social and emotional traits and skills that build positive life skills. How can you help your child's development in the Social/Emotional Domain?**

- Give positive affirmations often.
- Ask, listen and share. *How are you? How was your day?*
- Encourage keeping a journal.
- Meet and get to know your child's friends.
- Make sure your child is eating well, resting enough, and managing his or her stressors.
- Host family game night and create fun family memories.
- Explore your child's hobbies with them.
- Value and acknowledge each child's strengths.
- Express appreciation even when it's difficult, in order to set an example for your child (e.g., congratulate the winning team you compete against, thank service providers even if they are unfriendly, etc.).
- Set aside time for family mealtime.
- Create family traditions.
- Encourage conversation and share experiences from your childhood that your child can relate to.

**Character Domain: This domain is concerned with moral values and traits based on universal ethical principles.  
How can you help your child's development in the Character Domain?**

- Assign chores to all members of the house and hold them accountable.
- Practice and encourage others to say *thank you*, *pardon me* and *I am sorry*.
- Get into a habit of eating a snack or dessert after the meal.
- Speak one at a time without interrupting others.
- Choose a service activity and do it together.
- Hold family meetings to announce and discuss big decisions or news that impacts everyone.
- Watch a movie with your child.<sup>1</sup>
- Model good behavior (e.g., drive the speed limit, do not yell, ask for forgiveness).
- Keep promises you make.
- Get to know your neighbors and be involved in your community.
- Help your child donate toys and clothes he or she has outgrown to family, friends or a local charity.

---

<sup>1</sup>Movies can provide a rich content to have character discussions with your child. Browse the movie selection at [Teachwithmovies.org](http://Teachwithmovies.org) for ideas.

***"Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you."***

– Robert Fulghum, American author