

Character Council: A Student Leadership and Service-Learning Class

Ridgewood Middle School, Arnold, MO

2006 Character Education Partnership (CEP) National School of Character

http://www.ridgewoodms.fox.k12.mo.us/pages/Ridgewood_Middle

The Character Council of Ridgewood Middle School (RMS) has been an elective service-learning class since 2004. Students enroll through an application process and currently about 60 students participate in the daily class with the supervision of three teachers. The class is divided into a variety of committees (12 at this writing), which can include Spirit, Announcements, Fundraising, Assembly, Transition and Character Education. Each committee has its own student leaders who are responsible to complete service projects that can benefit the school or community.



Eighth grade council students review the effects of cyber bullying in a character education lesson.

In addition to their sub-committee work, all Character Council members participate in learning, preparing and presenting a character education lesson that was selected and designed by students in the Character Education sub-committee. The lessons are presented to the rest of the student body during Advisory class. Advisory classes are scheduled weekly and the Character Council presents their lessons approximately every other week.

The Council's weekly schedule generally includes two and a half periods for sub-committee work, a half period for a general Character Council meeting and reflection and two periods to learn and prepare the Council members to present character lessons to school Advisory classes.

Character education advisory lessons may be suggested from outside of the Council or the Character Education sub-committee might design its own lesson based on RMS's "word of the month" program. After a lesson is designed, the Character Council sponsors present and discuss the lesson with the whole Character Council. The next class day, Council members divide into teaching teams to prepare their own presentation of the character lesson for a school Advisory class. All Character Council members thus become responsible to successfully prepare and present relevant character lessons for their peers.



Character Council students introducing a character education lesson.

An example lesson was noted to evolve from students' concern about cheating at school. The Character Education sub-committee designed a lesson to help classmates define cheating and concluded with students and faculty taking an integrity pledge. The Character Education sub-committee has compiled a variety of lessons from caring for others, resisting bullying and respect for diversity.

Faculty has recognized the work of the Character Council as part of the positive climate and performance change that has occurred at RMS. The Character Council has been honored as a National Middle School Teams Difference, a CEP Promising Practice and the positive

school community that has been created at RMS is documented by their CEP National School of Character award.

Two of the Character Council teachers, Brandi Boyer and Ann Asher have authored a how-to-resource they call- ***R Character Council: Empower Student Leaders through Character Education and Service Learning***, which can be purchased for \$30 (not including shipping and handling) by contacting them at the school (see website above).