

“The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.”

– Mark Van Doren

Effective instructional strategies help students become independent, strategic learners. These strategies are effective because they provide students with:

- step-by-step strategy instruction
- a variety of instructional approaches and learning materials
- appropriate support that includes modelling, guided practice and independent practice
- opportunities to transfer skills and ideas from one situation to another
- meaningful connections between skills and ideas learned in the classroom and real-life situations
- opportunities to be independent and show what they know
- encouragement to plan and self-monitor
- tools for reflecting on, and assessing and evaluating their own learning.

Instructional strategies especially effective in teaching for character and citizenship include:

- cooperative learning
- group discussion
- journals and learning logs
- role-playing
- graphic organizers
- literature response
- service learning
- issue-based inquiry.



Cooperative Learning

“Cooperative Learning is a strategy. As we dig deeper, it becomes a method of fostering collaboration within a learning community. It is a powerful model for teaching. Its complex and interactive tapestry of values, knowledge and skills, becomes a philosophy.”

– Carol Rolheiser and Barrie Bennett

Cooperative learning involves students working in small groups, using collaborative, prosocial behaviour to complete tasks or projects. Activities are structured so that each group member contributes to the task, and success is based on group performance rather than the individual’s performance.

Cooperative learning activities foster students’ abilities to support, respect and appreciate others. Cooperative learning encourages group members to have a vested interest in each other’s success, to communicate effectively with one another, to listen to and accept each other’s ideas, to manage conflict, and to reach a consensus or understanding when needed. Regular participation in cooperative activities creates a sense of community in the classroom. In addition, cooperative learning typically results in greater student motivation, productivity and achievement, more positive personal relationships, and better general psychological health.¹

Implementing cooperative learning

Consider the following suggestions for successful cooperative learning in the classroom.²

- Keep groups small. Two to five members is best—the larger the group, the more skillful group members must be.
- Create diverse groups. This allows students to learn from each other’s differences. Vary groupings with level of thinking involved. For some higher level thinking tasks, consider grouping most able students together so they can challenge each other rather than always taking the lead.
- Structure activities so that success depends on each group member being responsible for some part of the task.
- Initially, assign students to groups and roles within the group.
- Clarify and post the focus and/or goal of the activity.
- Establish basic classroom-management routines, including getting into groups quickly and quietly, and maintaining appropriate noise levels.
- Explicitly teach and reinforce inviting others to join the group, treating all students with respect, and helping or encouraging peers.

- Monitor behaviour. Scan groups, use proximity and friendly reminders, sit and watch a group for a while, and revisit and reinforce expectations consistently.
- Ensure individual students are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the group. Post a list of roles or give students cards describing specific roles.
- Teach, discuss and model collaborative skills such as listening, allowing others to speak, asking for help when needed, reaching consensus and completing a task within the allotted time. Students need opportunities to practise these skills, and to receive feedback and reinforcement.
- Introduce new skills by having students brainstorm what the skill would look like and sound like. Record ideas in a t-chart.
- Allow students time to evaluate the process, individually and as a group.
- Provide students with frequent opportunities to work in small groups to improve their teamwork skills.
- Ensure groups are flexible. Group membership should change from one subject or activity to the next.

Forming learning groups

Using many different strategies for forming cooperative learning groups ensures that students have an opportunity to work with different group members. Consider the following strategies for forming groups.³

- **Pairing up partners** – Students pair up with someone who falls into the same category. For example, students pair up with the first person they can find who is wearing the same colour socks as them.
- **Pick a card** – Use old decks of cards to form groups. For example, to get groups of four, put together four kings, four queens, and so on. Distribute the cards randomly and ask students to find the others with matching cards.
- **Chalkboard list** – This is a good strategy to use when students are finishing work at different times. As students complete one assignment, they write their names on the chalkboard. When three names accumulate, they form a new group and move on to the next activity.
- **Corners**⁴
 1. Designate each corner of the room as a different choice or alternative (e.g., use symbols or questions to label the choice).
 2. Pose a question or present a statement to students.
 3. Give students a short ‘think time’ to consider their different alternatives and write their choice on paper without talking (to prevent them from following their friends to a corner).

4. Instruct students to move quietly to the corner that corresponds with their choice.
5. While in their corners, students interact with others in the corner and share the reasons for their choice.
6. Students listen to each other's ideas and paraphrase the ideas back to their partner or group.

Consider the following sample ideas for using Corners to support character and citizenship education.

- Present an opinion statement on an issue the class is studying, and designate the corners as Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statement.
- Present a stem about a character in a novel being studied and provide four different stem endings about the character.
- Have students choose a corner based on which word in a poem they think is most significant, which course of action would be best in a situation, or which way of analyzing or presenting data they plan to use in a research project.

- **Numbered Heads Together⁵**

1. Have students form groups of three to five people and number off within their group.
2. Present students with a question or problem.
3. Students first think about their answer individually and jot it down. They then put their heads together to discuss the answer and agree jointly on the correct response. Students must make sure that all members know the answer because individual group members will be called on to answer on behalf of the group.
4. Ask each group a question by randomly calling a number from one to five (depending on the number of students in the groups). The student with that number must answer the question and briefly explain why the answer is correct.
5. If the group has not been able to agree on an answer, the team may “pass” until it is called upon again.
6. Repeat with additional questions as time allows.

Consider the following sample types of activities for using Numbered Heads Together to support character and citizenship education:

- generating solutions for case-study dilemmas
- listing traits of various characters in a book
- finding the main idea in an article
- answering chapter discussion questions.

Group Discussions

Group discussions are integral to character and citizenship development. Discussions build understanding of specific issues and concepts, create motivation and interest, and give students a forum for exploring new ideas and information. Discussions help students learn to articulate their views, and consider and respond to opinions that differ from their own. Participating in group discussions helps students develop effective problem-solving skills.⁶

Implementing group discussions

Consider the following suggestions for successful group discussions in the classroom.

- Create an atmosphere of openness and acceptance. Encourage students to show respect for the ideas and opinions of others, even though they might not agree with them. Model this behaviour for students.
- Consider discussions that involve the whole class as well as those in small groups. Groups of two to six students work well.
- Establish ground rules for discussion. Rules may include:
 - no put-downs
 - no interrupting
 - everyone has the right to pass.
- Present situations where there are no right or wrong answers and students will have a variety of opinions or emotions. Discuss the idea that sometimes the best solution is to ‘agree to disagree.’
- Encourage students to form their own discussion questions.
- Be prepared to accept silence after a question. Build in 3–10 second “wait time” to give students the opportunity to think before they respond, especially for higher level questions.
- Probe beyond neat and tidy answers. Encourage students to express what they really think, not simply say what they think the teacher or other students want to hear. Use “What if ...” and “What else ...” questions to encourage students to go beyond their first responses.
- Guard against inappropriate disclosures. Be vigilant in situations where students might reveal hurtful or embarrassing information about themselves or others, and head off such revelations.⁶

Talking circles

Talking circles are useful when the topic under consideration has no right or wrong answer, or when people need to share feelings. The purpose of talking circles is not to reach a decision or consensus. Rather, it is to create a safe environment for students to share their points of view with others on a specific topic. This process helps students gain trust in classmates and to believe that what they say will be heard and accepted without criticism. Students may also gain an empathetic appreciation for other points of view.⁷



In a talking circle, people are free to respond in any manner falling within guidelines (a facilitator may initially be required to ensure guidelines are followed).

- All comments, negative or positive, are addressed directly to the question or issue, not to another person's comments.
- Only one person speaks at a time, while everyone else listens. Some groups find it useful to signify who is the speaker by going around the circle systematically or passing an object, such as a pencil, from speaker to speaker.
- Everyone feels invited to participate. For this reason, talking circles are often small groups. It is helpful to have a mechanism to prevent a few from dominating discussion. Patient and nonjudgemental listening helps shy students speak out and more verbal ones moderate participation. Going around the circle inviting each student to participate may be an effective strategy.
- Silence is an acceptable response. No one is pressured to contribute. There are no negative consequences, however subtle, for saying "I pass."
- Students avoid put-downs of others or themselves, such as "I don't think anyone will agree with me, but ...". Words like "good" or "excellent" or other judgemental terms are avoided.⁷

Brainstorming

Brainstorming serves a variety of purposes. It can be used to introduce new units of study, assess knowledge at the beginning or end of units, review information for tests, generate a starting point for writing assignments or projects, solve problems or make group decisions. Brainstorming creates an overview of what students know and/or think about a specific topic, and allows students to organize their knowledge and ideas. It is also an effective technique for creating interest and enthusiasm for new concepts or topics.⁸

Consider the following suggestions for supporting effective brainstorming in the classroom.

- Establish ground rules before beginning, such as:
 - all ideas are accepted without judgement
 - everyone participates
 - focus on quantity rather than quality.
- Record single words or phrases.
- Build routines that allow ideas to be recorded quickly. Have several students stationed at different sections of a whiteboard, recording ideas in turn.
- Try having small groups circulate from category to category, adding lists. Have groups record and post ideas, and then review overlap and novel ideas.

- Continue brainstorming until ideas are exhausted or the time limit is reached.
- Review ideas and look for ways to combine or sort them.⁸

The following sample activities show ways that brainstorming could be used to support citizenship and character development.

- **Concept poem**

Students brainstorm their thoughts about what a specific core value looks like, sounds like and feels like. The result is a poem like the following example.

Kindness is ...

Sharing your toys with others

Listening to what others have to say

Helping someone who is hurt

Thinking before you say something

Not leaving people out

Helping someone tie his or her shoes

Encouraging someone when something goes wrong

Tobogganing with someone who is afraid

Pulling someone else's toboggan up a hill

Saying thanks when someone helps you

That's what kindness is!

- **How did you share kindness today?**

This activity is especially suited to younger students. Following a discussion on kindness, students generate a class list of ways that they show kindness to others in their lives. Display student responses on large chart paper in the classroom or hallway. This activity could also be done with other core values.

- **Peaceable person**

Begin with a life-size outline of a person. Have students brainstorm a list of character qualities that they believe would contribute to a harmonious and peaceful classroom. List these within the body of the outline. Then have students generate a list of qualities that they feel would not contribute to such a classroom. List these on the outside of the body. Post the 'Peaceable Person' in the classroom and use it as a touchstone for the rest of the year.

- **What did you do today that made a difference?**

Have students brainstorm in pairs or small groups ways in which they make a positive difference in their school, family and community. Encourage students to consider how behaviours such as smiling, using manners or showing kindness can influence others. When students are finished, bring the class together as a whole group to share and combine ideas.

Journals and Learning Logs

Journals and learning logs are frequently used to process new information during class time. Teachers can give direct instruction in 10- to 15-minute segments, and then ask students to write down key ideas, questions, connections or reflections. This gives students an opportunity to think about new material, clarify confusion, discuss key ideas and process information before moving on to other new material.⁹

Learning logs also offer a number of more general benefits. For example, they:

- provide students with a format for identifying and remembering key ideas
- give students more time to process information
- can be included in portfolios or used to review for tests
- allow students who miss a class to borrow logs from friends to keep up with class work
- allow teachers to identify and clarify misunderstandings or confusion during the lesson.¹⁰

Consider the following suggestions for successfully using journals or learning logs to enhance character and citizenship development.

- Allow students to mark any entry “private.” These entries will be read only by the teacher and will not be shared with others without the student’s permission.
- Respond to journal entries by asking questions that guide students’ decision-making or problem-solving process.
- Focus on expression of ideas rather than on writing mechanics or neatness.
- Ask students to revisit their journal entries throughout the term and identify how their thoughts and ideas have changed.¹¹

Examples of journal formats that work well for teaching about and reflecting on citizenship and character development include the following.

- **Double entry journal**
A double entry journal allows students to record information in the left column and reactions or responses in the right. For example, in the left column students could be asked to copy quotes about a character or summarize passages of text that relate to a core value being studied. Then in the right column, students record their responses, questions or connections.
- **Reflective journal**
In a reflective journal, students describe an event, identify their feelings about it, and then reflect on what they learned. The last question might be “What would I have done in that person’s position?” or “Is there a better way that problem could have been handled?”

- **Feelings journal**

A feelings journal is a place for students to acknowledge and record emotional responses to daily events. This practice teaches students about feelings and promotes self-awareness. Younger students can be asked to reflect on their feelings on a daily basis, and then share their reactions and thoughts in a feelings journal through writing or drawing.

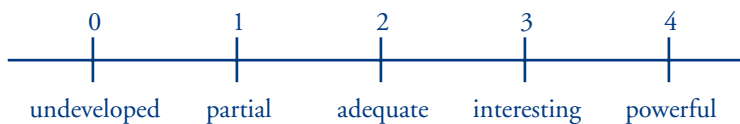
- **I can make a difference journal**

This type of journal is an opportunity for students to reflect on and write down behaviours and actions they have taken to make a positive difference for others or their community. Students may describe behaviours such as greeting someone with a smile, helping someone, picking up a piece of litter or turning in an item to lost-and-found. Putting aside time on a regular basis for this type of journal writing reinforces the importance of such positive actions.

Assessment of learning logs

Teachers can work with students to develop self-assessment tools that encourage setting higher goals in learning logs. Consider the following two examples that look at the level of thoughtfulness, depth and personalization of students' responses.¹²

Personal response



Personal response

Little evidence of thoughtfulness 1	Some evidence of thoughtfulness 2	Strong evidence of thoughtfulness 3
Response only	Response supported by <i>specific examples</i>	Response supported by <i>examples</i> and <i>personal reflections</i>

Role-playing

Role-playing is the spontaneous acting out of situations, without costumes or scripts. The context for role-play is presented and roles are selected. Students have minimal planning time to discuss the situation, choose different alternatives or reactions, and plan a basic scenario. At the conclusion, students discuss how they felt and what they learned about that particular situation. The most important part of role-play is this follow-up discussion.¹³

Role-playing is beneficial to character and citizenship education because it provides students with opportunities to practise communication and social skills in a safe, nonthreatening environment. Role-playing allows students to take on different perspectives and to develop empathy by seeing how their decisions might affect others. It can also be an effective strategy for social problem solving and exploring new ideas. In addition, role-playing can be a motivating learning activity.

Implementing role-playing

Ideas for using role-playing in the classroom might include:

- role-playing different methods of dealing with conflict
- role-playing imaginary interactions between story characters
- acting out a character's conflict and resolution, and exploring other possible solutions
- practising new social skills
- developing body language skills by acting out feelings or emotions and having others guess.

Consider the following suggestions for successfully using role-playing as part of character and citizenship education.¹³

- Always have students role-play the positive side of a skill or situation.
- If it is necessary to role-play a negative situation, the teacher should take on the negative role.
- Provide a specific situation.
- Limit the time students have to develop and practise their role-plays (5 to 10 minutes is usually sufficient).
- Limit the use of costumes and props.
- Provide students with tips for participating and observing.

Tips for participating

Discuss the following tips with role-play participants.¹³

- Face the audience, and speak loudly and clearly.
- Do not rely on props or costumes. Use body language to communicate your message.
- Focus on your role-play partners and the message you want to communicate.

- Assess your participation by asking yourself the following questions.
 - How am I demonstrating that I understand this role?
 - Are we showing all important aspects of the situation?
 - Are we showing all ideas from our planning session?
 - Am I using new skills or concepts accurately?

Tips for observing

Discuss the following tips for being a supportive observer.¹³

- Demonstrate good listening by being quiet and attentive.
- Laugh at appropriate moments.
- Do not laugh at role-play participants.
- Show support by clapping and using positive words of encouragement and feedback when the role-play is finished.

Assessment of role-playing

During the role-play, observe how students handle the situations represented and consider the following questions.

- Are concepts expressed accurately in language and action?
- Are any students confused or uncertain about the purpose of the role-play, the situation or their roles?

To extend learning from role-plays, consider the following questions.

- What issues were clarified through role-play?
- What misconceptions might have been presented?
- What questions did the role-play raise?
- What new information is needed?
- How does this role-play link with future tasks that extend or broaden the topic?¹³

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers (also known as key visuals or cognitive organizers) are formats for organizing information and ideas graphically or visually. Students can use graphic organizers to generate ideas, record and organize information, and see relationships. As students apply their learning, teachers gain information about student thinking. Just as cooperative learning and group discussions provide evidence of student thinking, graphic organizers make student thinking visible. They demonstrate not only *what* students are thinking but also *how* they are thinking as they work through learning tasks.¹⁴



Implementing graphic organizers

Consider the following suggestions for successfully using graphic organizers in the classroom.¹⁴

- Model effective use of graphic organizers by using them to plan and introduce new concepts.
- Show examples of new organizers, describing their purpose and form.
- Demonstrate use of new organizers on a chalkboard, overhead or chart paper, using easy or familiar material and a “think-aloud” format.
- Give students opportunities to practise using the format with easy material, and coach them at various points in the process.
- Share final products; discuss what worked and what did not, and give students an opportunity to revise information.
- Provide students with many opportunities to practise using graphic organizers with a range of topics and issues.
- Encourage students to evaluate which organizers work best in which learning situations.

Graphic organizer formats

Examples of graphic organizers that can be used for teaching about and reflecting on citizenship and character development include the following.

Idea builders

Idea builders create a context for introducing or clarifying new concepts, such as developing an understanding of a particular value. They are especially helpful for English as a Second Language students or students with special needs who require support in understanding new concepts. Idea builders encourage students to:

- make connections between what they know and what they will be learning
- gather information related to a concept by identifying essential and nonessential characteristics, or examples and nonexamples
- examine concepts from multiple perspectives
- develop inductive and divergent thinking
- focus their attention on relevant details.¹⁴

See Appendix H-1 for a template of this graphic organizer.¹⁵

Idea Builder

1. Key Idea

Friends

2. Draw it



3. Facts

- You can have friends of all ages.
- Friends are people who appreciate who you are and enjoy your company.
- Friendships change over time and circumstances.

4. Sample sentence

I am happy that my friend Terri is also in my class and we often have fun together at recess.

5. Examples

- Betty, Gail and Terri
- my cousin, Aileen

6. Nonexamples

- strangers (people who do not know you)
- students in other grades who may not know my name

7. Definition

Friends are those important people who are on your side. Friends know you, try to understand you and enjoy your company. They support you and appreciate you for who you are.

T-charts

T-charts help students organize their knowledge and ideas, and see relationships between pieces of information. T-charts can have two, three or more columns. As students explore core values, t-charts can be used to create visual pictures of what that value looks, sounds and feels like. They can also be used to explore social issues, compare and contrast different situations, or investigate two or more aspects of any character and citizenship topic, as shown in the following example.

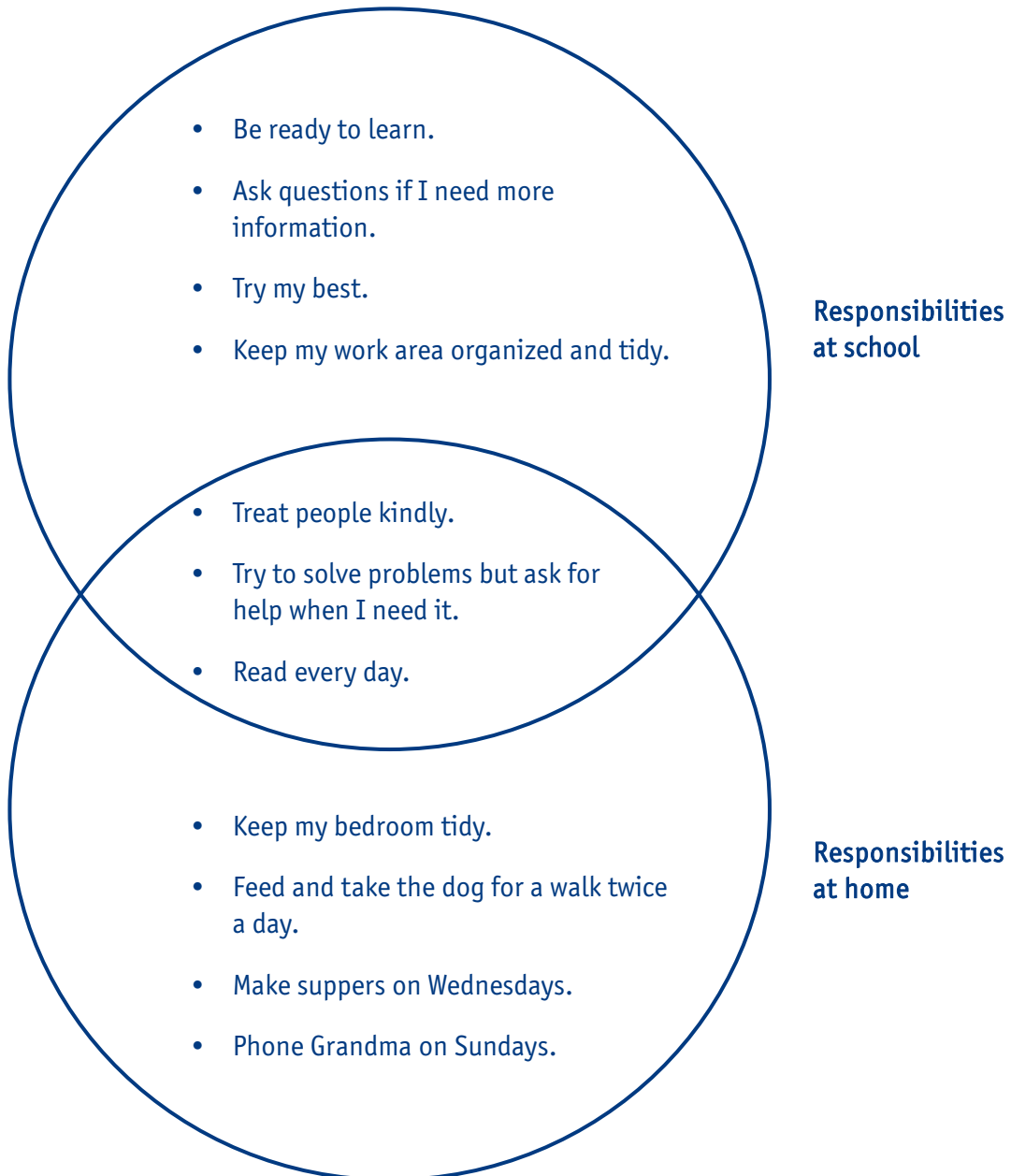
Friendliness ...		
Looks like	Sounds like	Feels like
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- smiles- standing close- doing things together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- laughter- friendly words like "Good to see you!" "Do you want to play?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- you belong- someone cares about you

Venn diagrams

Venn diagrams are a way of comparing and contrasting information about two things (e.g., objects, events, concepts or ideas). For example, students could use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast behaviours of different characters from a story or novel, or differing viewpoints on an issue of inquiry. Venn diagrams can also be expanded to three or more interlocking circles in order to compare a number of issues or concepts.

See Appendix H-2 for a template of this graphic organizer.

Venn Diagram




Chapter 12

P–M–I decision-making charts

Students can use a version of Plus, Minus and Interesting (P–M–I) charts to compare and contrast situations, ideas or positions.

P–M–I charts give students a format for organizing information, and evaluating their knowledge, ideas or alternatives for making informed decisions.¹⁶

Question: I have been offered the answers to the Science midterm.
Should I take them?



Choice 1

Take the answers.

Plus	Minus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I could ace the midterm. - I would raise my average. - I wouldn't have to study as hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I might get caught. - I'll feel guilty - I won't really know the material for the final exam.
<p>Interesting (Give reasons why)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a number of my friends have taken the answers to avoid studying - if I cheat once it might be easier to cheat again 	

Choice 2

Say "Thanks, but no thanks."

Plus	Minus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel good about myself - I'll be better prepared for the final exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I might not do as well on the test - The friend who offered me the answers might be upset with me
<p>Interesting (Give reasons why)</p> <p>Ms. Johnson is my favourite teacher and I know her exam will be fair.</p>	

My Decision

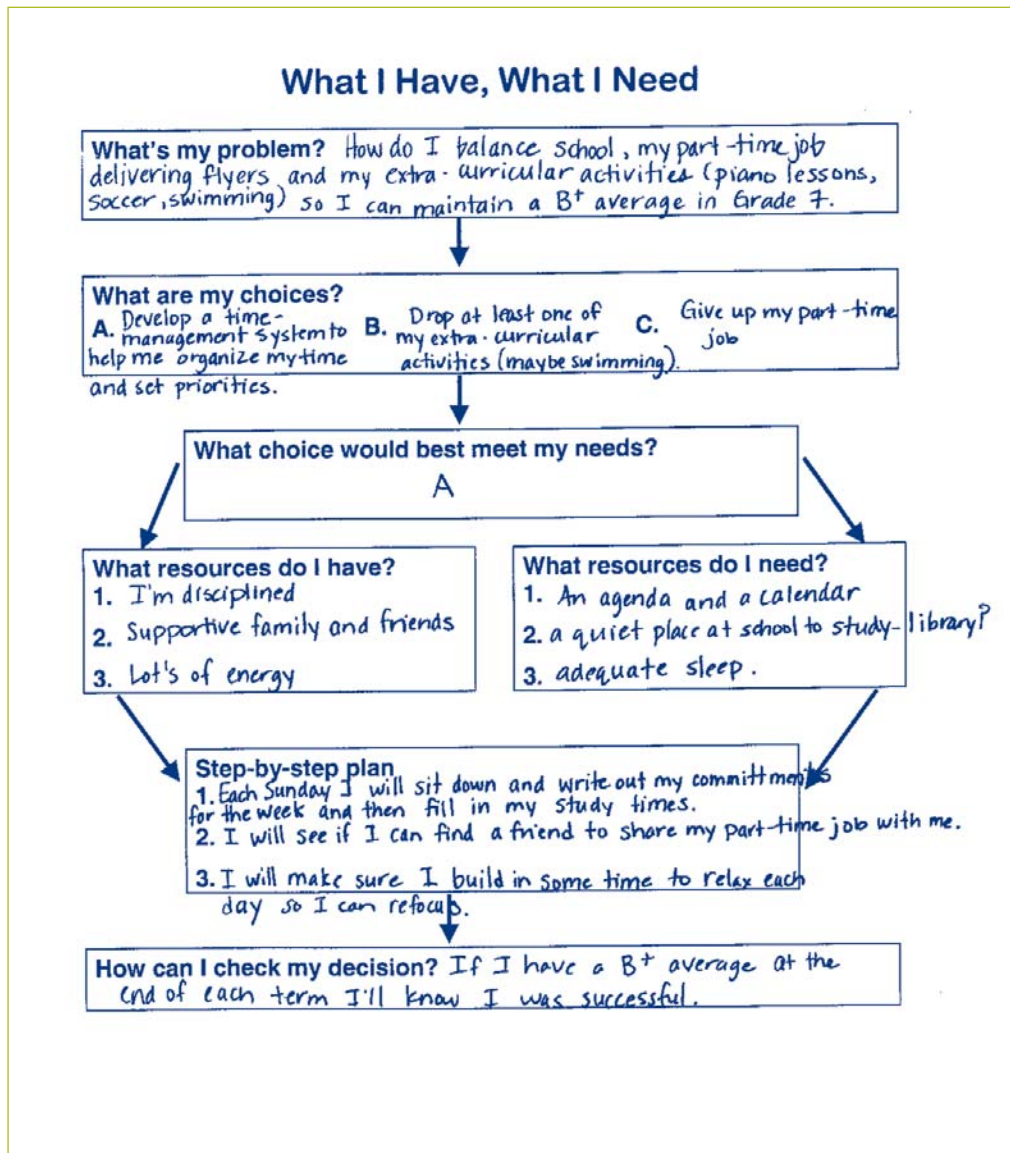
I'll say "No, thank you." and prove I can do just as well on the test by using my study strategies to help me prepare for it.

See Appendix H-3 for a template of this graphic organizer.

What I Have, What I Need

A decision-making model such as What I Have, What I Need offers a step-by-step process that encourages students to look for more than one solution, choose the best alternative and develop an action plan for implementing their decision. By breaking down problem solving into specific steps and taking the time to generate a variety of solutions, students at any grade level can become better, more creative problem solvers.

A sample of this model follows.¹⁷



See Appendix H-4 for a template of this graphic organizer.

Chapter 12

K–W–L + charts

K–W–L charts help students understand what they know (K), what they want to know (W) and what they learned (L) about a certain topic or issue. K–W–L charts are an effective visual tool to tap into students’ prior knowledge and generate questions that create a purpose for learning. K–W–L charts can be used to introduce new topics or concepts, or when reading, viewing videos, preparing for guest speakers or going on field trips. K–W–L charts can also be a guide for research projects.¹⁸

Consider adding a Plus (+) feature to a traditional K–W–L chart by posing an additional prompt to encourage students to reflect on how they will use this new information they will be learning.

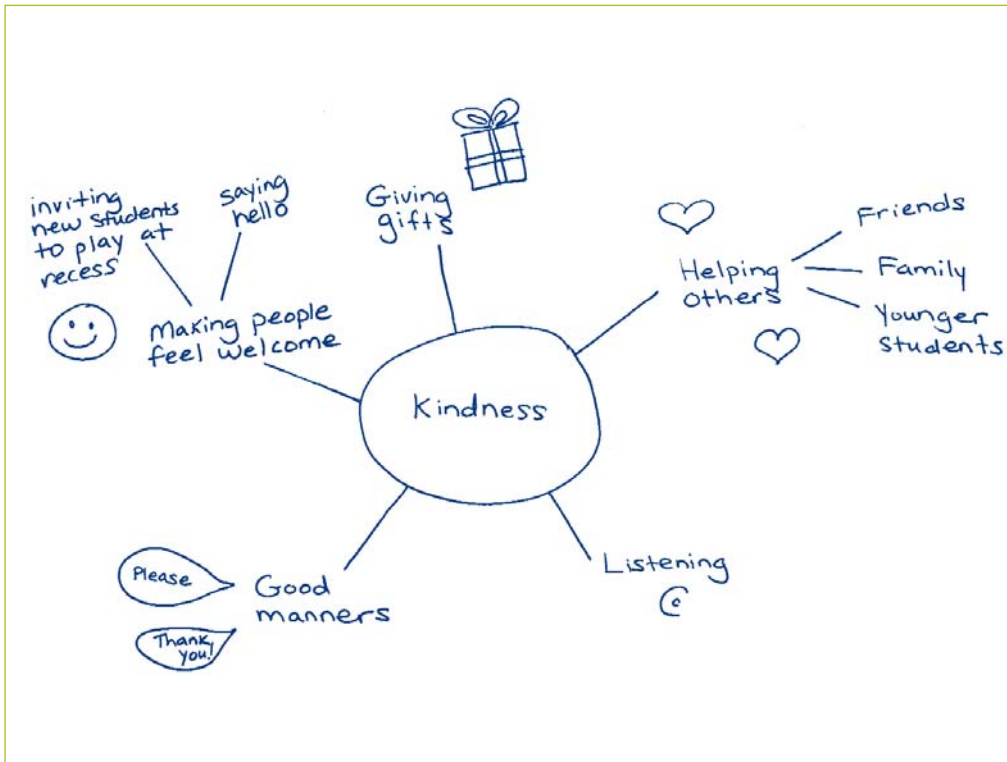
K–W–L + chart		
K	W	L
(List what you already know about the topic.)	(List questions about what you want to know about the topic.)	(Using your questions as a guide, write all the information you learned .)
+ Why is this information important and how will I use the new information learned?		

See Appendix H-5 for a template of this graphic organizer.

Mind maps

Mind mapping was developed in the early 1970s by British author and brain researcher Tony Buzan. It is an easy way to represent ideas using keywords, colours and imagery. Its nonlinear format helps students generate, organize and see connections between ideas. Mind maps integrate logical and imaginative thinking, and create an overview of what students know and think about a topic.

Webs are simple mind maps. Adding pictures, colours and key words transforms them into more powerful tools for learning, remembering and generating ideas. The following example is a mind map illustrating the class’s understanding of kindness.



Continuum

A continuum can be used for scaling and illustrating extremes. For example, after discussing different feelings, a teacher might have younger students use a continuum to help them clarify the intensity of their feelings about or reactions to an idea or event. A continuum can also be used to track a character's reactions or feelings in a story.



Chapter 12

Thinking grid

A thinking grid is a simple way for students to organize information around core values. Headings on the grid could be changed to suit a variety of other topics or concepts.

What does a cooperative classroom look like?		
Attribute	What it looks like or sounds like	When you would do this
Working quietly	Talking to classmates in a low voice, putting your hand up, moving quietly through the classroom	During journal writing, writing tests or silent reading time
Helping each other	Working together on a problem, asking if someone needs help	If someone was sad, when working in pairs
Manners	Saying 'please' or 'thank you,' waiting your turn	If someone shares something with you or offers you something, lining up in class

Children's Literature

“The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other’s memory. This is how people care for themselves.”

– Lopez 1991, p. 48

As well as developing reading literacy and other cognitive skills, most experts agree that literature can be an important tool in teaching children about character and citizenship. For example, the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character in Boston states that “the human community has a reservoir of moral wisdom, much of which exists in our great stories, works of art, literature, history, and biography” (n.d.).

Exemplary literature engages all five senses simultaneously—seeing the visual imagery of the illustrations, hearing the rhythm of language and the cadence of the reader’s voice, feeling the texture of the book cover and pages, experiencing images that evoke smelling and tasting sensations.¹⁹ Because of this sensory engagement, children connect with the story at an emotional level, creating a more memorable experience.

Children’s literature abounds with hypothetical social and moral dilemmas, encouraging students to think critically. Children’s literature also fosters development of empathy by encouraging a view of situations from the different perspectives of story characters. Literature lets the learner access the thoughts, intentions and emotions of the characters, and see how these factors affect the characters’ decisions or behaviour. Finally, children’s literature provides a vehicle for teachers to model, teach, acknowledge and celebrate core values.

Implementing children’s literature

Consider the following suggestions for successfully using children’s literature to support character and citizenship education.

- Choose literature that lets students see what a core value looks like, sounds like and feels like.
- Revisit the story as a shared experience that students can use to link their learning to their actions in their everyday lives: “Remember when we read that story about being kind? Did your action at recess show kindness?”
- Encourage students to respond to literature on a critical and emotional level, to explore their own ideas and beliefs, and to examine ways they connect with the story and the characters. Response strategies may include:
 - reading journals
 - writing a letter to a character
 - drawing (for example, various options a character might have or a personal experience evoked by the story)
 - developing a role-play based on the story
 - writing a different ending or a sequel to the story.
- Use literature conversations to create a context of safety within which core values and real-life challenges can be discussed and explored more deeply.

Literature conversations

Discussing literature is an opportunity for students to explore their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours within a safe context. By dialoguing about different aspects of a story, students connect with what was read, making connections with their own lives. The characters’ actions provide a starting point for students to discuss ‘appropriate’ and ‘not so appropriate’ behaviour in a manner that is respectful of all.



Using children's literature to teach social skills

Consider the following model for using literature to introduce a social skill, and for reinforcing and maintaining the skill once it has been taught.²⁰

1. **Present the story** – Clearly define the social skill (or core value) that students will learn, and know what follow-up activities will be used.
2. **Clarify the story concepts** – After sharing the story, discuss what happened and ensure that all students understand the main events. Encourage students to explore the characters' feelings and thought processes, and why they might have behaved the way that they did. Explore how the story made students feel and why.
3. **Clarify the skill** – Through the discussion, connect the story to the skill through questions such as “What other choices could the characters have made? What might have happened if they had made a different choice?” Encourage students to recognize what a desired behaviour might have been and what it would look like.
4. **Enact the skill** – Role-play parts of the story, emphasizing the desired skill and skill components that evolved from the story discussion.
5. **Practise the skill** – Identify real-life situations where the social skill might be used. Have students role-play these situations while you prompt, correct and reinforce the use of the skill. Be watchful for opportunities to prompt and reinforce the skill when they occur in real life.
6. **Maintain the skill** – Read other similar stories to practise and maintain the social skill taught and provide activities that will allow further practice.

Using picture books with older students

Teaching with picture books is not limited to young children. Many picture books are rich with meaning and imagery on many levels, and can offer a valuable literary experience for readers of all ages.

To use picture books most effectively with older students, teachers use many strategies they would use for other literature, including activities that encourage thoughtful questioning, reflective dialogue, critical exploration of issues and making connections to students' own lives.

“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day.”

– Sally Koch

Service learning is a process of goal setting and action that contributes to character and citizenship development while positively affecting others. It provides students with meaningful experiences that foster academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility. Students come to know that they are not only citizens of their community, province and country, but they are also citizens of the world. All students can participate in service learning. Service learning provides benefits for everyone involved.

In faith-based schools, service projects are linked with social justice and students prayerfully reflect on hope, peace and justice. Through service learning, students live the gospel values of faith, hope and love.

For students, benefits include:

- strengthening academic knowledge and skills by applying them to real problems
- building positive relationships with a variety of people
- discovering new interests and abilities
- setting goals and working through steps to achieve them
- working cooperatively
- taking on leadership roles
- learning the value of helping and caring for others.²¹

For teachers, benefits include:

- having meaningful, close involvement with students
- reaching students who have difficulty with standard curriculum
- establishing home/school/community partnerships
- promoting school spirit and pride
- building collegiality with other school staff.²¹

For the school and broader community, benefits include:

- strengthening connections between students, schools and communities
- creating a more positive school and community culture
- fostering a more positive view of young people by the community, leading to stronger support for youth and schools
- increasing awareness of community needs and concerns
- increasing community action to address key issues.²¹

Implementing service learning

Consider the following suggestions to make service learning projects as successful as possible.

- Involve community members—Guest speakers from a variety of sources are often willing to support service learning projects.
- Use existing resources—Find ways to use what is in the classroom rather than raise or spend money on the project. For example, student art can decorate the walls of a drop-in centre or be laminated for place mats in a Kindergarten snack program.
- Determine a specific goal for the school or community and then develop a project to help achieve that goal. Deciding on the goal and project as a class will strengthen student motivation and interest.

Sample service learning projects

Consider the following examples of goals for service learning projects that support character and citizenship education.²²

Goal: To make school a positive place for everyone

Possible projects:

- Create posters with positive messages on topics such as friendship, cooperation, cross-cultural understanding and school spirit.
- Start a schoolwide campaign to eliminate put-downs. Make posters, organize noon-hour events and involve school staff.
- Organize mini-workshops and tutoring programs.
- Plan an appreciation day for school volunteers or school staff.

Goal: To beautify the school

Possible projects:

- Organize a school clean-up campaign.
- Plant flowers and trees around the school.
- Organize a hall of fame with photos of outstanding graduates.
- Start a campaign to keep the school litter-free.
- Paint murals on hallways or walls.

Goal: To make a positive contribution to seniors in the community

Possible projects:

- Write letters to housebound seniors who would enjoy receiving mail.
- Adopt grandparents in the community.
- Plan a holiday dinner for senior citizens at a nursing home.
- Invite senior citizens for a special day of sharing and discussion.
- Create handmade gifts for special occasions.
- Send handmade birthday cards to people celebrating 80+ birthdays.

Goal: To contribute to young families in the community

Possible projects:

- Plan a special party for children in day care.
- Present a puppet show in an elementary school.
- Teach simple craft projects to children in an after-school program.
- Read stories to children at an elementary school.
- Organize on-site babysitting services for parent and community meetings held at the school.

Goal: To improve living conditions for people in the community

Possible projects:

- Cook and serve meals at a community centre.
- Collect food, clothing and toys for distribution at local shelters.
- Learn about the local homelessness situation and write letters of concern to community officials suggesting strategies for improving the living situations of people who are homeless.

Goal: To gain awareness of and support a global perspective

Possible projects:

- Study an issue and prepare a display for the school showing the different perspectives involved.
- Research an issue and develop a petition or advocacy letter about the issue.

Turning service projects into service learning

Sometimes students completing service projects remain detached from the experience and do not perceive their efforts as worthwhile. Teachers can use the process described below to encourage their students to move beyond service projects and into service learning by providing opportunities for them to explore and understand the purpose of their efforts.

See Appendix I for sample templates for supporting service learning.

Chapter 12



Step 1: Prepare

With guidance, students determine needs to address in the school and community, list questions they have about the issues and research the answers. This helps students to clearly understand why their project is significant and how it will benefit their community. Students then define desired outcomes and goals, and choose projects that they know will respond to authentic needs in the school or community. This step is also a time for students to consider how they can collaborate with parents and community partners to address these needs.

Step 2: Plan

Students develop a step-by-step plan and timeline, consider possible challenges and roadblocks, and determine how they might be overcome. Each student needs to be responsible for part of the project. At this stage, encourage students to consider ways to communicate effectively with the school, parents and the community-at-large. Providing information about the project encourages others to participate. Teachers also need to check at this stage to ensure that the project provides meaningful service and real consequences.

Step 3: Put the plan into action

As students implement their plan, make sure that they assume as much responsibility as possible, and that the environment is safe, and allows for mistakes and successes. Encourage students to involve parents and screened community volunteers. Monitor student performance and safety on a regular basis.

Step 4: Review and reflect

Use methods such as role-plays, discussion and journal writing to acknowledge and celebrate the participation of everyone involved. Teachers should guide the process of reflection to ensure it is systematic and beneficial. Consider ways to encourage the following three levels of reflection.²³

- *The Mirror (gives a clear reflection of the self)*
Students reflect on who they are, what they have learned about themselves, and how their experience will impact them in the future.
- *The Microscope (makes the small experience large)*
Students describe their experience and what they learned about the agency, people or community. Students reflect on whether or not they feel their actions had any impact, consider what changes they would make to the experience, and connect and compare their experiences to their learning in class.
- *The Binoculars (makes the distant appear closer)*
Students take a more global perspective and attempt to identify larger issues that may be impacting the problem (e.g., political, social), what the future might hold, and what can be done.

Step 5: Demonstrate

To reinforce learning, students must demonstrate mastery of skills, insights and outcomes by reporting to their peers, families and communities. Students could write articles or letters to local newspapers regarding local issues, or extend their experience to develop future projects in the community. It is essential that at the end of service learning projects, students have opportunities to privately and publicly reflect on what they contributed and learned through the project.

Issue-based Inquiry

An essential component of character and citizenship education is that students have opportunities to develop their ability to think critically, share their thoughts and concerns, and make decisions based on informed beliefs. One way to create these opportunities is through issue-based inquiry with real-life issues. An effective issue-based inquiry:

- focuses on an important theme or issue
- begins with an experience that all students have in common—in this way, new knowledge can be built on past experience
- allows for students to be involved in decision making.

In the teacher resource *Controversy as a Teaching Tool*, MacInnis, MacDonald and Scott outline the following six steps to help students examine issues and conduct an issue-based inquiry:²⁴

- identify the issue
- investigate the issue
- make a decision
- defend a position
- take action
- evaluate results.

This step-by-step approach creates opportunities for students to examine issues systematically. This model, or selected activities within the model, can be used in a variety of ways and with a variety of topics when teaching character and citizenship education.

See Appendix J for sample templates to support issue-based inquiry.

Identifying issues

Issues are meaningful and valid when facing them on a daily basis. There are many current issues and events that can be used as points of discussion and catalysts for case studies, debates, role-plays, discussions, position papers or special projects.

Work with students to generate a list of meaningful issues that:

- align with character development and citizenship
- are relevant to the community
- are of interest to the class.

Chapter 12

Often the most meaningful issues for inquiry are those that are most controversial and involve different positions. The degree of controversy depends upon the intensity of the emotions aroused. Examination of controversial issues is essential to the democratic process and has an important place in the classroom. Dealing with controversial issues allows students to view and weigh multiple perspectives and builds conflict-resolution skills.

At the same time, choices of issues reflect sensitivity to the social and political realities of the community. Examining a particular issue could potentially affect the lives of students, families and/or the community-at-large. For example, debating certain controversial issues in some communities could escalate bitterness between family or community members. The more controversial the issue, the greater the risk of bias. Regardless of the issue selected, ensure that sufficient resources are available to address the issue in a comprehensive, bias-balanced manner.

Sample issues for inquiry-based learning activities

Issue-based inquiry can be used at any grade level, as long as the issue chosen is appropriate to the age and developmental level of the students. Consider the following sample issues as starting points.

Division One

- How can the class work together to keep the classroom clean and organized?
- What should you do if you break your friend's favourite toy by accident?
- In gym, should students be able to choose their own teams?
- If a classmate is being teased by one of your best friends, what could you do?
- What should you do if you have arranged to go to a friend's house on Saturday afternoon but then another friend asks you to do something that you would rather do?

Division Two

- Should children be paid for doing chores at home?
- You worked really hard to get your homework completed and now your friend wants to look at your homework to see if she did hers correctly.
- What should we do as a community to eliminate homelessness?

Division Three

- What could you do if you see a classmate being bullied by a group of peers?
- What should you do if your friends get together for a sleepover and rent a movie that you are not comfortable watching?
- Is it helpful to give money to people who are panhandling?

Endnotes

1. Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 1994.
2. Adapted from Alberta Learning, *Kindergarten to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation* (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2002), p. 68.
3. Ibid., p. 69.
4. Kagan 1992, 1994.
5. Kagan 1992, 1994.
6. From Alberta Learning, *Kindergarten to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation* (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2002), p. 71.

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Introducing the issue

An engaging and motivating introduction is key to the success of an issue-based inquiry. One strategy is to show a taped newscast of the issue with students assuming the role of reporters interpreting the issue. Related newspaper clippings could be displayed and discussed. Alternatively, the topic could be introduced by a guest speaker or a small group of students.

Having someone else introduce the issue allows teachers to facilitate the process from a neutral, unbiased position. Students assume the role of responsible citizens investigating a controversial issue in which action is ultimately required. Teachers need to be aware of school and jurisdiction guidelines for speakers and controversial issues.

Investigating the issue

Students need opportunities to research and discover information about the issue. Distribute printed materials, bring in guest speakers and, if possible, arrange for a relevant field trip. Help students develop frameworks for gathering, analyzing and evaluating new information from a variety of sources.

It is important to recognize that bias can play a major role when discussing social issues. Whether it is a result of attitudes, emotions, values or stakeholder interests, everyone is influenced by bias to some extent. With this in mind, it is important that students develop effective strategies for identifying and classifying their own biases, and those of others.

Making a decision

Students should use a decision-making chart or another method to compile and organize information that they found throughout the inquiry. They can then use this summary to help them make an informed decision about the issue.

Defending a position

Students should present their conclusions in a position paper, oral presentation, poster or other method. This step may be done individually, in pairs or in small groups.

Taking action

The action component of a unit may be the most rewarding for both students and teachers. In this phase, students use all they have learned about an issue to develop action plans. Action categories include the following.

- **Research/information gathering**—includes actions intended to increase knowledge of the issue itself.
- **Public awareness/media**—includes actions designed to receive media attention, and influence the audience and decision makers, for example, letters to the editor, press conferences, public awareness campaigns.
- **Direct**—includes actions of a direct but nonpolitical nature, such as picketing, boycotting, meeting with involved parties.

Endnotes (continued)

7. Adapted with permission from Judie Bopp et al., *The Sacred Tree Curriculum Guide* (Lethbridge, AB: Four Worlds International Institute for Human and Community Development, 1988), pp. 21–22.
8. Adapted from Alberta Learning, *Kindergarten to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation* (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2002), pp. 72–73.
9. Adapted from *How to Assess Authentic Learning: The Mindful School, 3rd Edition* (p. 115), by Kay Burke. ©1999 by Skylight Training and Professional Development. Reprinted by permission of LessonLab, a Pearson Education Company, www.lessonlab.com.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
11. From Alberta Learning, *Kindergarten to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation* (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2002), p. 83.
12. From *How to Assess Authentic Learning: The Mindful School, 3rd Edition* (pp. 118, 119), by Kay Burke. ©1999 by Skylight Training and Professional Development. Reprinted by permission of LessonLab, a Pearson Education Company, www.lessonlab.com.
13. Adapted from Alberta Learning, *Kindergarten to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation* (Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning, 2002), pp. 84–85.

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Chapter 12

Endnotes (continued)

14. Ibid., pp. 85, 86, 87.
15. Form reproduced with permission from Edmonton Public Schools, *Thinking Tools for Kids: Practical Organizers* (Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public Schools, 1999), p. 178.
16. Ibid., p. 199.
17. Ibid., p. 232.
18. Ogle 1986, Carr and Ogle 1987.
19. Gluth and Love 2000.
20. Adapted from “Learning Social Skills Through Literature for Children and Adolescents” by Gwendolyn Cartledge and Mary W. Kiarie, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34, 2, 2001, pp. 44–45. Copyright 2001 by the Council for Exceptional Children. Reprinted with permission.
21. Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Changes and Challenges* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), p. 4.
22. Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Service Learning* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), pp. 64–65.
23. Cooper n.d.
24. Adapted with permission from Eric MacInnis, Ross MacDonald and Lynn Scott, *Controversy as a Teaching Tool* (Rocky Mountain House, AB: Parks Canada, 1997), pp. 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 48, 67, 68, 69, 73.

- **Legal**—includes litigation and participation in public hearings.
- **Organizational**—includes fund-raising or formation of a special interest group.
- **Political**—includes actions designed to influence or gain assistance of elected officials, for example, petitions and letters.
- **Civil disobedience**—exclude these actions, but discuss implications of these choices.

To minimize risks and make this as positive an experience as possible for all participants, consider the following suggestions.

- Encourage students to discuss projects with their parents.
- Ensure that the issue is secondary to the process students are learning about.
- Encourage students to share their positions and solutions. Classify actions into categories and discuss characteristics of each.
- Set reasonable expectations, and focus on actions that have a likelihood of positive outcomes. Students may become disappointed or disillusioned if their actions do not achieve desired results.
- Encourage specific actions within a specified time frame. As a group, decide which actions fall within the scope and time limitations of the unit.
- Encourage students to engage in cooperative, positively-structured actions, such as debates.
- Resist pressure to become personally involved in the issue.
- Keep your school administration informed from the beginning to ensure the necessary support for student actions.
- Help students become aware that choosing to do nothing is also an action.
- Set clear parameters in relation to actions.

Evaluating results

Students have an opportunity to review the steps in the process so they are able to apply them again when examining other issues. Reflecting on the experience lets students identify new understandings and assess their own learning.