

Character Education Policy Q & A



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June, 2014.

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Laws requiring schools to teach character education are not common, but do exist in some states, including Nebraska. Below are questions and answers related to character education laws.

List of Questions - Click any Question to Jump Straight to the Answer

- [Is there any federal law regarding character education?](#)
- [Does the state of Nebraska require character education to be taught in public schools?](#)
- [Do other states require character education?](#)
- [How is this law monitored in school districts across Nebraska?](#)

Is there any federal law regarding character education?

No. No federal law appears to address character education. There are some efforts to pass laws, which require curricula in “social and emotional learning” which may be similar to character education. However, no such federal law has been passed at this time. For a definition of character education and description of related programs, see the Strategy Brief on [Character Education](#).

Does the state of Nebraska require character education to be taught in public schools?

Yes. Nebraska has a law regarding character education. However, the Nebraska law does not use the term “character education;” however, it addresses content which would likely be considered to be “character education” as well as “citizenship”. The Nebraska law states:

“Every teacher employed to give instruction in any public, private, parochial, or denominational school in the State of Nebraska shall . . . give special emphasis to common honesty, morality, courtesy, obedience to law, respect for the national flag, the United States Constitution, the Constitution of Nebraska, respect for parents and the home, the dignity and necessity of honest labor, and other lessons of a steadying influence which tend to promote and develop an upright and desirable citizenry.”
([Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-725, 2012](#)).

This law was originally drafted in 1927 and the language about what should be taught was added in 1996 ([Nebraska Department of Education, 2002](#)).

Do other states require character education?

There are currently 18 states that mandate character education be taught in their schools ([Character Education Partnership, 2014](#)). These states' requirements vary.

How is this law monitored in school districts across Nebraska?

Although character education is mandated, the law does not provide information about how character education instruction is to be monitored or regulated.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) may include the instructional topic listed earlier as a component addressed during its school accreditation process in Rule 10. In that case, the Department would investigate, and if necessary, provide the school or district a deadline to make changes in its policies or curriculum as a part of its accreditation review.

As with many issues related to education, a citizen could make a complaint to the Nebraska Department of Education about a school or district for failure to teach character education. This would then be investigated and resolved by NDE.

Theoretically, a teacher who was not complying with the law could be taken to court or charged with a Class III misdemeanor ([Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-727, 2012](#)). However, we are not aware of any report of this nature that has been filed.

Recommended Citation:

O'Conner, A., Peterson, R. L., & Fluke, S. (2014). *Character education, Policy Q & A*. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska Department of Education. <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/character-education-policy>.