

Georgia Law

House Bill 605

Improved student learning environment and discipline act.
Signed and dated by Governor Barnes: 4/23/99

Local District Action Needed:

- Local boards must implement a comprehensive character education program for levels K-12 by the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year.
- This program must focus on the students' development of the following character traits: courage, patriotism, citizenship, honesty, fairness, respect for others, kindness, cooperation, self-respect, courtesy, compassion, tolerance, diligence, generosity, punctuality, creativity, sportsmanship, loyalty, perseverance, cleanliness, cheerfulness, school pride, respect for environment, respect for the creator, self-control, patience and virtue.

A SIGNIFICANT LAW FOR A CULTURE IN CRISIS Inclusive Character Education

The State of Georgia is in a position to make a most significant contribution to the Nation, humanity and the World through its ingenuous Character Education Law, House Bill 605, signed into Georgia Law April, 1999 by Governor Roy Barnes. This Law mandates the teaching of character education in all public schools throughout the State of Georgia from kindergarten through grade twelve.

This Character Education Law provides for the teaching of twenty seven non-controversial character traits that are universally acceptable for human development, educational achievement and cultural enrichment for a humanitarian civilization. These positive character education traits are vitally needed for all the arenas of civilized and productive living for all people. The accelerating American cultural diversity, divisive political identities, ideological conflicts, increase of crime and violence, warrant serious attention to character education throughout the American society.

In his book, *New Possibilities for Juvenile Justice*, Reverend W. J. Webb enumerates the 27 character traits along with a brief definition of each trait. This information is provided to heighten the awareness of this significant law and to help to disseminate this vital knowledge which is not well known nor publicized. These generic traits for teaching character education are very relevant and vital for the welfare of America and its people.

These universal character education traits are not just needed in the K through 12 classrooms in Georgia, they are needed in all educational, domestic, social, civic, political, religious, business, healthcare and governmental institutions. It is tragic that this Character Education Law has been in effect for 22 years and so few people are aware of its existence. Although this Law is mandated throughout the public educational districts of Georgia, many of the teachers, principals and school board members are not aware of this significant vital character education law.

The severity of America's culture crisis necessitates and mandates that all responsible Americans engage in the teaching and spreading this law!

FUNDAMENTAL TRAITS FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

(Georgia Law, House Bill 605)

The consistent teaching and practice of the enumerated traits of character education below found in Georgia Law have the potential to significantly transform the American culture for good. These character traits are not exhaustive. However, they provide the content for the judgement that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to in his classical statement, "Judge others not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." These character traits or the noble contents of character, are enumerated and defined so that they can be systematically and intentionally taught and practiced for the ethical, moral and spiritual transformation of the American culture.

These contents of character can also be seen as golden rules for living. These noble traits and golden rules involve the inner sentiments and aspirations of the mind, heart and spirit of human beings. The culture of a people and nation reflects the contents of the human beings of the inhabitants of the respective culture and nation. The elevated transformation of societies, cultures and nations must begin and sustained by the internal values of the minds, sentiments and spirit of the inhabitants. **IT IS CRITICAL THAT CHARACTER EDUCATION BECOMES A MAJOR PRIORITY IN THE CURRICULUM AND POLICIES OF ALL AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS.** Additionally, the following 27 character traits are highly and urgently recommended for teaching and practice in all educational, religious, political, business, government and social institutions. They develop and enhance individual, family, community cultural and national human health and safety.

Fundamental Traits and Definitions for Character Education:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Cheerfulness - | Be pleasant and encouraging. |
| ___ 2. Citizenship- | Be a responsible member of society. |
| ___ 3. Compassion- | Develop a caring and positive concern for others. |
| ___ 4. Cleanliness- | Practice personal & environmental cleanliness. |
| ___ 5. Cooperation- | Learn and practice teamwork with others. |
| ___ 6. Courtesy- | Extend friendliness & hospitality to others. |
| ___ 7. Courage- | Be brave. Take a stand for the right thing. |
| ___ 8. Creativity- | Use your intelligence to think/innovate new things. |
| ___ 9. Diligence- | Do not give up. Hold on. Endure to the end. |
| ___ 10. Fairness- | Treat all with respect. Give everyone their dues. |
| ___ 11. Generosity- | Adhere to a spirit of giving and sharing. |
| ___ 12. Honesty- | Be real, authentic, sincere, true. |
| ___ 13. Kindness- | Be pleasant, affirming, helpful and positive. |
| ___ 14. Loyalty- | Be reliable, dependable, committed, dedicated. |

(Continued on next page)

Fundamental Traits and Definitions for Character Education – Continued

__15. Patriotism-	Express care, concern, loyalty for your nation.
__16. Patience & Virtue-	Wait with hope, faith and endurance.
__17. Perseverance-	Work, struggle until success is achieved.
__18. Punctuality-	Be on time or ahead of time for appointments.
__19. Respect for Creator-	Reverence for God the Creator.
__20. Respect for Others-	Acknowledge sacredness of human life.
__21. Respect for Environment-	Keep clean, healthy, productive and safe.
__22. Self-Respect-	Value your human dignity, integrity, sacredness as one who bears God's image.
__23. Self-Control-	Be guided by knowledge, wisdom, respect.
__24. Sportsmanship-	Play fairly. Lose gracefully. Be a winner.
__25. School Pride-	Help your school achieve its corporate goals.
__26. Temperance-	Balance mind, emotions, actions w/reality.
__27. Tolerance-	Be understanding and considerate of those who do not meet your expectations.

The above twenty seven character traits and definitions abstracted from Georgia Law 20-2-145 are universal principles that can be used in a variety of educational settings, growth, fellowship and discussion groups in schools, churches, homes and other agencies and institutions where people gather. These character traits can also be offered for educational and certification credits to participants who wish to teach the Character Education Course on a regular or part time basis.

This information and other related transformational education can be found in the book authored by Willie James Webb, entitled **NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE – DIRECTIONS FOR YOUTH TRANSFORMATION**. The Christian Institute of Public Theology is promoting and providing information for character education and other cultural transforming knowledge. CIPT, Inc is providing certification courses for churches, schools and other institutions and individuals to spread this helpful transforming knowledge for children and all diverse groups with interest in making a positive difference in these difficult times in America and the world.

CIPT (Christian Institute of Public Theology)