



CHARACTER MATTERS

A Component of SPARK Physical Education and After School Programs

Character Matters

Character Matters (CM) is a social skills development program designed to identify, reinforce, and assess character education concepts in physical education and physical activity settings.

These concepts are introduced at the beginning of the school year in all SPARK PE programs (grades K-12) and SPARK After School. This is an important time to develop an emotionally safe learning environment -- one that is inclusive, respectful, appreciative, trusting, all the while being active. Character Matters initiates personal growth and exploration, fosters cooperative relationships, and encourages positive academic behaviors.

Character Matters Scope and Sequence K-12

Grade Level(s)	Character Matters Focus
K	Kindness, Caring
1 st	Courtesy, Appreciation
2 nd	Self-Control, Respect (for others/equipment)
3 rd	Responsibility, Helpfulness
4 th	Encouragement, Acceptance of Personal Differences
5 th	Competition, Positive Disagreement
6 th	Sharing of Ideas, Compromise
Middle School	Responsibility, Respect, Acceptance, Trust, Appreciation
High School	Initiative, Trust, Leadership, Respect, Cooperation, Fair Play, Competition, Responsibility, Appreciation, Concern

The scope and sequence of Character Matters introduces concepts sequentially and at an appropriate pace. By the time students reach middle school, they are prepared to apply the many social skills in a variety of movement environments. At the high school level, students are ready to add additional important life skills such as Initiative and Leadership.



Character Matters tools include:

- ✓ Lesson and activity plans focused on teaching social skills
- ✓ Sample T-charts with relevant examples
- ✓ Character Matters definitions
- ✓ Resources to create a Character Matters Personal Best Wall
- ✓ Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda journaling page assessments
- ✓ Character Matters self-check assessments

Character Matters and the NASPE (National Association for Sport and Physical Education) Standards

Participating regularly in physical activity (NASPE Standard 3) takes *responsibility* and *initiative*, and often requires a support system that demonstrates *concern* and offers *encouragement*. Regularly participating in physical activity can lead to the achievement and maintenance of a health-enhancing level of physical fitness (Standard 4).

Physically literate individuals exhibit *responsible* personal and social behavior (Standard 5) through acts of *self-control*, *kindness*, *compromise*, *fair play*, and *appreciation*. They *respect* self and others and display *acceptance of personal differences* in physical activity settings (standard 5). Additionally, physically educated individuals value physical activity for its positive social interactions (Standard 6) and display *various behaviors* that enhance the activity environment.

Character Matters and Academic Performance

The following components of academic performance have Character Matters concepts embedded:

Academic Performance Component	Character Matters Concept
Cognitive Skills & Attitudes [Attention/Concentration, Verbal Ability]	Courtesy, Self-Control, Respect, Sharing Ideas, Taking Initiative
Academic Behaviors [Attendance, Time on Task, Positive Conduct, Homework Completion]	Courtesy, Self-Control, Respect, Responsibility, Initiative, Leadership, Cooperation

One Focus for All Settings

Ideally, the experience of students with SPARK’s Character Matters concepts would occur first during Kindergarten physical education and continue through high school PE. This consistent social skills messaging should generalize to other aspects of the student’s SPARK experiences (e.g., take-home materials, school wellness challenges).

Concurrently, the community’s investment in SPARK After School programming provides additional opportunities for Character Matters concepts to transfer to other environments. This additional exposure to positive behavioral messaging provides structure to the social, cognitive, and physical development of all students.