The Principled Academy: Back to School with Values and Virtues

Isaac Durst September 9, 2025



Back-to-School Newsletter

Hey there, Friends and Family!

Welcome back to school! We hope the transition from summer to fall has been smooth and that your students are settling into their new routines with excitement and energy.

Here's a glimpse of what you'll find in this issue:

- Highlights from our recent character education workshop in Belize
- Fresh ideas for building executive function through reading
- · An interactive activity to foster compassion and empathy
- · A spotlight on some of our newest stories and resources

May these ideas and activities enrich your students' learning and create meaningful memories this school year!

Health and happiness always,

Isaac Durst

Director, Values and Virtues





News from the Field: Workshop in Belize!

From August 18–20, we had the joy of traveling to Belize to host a three-day character education workshop for school teachers. What began as a collaboration between leadership teams in the U.S. and the Teacher Learning Institute (TLI) blossomed into an inspiring exchange of ideas, experiences, and hope for the classroom.

Teachers earned 15 hours of credit while diving into interactive presentations, group activities, and one-on-one coaching. Together, we explored resources on Values

and Virtues and uncovered fresh ways to bring virtues and values into daily lessons.

Beyond the materials, what stood out most were the conversations — teachers sharing their challenges, brainstorming solutions, and discovering new tools for classroom management and deeper connection with their students. By the end, the room felt filled not only with new skills but also with renewed energy and vision for the children they teach.

Watch Isaac's report from Belize below:





Testimonies from Participants:

"The [contents] are rich with stories and lessons that will definitely teach them the virtues. I loved the questions; they are to spark critical thinking. Discussions promise to be rich."

"The workshop on character education was very informative and interactive. The values will make a huge impact on the lives of the students, teachers, parents, and the community. The values can be incorporated in any subject being taught. It is a worthwhile project. It is a great investment especially for our students."

To support more impactful projects like the above, please consider making a donation by clicking the button below:

Support Values & Virtues!



Reading Tips to Boost Executive Function

Executive function (EF) refers to a set of cognitive skills that enable individuals to plan, organize, initiate, and regulate their behavior. These skills are crucial for success in various aspects of life, including academics, social interactions, and personal well-being.

Reading isn't just about words on a page—it's a workout for the brain. When children read, they practice holding details in mind (working memory), shifting between ideas and perspectives (cognitive flexibility), and staying focused even when the text is challenging (self-control).

You can strengthen these skills at home or in the classroom by making reading interactive:

- ask your child to predict what might happen next
- retell the story in their own words
- or imagine a different ending!

These simple activities turn reading into a fun way to build executive function while deepening comprehension.

Check out more fun reading activities on our website!



Activity Spotlight: "Cross the Line"

This interactive activity helps students reflect on what they have in common and the unique challenges each person carries.

Through simple prompts, students step forward if a statement applies to them, silently acknowledging shared experiences with their classmates.

By the end, students gain new awareness of one another, foster trust, and strengthen their compassion and empathy towards themselves and each other.

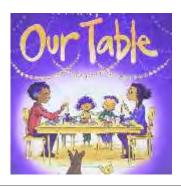
Check out the full activity here.

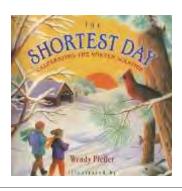
Example Prompts:

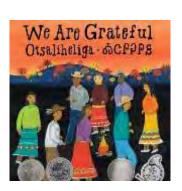
- Your birthday is in _____ (month).
- You have a brother or sister.
- You speak another language.
- You have a pet.
- You have ever been left out of group activities.
- You were bullied or teased.
- You were judged or made fun of because of your culture or appearance.

See what's new:

New Stories + Guiding Questions







"Our Table"

Gratitude
1st & 2nd Grade
Read now!

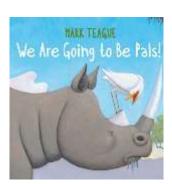
"The Shortest Day"

Gratitude
1st & 2nd Grade
Read now!

"We are Grateful"

Gratitude 1st & 2nd Grade Read now!

New Activities



We Are Going to be Pals!

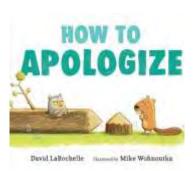
Friendship
1st & 2nd Grade
See activity



Big Jar of Kindness

<u>Friendship</u>

1st & 2nd Grade See Activity



"Saying Sorry" Activity

Friendship
Pre-K & Kindergarten
See Activity



That's all for now, thank you for reading! Here's a happy puppy :)

How did you like this email?







Values & Virtues is an online character education resource for educators and parents. Our mission is to build a world filled with ethical, loving, and compassionate human beings.





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