

Community Advantage

Transportation Department Joins Character Initiative

We're on the Move . . . Building Good Character One Word at a Time!

At a professional meeting held earlier this year, the Transportation Department and bus drivers for Sumter County Schools (SCS) unanimously agreed to promote good character in a visible way. Joining in the District-wide character effort, they dedicated a portion of their professional development time to have all bus drivers "I Care" trained.

In the training sessions, bus drivers discussed the benefits of educating youth outside the classroom by promoting good character and the important role they could play in helping youth become character strong. After a presentation by Debora Knowles, bus drivers shared what they hoped would be the outcome of this new partnership—improved behavior and fewer incidents on their buses.

The exchange of ideas led to one suggestion that may be implemented as early as this coming fall and that is to have each of the 70 bus drivers identify a Student of the Year. One goal of this recognition effort would be to provide as many students as possible the opportunity to be acknowledged for demonstrating good character—respect, self-control, a positive attitude, etc. If each bus driver identified a Student of the Week, a Student of the Month, and then (from the pool of students selected throughout the school year), recognize a Student of the Year, more students throughout the District would receive recognition.

Plans are to develop and communicate selection criteria to students and their parents so each will know the positive behavior expected of students to be considered for future recognition.

New Bumper Stickers Let All of Americus Know That at SCS, We're Building Good Character One Word at a Time!

As SCS expands its focus on character, school buses and service vehicles display new bumper stickers which say, "We're Building Good Character One Word at a Time!" Reminding parents and the community that together we can help our youth become character strong is the visible contribution bus drivers are making to help the District achieve its goal. The collective efforts of our parents, family members and the community to teach, model, reinforce, and acknowledge good character will help Americus-Sumter County become a community of character.

Mr. Jerome Smith, Director of Transportation for Sumter County Schools stated, "Our drivers see the character words as a tool to recognize students for good behavior and for making good choices."

Bus drivers frequently encourage students to show good character, like respect and self-control, because they understand that it still takes a village to raise a child.



Pictured from left to right: Tracy Monts, Lavar Whittington, Brenda Faye Smith, Jerome Smith, & Debora Knowles

In This Issue

- A Message from the Superintendent 2
- A Note of Thanks to Parents 2
- The Proof Is in the Data! 2
- Purpose & Goal of This Newsletter 2
- Local Beauty Salons & Barber Shops Join Character Initiative 3
- 100% Character Club 3
- Character Is a Language Understood by All . . . 4
- Safe & Drug Free 4
- In Search of Character! 4
- Teachers Make a Difference 5
- Parent Workshops Well Received & Parent Policies Shared 5
- Parents Respond to the Call! 6
- Sumter Area Ministerial Association Supports Character 6
- School Spotlights 7
- Community Partners 12

We're Building Good Character One Word at a Time!

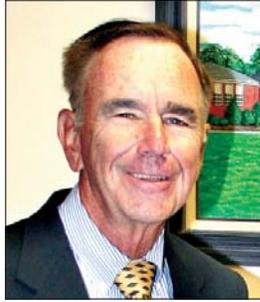
Character Really Matters—A Message from the Superintendent

Sumter County Schools are committed to working with parents to teach students core values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others. These values, along with those which contribute to improved student performance—like endurance, commitment to excellence, and perseverance—strengthen character, build a strong work ethic, and foster good work habits to enable students to reach their academic potential.

I believe we can create safe and nurturing learning environments, increase school attendance, and student achievement. We can also reduce our drop-out rate and equip young people with skills needed to become good citizens and lead productive lives.

During these challenging times we don't want to lose sight of the importance of education. One of the major responsibilities of successful schools and school Districts is to develop students' character in preparation for the job market and success in college.

I support the mission of the National Character Education Partnership which is to develop young people of good character who become responsible and caring citizens. Quality character education is a key component in school reform, academic achievement, and preparation for responsible citizenship and future success. I am proud of the work our school teams are doing to become schools of character and I commend the leaders of the City of Americus, Sumter County, and the business community for joining with us in our quest to be recognized as a community of character.



Dr. Dennis McMahon,
Superintendent of SCS

The Proof Is in the Data—Character Measures Up!

How do we know the character initiative is working in Sumter County Schools? Data is one way we can see how programs and special initiatives measure up. And measure up is just what "I Care" does. A review of data from the 2008–2009 school term shows:

- **Parents Trained Increased.** For 2008–2009, over 3,000 of the District's 5,254 parents have participated in "I Care" Training—almost twice the number of parents trained when "I Care" was launched District-wide in (2007–2008).
- **Parental Involvement Increased.** As of March 2009, parents (and caring adults) in SCS completed over 82,000 positive character-building and mentoring activities with their children at home and their mentees at school.
- **Middle School and High School Student Participation and Parental Involvement Were Up.** As of March 2009, participation for Middle & High Schools was up approximately 90% from March 2008; parental involvement was up approximately 85%.



A Note of Thanks to Parents

From School Principals

We would like to extend our sincerest thanks to the more than three thousand parents in Sumter County Schools who took time to become "I Care" trained and did positive character-building activities with their sons and daughters at home.

Thank you, parents, for having high expectations for your children and encouraging them to attend school each day, for working with your child's teachers, attending conferences, returning phone calls, visiting the school, attending performances, attending PTO meetings, and volunteering whenever you can. Thank you for all the things you do with your children at home to build good character one word at a time.

We understand that all parents are not able to come to school but care very much about their children and want them to be successful. The "I Care" Character-Building Activities that our schools send home at the beginning of each month provide you with the information you need to help your children become character strong!

Parent Tip Ask your child, youth, teen, or mentee these questions at the end of each day:

- Did you learn something new today?
- Did you do your best?
- What's the character word for this month?

Purpose & Goal of This Newsletter

The Sumter County School District Office of Parental Involvement is proud to produce this newsletter as a service to the community.

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep parents, community partners, students, and school personnel informed and to share activities, contributions, and accomplishments of our work together to promote character development through parental and community involvement.

Goal for 2009–2010—20% increase over the previous year in the number of parents trained and the number of students participating in the "I Care" Character Initiative, raising the District totals for parents trained to 80% and participation to 50%.

Local Beauty Salons & Barbershops Join Character Initiative

Not only are bus drivers promoting good character in Sumter County, but several area beauty salons and barber shops have joined the community character effort, too. How are they showing that character matters? They are displaying “I Care” character posters and creating reading corners to promote literacy.

“Everyone can encourage children to read. By having a reading corner and posting the character posters, customers who stop in to receive services are reminded that real beauty comes from having a positive attitude and good character. Children accompanying their parents can pass the time by reading stories with encouraging messages,” says Ms. Dorothea of Dorothea’s Barber & Beauty Shop.

“We are grateful to the beauty salons and barber shops who are partnering with SCS and displaying character posters and the monthly character words,” says Carolyn Brown, Director of Pupil Services and Federal Programs with Sumter County Schools. “I know from talking with Mrs. Knowles that our hope is to continue to expand the number of local businesses who join the community character partnership. I have found this to be a very supportive community. I am confident we’ll succeed at expanding support for promoting good character through parental and community involvement.”



Master Kutz

Dorothea’s Barber
& Beauty Shop

Motivations
Barber Shop

Professional Cuts
Barber Shop



Final Faze Barber & Beauty Salon

SCS 100% Character Club

Teachers who were successful during the 2008–2009 school term at promoting character and influencing the largest number of students to return their Feedback Forms were recognized as Class of the Month for their grade level and had the honor of displaying the “I Care” Class of the Month banner.

A number of teachers throughout the District at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were able to encourage 100% of their class to participate. Those teachers are members of a very special group, **The 100% Character Club**.

Hats off to the TEAM of teachers for the high expectations they set, as well as the creativity, diligence, and perseverance they demonstrate, and the incentives they provide for students in their class to return their monthly “I Care” Feedback Forms and to complete the Student Character–Building Mastery Activities.

Members of the 100% Character Club, we thank you for helping to build better futures by building good character—one word at a time!

100% Club Members

Sumter Primary

Lezley Anderson	Susan Guynn
Mary Beckum	Susan Norris
Joan Converse	Sheryl Rush
Cadie Dukes	Sherrlyn Stone

Cherokee Elementary

Deborah Brinson	Kimberly Griffin
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Sarah Cobb Elementary

Lorie Harrell	Erin Owens
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Sumter Elementary

Lee Bass	Elizabeth Holloway
Daniel Carpenter	Lauren Shemwell
Michael Duke	

Staley Middle School

Priscilla Floyd	Thomas Prater
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ASHS–North

Samantha Braswell	Letitia Williams
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Performance Learning Center

Dr. C. Fernandes

Yes We Can! We can build good character one word at a time!

Character and Caring Is a Language Understood by All

Ms. María Silva and Mrs. Grisdelia Gómez are Home-School Liaisons with Sumter County Schools. Their primary responsibility is to work with migrant students and their families.

Whether working in the classroom beside teachers or making home visits to aid parents, these ladies assist SCS in delivering needed services to our migrant population.

As partners with teachers, Ms. Silva and Mrs. Gómez also assist the District by providing “I Care” Character Training to parents in Spanish.

“All our parents want their children to succeed,” says Ms. Silva. Mrs. Gómez went on to say, “We work to make sure migrant parents are informed, understand school expectations, and are equipped to help teach and reinforce good character in their own language at home.”



Mrs. Grisdelia Gómez & Ms. María Silva



Spanish Parent Training Session

Safe & Drug Free

The Sumter County School District is committed to having safe and drug free learning communities—places where every child, youth, and teen who commits himself or herself to doing well can grow and excel academically.

The results of the 2008 Georgia Student Health Survey II (GSHS II) are now available and can be found on the Georgia Department of Education web site. This data plays a key role in identifying student health and behavior issues and it is a valuable resource for developing targeted strategies to address the most challenging areas.

To view SCS results, visit the Georgia Department of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools web site at http://www.gadoe.org/sia_titleiv.aspx.

Answer to Sudoku on page 12

4	8	3	2	5	7	1	6	9
1	6	7	3	9	4	8	2	5
5	2	9	6	1	8	3	4	7
8	4	1	9	3	6	5	7	2
3	7	5	8	4	2	9	1	6
6	9	2	1	7	5	4	8	3
2	5	6	4	8	9	7	3	1
9	3	8	7	2	1	6	5	4
7	1	4	5	6	3	2	9	8

In Search of Character!

Q L U M P E R S O N A L G R O W T H G Z
 X I T V T R U S T W O R T H Y D E A N G
 P I H S N E Z I T I C L J F N C V F I N
 C T S E L F A W A R E D W R N Q A G T I
 O Z H E R R U R D X L P N E P O L F T R
 M A P D L E K C W B G P D S N Y U R E A
 M V F V E F N S J D R I B P C M E X S C
 U F O F S T K R N U F I I E D N O H L R
 N T C Z U N A N A N B S N C I C T O A E
 I N I R C Y I V O E N V D T J I H N O S
 C E V T F Z L C I W L B M N C I E E G P
 A G I M K Z F Z J T I G A B T M R S K O
 T I C U X L Z W A P O N N L H W S T M N
 O L M L E P U E J C P M G O Q P K W U S
 R I I S N T S Z G J S G G S L O K P M I
 G D N S E L F C O N T R O L A E A R S B
 M G D T N E D I F N O C M M E Z F S V L
 U P E R S I S T E N T O A G I G S I Y E
 W T D N P U R P O S E D R I V E N L L G
 H N Z A M K W T Z B Z P B Z L J G V U L

GOAL-SETTING
 SELF-AWARE
 VALUE OTHERS
 SELF-CONTROL
 CARING
 RESPONSIBLE
 CITIZENSHIP
 LIFE-LONG LEARNER
 SELF-CONFIDENCE
 RESPECT
 TRUSTWORTHY
 MOTIVATED
 PERSISTENT
 CIVIC-MINDED
 COMMUNICATOR
 CONFIDENT
 SELF-KNOWING
 PURPOSE-DRIVEN
 HONEST
 DILIGENT
 PERSONAL GROWTH

Expressions of Gratitude for Teachers Who Make a Difference

A heartfelt thanks to the many teachers throughout the Sumter County School District who work to creatively integrate character into their subject areas, teaching, modeling, reinforcing, and acknowledging good character among the students in their care.

All across the District, teachers, para-professionals, coaches, social workers, and counselors are identifying opportunities to reinforce character traits that contribute to student performance and future success. At the South Campus and Early College for example, students create scenarios and skits pertaining to the pillar of character and the grade-level character word for the month which they discuss during advisement times.

Whether in their creative writings and journals; in small group discussions; or in Math, Marketing, or History classes, teachers are finding endless ways to promote good character and good choices as they integrate the monthly character word in all subjects.

At Sumter County Elementary and Cherokee Elementary, teachers encourage students to model the character traits and acknowledge them through the awarding of “Gotcha’s.”

All schools share the character word—better known as the “I Care” Word of the Month—over the morning and afternoon announcements. At Cherokee Elementary, students share the character word and what it means on the Morning Show. At Sarah Cobb Elementary and Sumter Primary, students select additional books to read and do art projects around the character word.



Parent Workshops Well Received

A series of parent workshops were conducted this 2008–2009 school term in collaboration with schools and supplementary programs, such as the ASTEP After-School Program and the Boys and Girls Club of Sumter County. These workshops addressed specific concerns and interests expressed by parents when they were surveyed earlier in the school year.

Some of the workshops presented were:

- 2008** **7/14** *Parents Are Teachers Too!*
 8/18 *Choices We Make at the Cross Roads*
 9/15 *Conversations with Parents . . . an Open Forum*
 11/11 *“I Care” Training*
 12/15 *Equipped for Change: Managing Uncertainty*
- 2009** **1/29** *Constructing Better Futures*
 2/26 *The Road to College*
 3/27 *Character & Work Readiness*
 4/29 *Leadership Development—A Smart Move*
 4/30 *Customer Service Skills—Showing Character*

Parents expressed appreciation to presenters for sharing different ways they can be involved in the lives of their children throughout their schooling; work with the school to support their children; seek help for their children with difficult subjects; and encourage youth or teens to stay in school and graduate.

Parental Involvement Research

A recent study done by the University of Illinois found that “good schools do more than teach reading, writing, and math. They provide the kind of learning opportunities that help students become good citizens and be successful in the labor market,” says Christy Lleras, a University of Illinois Assistant Professor in Human and Community Development. How does this research help parents and teachers? Lleras states, “Teens need to see that their efforts in high school matter and will eventually pay off. I think that incentives are very important, particularly for adolescents. This research gives parents evidence they can use to talk to their kids about the importance of working hard, getting along with others, and participating in extracurricular activities.”

Parent Policies Shared

Each year SCS does a review of Parent Policies to secure input and feedback from parents to share with them what students are expected to do, what they can expect of teachers and administrators, and what opportunities are available for them to be involved in the education of their child, youth, or teen to increase student success in school, graduation rates, and education opportunities beyond high school.

Student Handbooks

Did you know that in the Student Handbook for each school you will find a parent policy, and in K–8 schools you’ll also find a Compact (an agreement between parents, students and teachers/administrators) stating what each will do to contribute to student success?

Annually, parent policies are reviewed and updated as needed. During a PTO, Parent Council, or other school meeting, parents have an opportunity to review and discuss each school’s parent policy and proposed changes. Flyers are sent home with students informing parents of upcoming parent meetings and inviting them to attend. **Parents, make sure you regularly ask if any information was sent home and have your children check their book bags.** Also, check out the calendar found on each school web site. Parent meetings and student performances will be posted there as well.

It’s a known fact that when parents, teachers/schools, and the community work together, students benefit.

Character Liaisons Help Build Better Futures

An “I Care” School Liaison provides leadership for each school’s “I Care” implementation team. They work with the District Coordinator for Parental Involvement and are the primary point of contact and communication link with the schools. Under the direction of each school principal, “I Care” Liaisons train and support their teachers and work with them to train parents. They coordinate data collection and data entry at their school.

Liaisons help their school to create excitement about building good character and serve their fellow teachers by providing assistance with the monthly distribution of character-building parenting activities and student mastery activities.

We appreciate the invaluable service these individuals provide and extend special thanks for all they do on behalf of children and youth.

Cherokee Elementary—Debbie Humphreys

Sarah Cobb Elementary—Jody Arrington

Sumter Elementary—Michelle Grinnell

Sumter Primary—Marie Belcher

Sumter Middle—Janice Burnette/Sherri Nance

Staley Middle—Latrishia Monroe

ASHS North—Sandra Wolcott

ASHS South—Tameka Jackson/Mary Urda
Mary Lopez/Uvonda Goings—Mitchell

Early College—Sherrell Bailey

PLC—Irma (Peaches) Davis

Crossroads Academy—Emmarene Streeter

Teachers and Parents Respond to the Call to Build Good Character

Early in the school year Debora Knowles, District Coordinator for Parental Involvement, issued a call to which teachers and parents responded.

“We all know that character matters,” Mrs. Knowles said, “but we can’t teach it, model it, or reinforce it without your enthusiastic support, earnest effort, and sincere cooperation. We need your help and we can’t be successful building the character of our youth without you.”

She went on to ask parents and teachers to, “Take the time—make the time—to discuss the pillar of character and the monthly character word. Expect your students—and your sons and daughters—to know the word, what it means and, whenever possible, to model it.

“Who wouldn’t want their child to be honest, fair, responsible, and caring? Our young people—your students and your children—will rise or fall to meet your expectations. Set the bar high and watch them rise.”

Urging parents to become more involved, Knowles defined parental involvement. “**Parental Involvement** is what parents do with their children at home. It’s the positive interactions you have each day that matter.

“The SCS District tracks how many parents are trained and how many students and parents participate in ‘I Care’ by completing the Character-Building Activities each month. That is why each school encourages their students to return monthly ‘I Care’ Feedback Forms. We believe that far more parents are making time to work with their children than the numbers show. More importantly, the research shows that students whose parents are involved have fewer discipline problems, better school attendance, and better grades.

“Thanks to all teachers and parents who do what you have the power to do—teach, coach, train, influence, and encourage youth to become **character strong!** We can, and we are as a community, building good character one word at a time!”

“Parental Involvement is what parents do with their children at home.”

Sumter Area Ministerial Association (SAMA) Supports Character

In a recent interview, Reverend Norris Harris, President of the Sumter Area Ministerial Association (SAMA), spoke with candor and passion about the role character played in his life.

Reverend Harris cited several teachers and principals who helped develop his character. One such person was Principal London. “Principal London stressed to the young men the importance of combing our hair, putting our shirt tails in our pants, learning how to talk to people, and how to behave in different situations. It was those early lessons in caring for my personal appearance and learning how to speak that gave me greater confidence later in life.”

He went on to share, “Dr. Andrews taught me how to outline and that equipped me for my work in the ministry. Outlining has given me the foundation I need as a pastor to build an informative and compelling sermon. Mrs. Mary Comer was my Spanish teacher, and to this day we greet each other in Spanish. She taught me the importance of building supportive relationships. My Biology teacher was also instrumental in my life and *insisted* I learn. As a result of the foundation I received in biology, I am able to relate the Creation Story in the book of Genesis and help others to understand it.”

Reverend Harris went on to say, “The time I spent developing good character has afforded me opportunities that I might not have had. It has helped me win favor with people who saw me as someone to be trusted and someone interested in learning. We must take the time to build good character among all of our children to position them for a brighter future. Character matters.”



Reverend
Coleman

Reverend
Harris

Evangelist
Snipes

Cherokee Elementary School Spotlights

The Cherokee Elementary School team of teachers, administrators, and staff began the school year with a goal in mind—to significantly increase the number of parents who were trained in using the “I Care” Character-Building Parenting Activities.

Creatively integrating character into their core knowledge curriculum, Cherokee teachers provide opportunities for students to share the monthly character word using the closed-circuit TV Morning Show. They also read many stories and do writing activities around the monthly character traits.

Students are learning that good character is something to sing about as choral students led by Mr. Ryan learn songs with encouraging messages that feature key character traits needed for success in school and in life.

513 of the 546 parents whose children attend Cherokee Elementary have participated in “I Care” training for the 2008–2009 school year. On average, one out of four students return monthly Feedback Forms and plans are to work with parents so this number will continue to increase.



Catch Us at Our Best!

Cherokee Parents Have Completed 8,094 Positive Activities with Their Children This Year! Also, 94% of Parents Have Been Trained!

Sarah Cobb Elementary School Spotlights

Sarah Cobb Elementary Real World Academy leads the District in parental involvement. Their early successful experience when piloting the “I Care” Character-Building Curriculum was instrumental in the Board of Education’s decision in 2007 to launch “I Care” District-wide in Sumter County Schools. Two years later (2008–2009), Sarah Cobb continues to set the bar high as all schools in the District work to increase parental involvement using the comprehensive “I Care” Character-Building Curriculum.

During the 2008–2009 school year, the Sarah Cobb TEAM consistently ranked high in three or more parental involvement measures including parental involvement (the number of positive interactions between parent and child at home, between the mentor and youth at school); participation (the number of monthly Feedback Forms returned); positive school contacts (the number of parents who report hearing something positive about their child from school); and parents trained (the number of parents who viewed the 15-minute training video or who spoke with a school teacher, counselor, or administrator about “I Care” and how they could teach character at home).

Sarah Cobb Cited for Promising Practices

Sarah Cobb is under consideration for a Promising Practices Award by the National Character Education Partnership (NCEP) in Washington, D.C. Plans are also underway to recommend that Sarah Cobb be named a 2009–2010 *National School of Character*.

When asked what difference “I Care” has made for teachers, parents, and students at Sarah Cobb, the answer is a dramatic increase in parental involvement. “We used to be able to provide food for parents attending evening school events. Now we have such a large turnout of parents that we’re not able to continue that practice,” says Principal Thelma Owens.



Catch Us at Our Best!

Sarah Cobb Parents Have Completed 13,497 Positive Activities with Their Children This Year! Also, 96% of Parents Have Been Trained!

Sumter Primary School Spotlights

Pictures speak louder than a thousand words and tell the story of Sumter County Primary School students becoming model citizens and future leaders. In the focus on character, SCPS has trained 707 of its 914 parents—the highest number of parents trained by any school. SCPS has also raised participation to nearly 45%.

Throughout the 2008–2009 school year, the Sumter Primary Team has focused on making a difference in the community. Students, staff, and teachers have participated in the annual food drive. They also worked together to raise money for cancer awareness and sponsored a team in the *Relay for Life*.

How do teachers teach and reinforce the grade-level character words? They integrate the character word in all subject areas, feature students using the character words in writing assignments, in readings, and on posters and bulletin boards. Creative artists and speakers use the character words at school assemblies. Whether it's students announcing the character words or receiving "Gotcha's!" for demonstrating good character, it is clear that SCPS students are becoming character-strong.



Our principal has us share about "I Care" on the morning news program. She sets a great example for the rest of us.



Ms. Joan Converse's Kindergarten Class



Ms. Lezley Anderson's 2nd Grade Class



Ms. Susan Guynn's Pre-K Class

Catch Us at Our Best!

Sumter Primary Parents Have Completed 19,607 Positive Activities with Their Children This Year! Also, 76% of Parents Have Been Trained!



Students brought 2,731 items for the Salvation Army Holiday Drive



Ms. Susan Norris' Pre-K Class

Sumter Elementary School Spotlights

Character Counts at Sumter County Math, Science, & Technology Academy

At SCES, we strive to promote character every day. Our teachers work hard to incorporate character traits into daily activities, both inside the classroom and beyond. Throughout our building you will witness examples of students promoting quality character from our core values—"Safe, Respectful, and Responsible"—to our student News Team; from our Student Ambassadors to our Student of the Month Luncheons, we model good character.

Each month our classrooms compete for the recognition of "I Care" Class of the Month. The class in each grade that returns the most "I Care" Feedback Forms in the timeliest manner becomes the "I Care" Class of the Month. That class retains the Class of the Month banner, gets a picture taken to be displayed in the hallways (and published in the newspaper), and each student and the teacher receive a prize.

The three winning 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classes at our school have held on to the title of Class of the Month for several months in a row. Mrs. Holloway's third grade class, Mr. Carpenter's fourth grade class, and Mrs. Bass' fifth



Mrs. Duke—The "I Care" Queen!

grade class have retained their titles for five months in a row, as well as having 100% participation in all five of these months. They have had some fierce competition on their halls, but have managed to hold their titles!

Mrs. Duke's fourth grade class has its own claim to fame. Every student in her class has brought back his or her Feedback Form every month this year. Her class has 100% participation all year long! Mrs. Duke has successfully trained 100% of her parents. They may not be called our fourth grade class of the month, but they certainly deserve credit for their accomplishments, and Mrs. Duke has been affectionately known as the "I Care" Queen—and rightfully so!

At SCES, we have connected two very important concepts that seem to go hand in hand. Each month, we recognize students of the month from each

of our classes. These students are chosen by their teacher for demonstrating good character qualities, good study habits, good behavior, or improvement in one of these areas. The student is recognized at our monthly luncheon and is presented with a certificate and a special note written by his or her teacher explaining how good character was demonstrated.



Mrs. Holloway's 3rd Grade Class



Mrs. Bass' 5th Grade Class

Catch Us at Our Best!

Sumter Elementary Parents Have Completed 16,156 Positive Activities with Their Children This Year! Also, 72% of Participating Parents Say They Hear Something Positive About Their Child Each Month!



Mr. Carpenter's 4th Grade Class

Sumter Middle School Spotlights

Gains in parental involvement measures are reason to celebrate. One third of the 735 SCMS parents have completed the annual "I Care" training, putting SCMS in a position to meet the District goal—to have schools train 20% more parents in 2008–2009 than they did the year before.

"Even in the midst of downturns in the economy, developing good character among our youth is seen as the right thing to do—good for business and the best thing for our youth and their future," says Janice Burnette, Counselor at SCMS.

One of the bright spots for SCMS has been the excitement the school has created around character. SCMS kicked off the 2008–2009 school year with a high spirited character rally. The student competition for creating and performing the best character cheers left the seventh grade leaping for joy after being announced the contest winner.

SCMS students gain experience in communicating and encouraging their peers to know and to model the monthly character word which is featured each week on the morning announcements. Colorful posters and bulletin board messages routinely posted throughout the halls also encourage good character.



Catch Us at Our Best!

Sumter Middle School Parents Have Completed 5,445 Positive Activities with Their Children This Year! Also, 71% of Participating Parents Say They Hear Something Positive About Their Child Each Month!

Staley Middle School Spotlights

Team Staley is "Taking it to the Next Level" and that includes character development! At several parent meetings throughout the 2008–2009 school year, Mrs. Knowles spoke with parents about the important role they play in teaching character to their youth. Among the 424 students enrolled at Staley Middle School, 373 parents (88%) have been trained in "I Care." Student completion of independent character-building mastery activities is an area where Team Staley has excelled with 96% of students completing these activities each month.



Catch Us at Our Best!

Staley Middle School Parents Have Completed 6,575 Positive Activities with Their Children This Year! Also, 91% of Trained Parents Are Participating Every Month!

Americus–Sumter High School North Campus Spotlights

According to the data generated for 2008–2009, the Ninth Grade Academy raised student participation in the “I Care” character initiative to 30% and increased parental involvement as well. Parent training also increased 10% from the previous year.

One study found that most adults believe that parents want to avoid or minimize family involvement in their children’s education as they get older. Data collected about students throughout high school suggest the opposite. Students want their parents to be knowledgeable partners in their education and available to be helpful sources of information and assistance at home.

“We are thrilled to see that parents are involved with their teens even at the high school level based on the data we receive each month,” says Principal Davidson.

Here are some comments from students at the North Campus about what “I Care” means to them:

“‘I Care’ gives us a way to connect with our parents. It is a way that we express our bond and relationships with our parents. It brings us together as a family.”
—**Kadijah Banks**

“When I think of ‘I Care,’ it means a chance to spend quality time with your folks. It makes you want to spend more time with them.”—**Quinterrious Dodson**



Ms. Williams has 100% return of feedback forms for the months of: September, October, November, December, and January.

Catch Us at Our Best!

Americus–Sumter High North Parents Have Completed 4,213 Positive Activities with Their Teens This Year! Also, 53% of Participating Parents Say They Hear Something Positive About Their Teen Each Month!

Americus–Sumter High School South Campus Spotlights

South Campus Demonstrates that When It Comes to Character Development, Teamwork Works!

At the start of the 2008–2009 school year, the South Campus incorporated character as one of the initiatives that the Curriculum Committee would take on to reinforce core values and character traits that contribute to student performance, work readiness, and success in college. The Character Taskforce (A.K.A. Curriculum Committee) increased the number of parents trained to nearly 20% of the 782 student enrollment, and raised participation to nearly 10%.

“This 2008–2009 data, when compared to the previous year, represents promise for dispelling the myth that high school students need minimal parental involvement and that character development doesn’t really matter at the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades,” says Mrs. Tameka Jackson, School Counselor.

A recent report by the University of Illinois makes the case for character development to enhance student performance. The study goes on to link achievement of high school students over a ten year period and clearly shows the long-term benefits of parental involvement, linking it directly to enhancing career success.

Catch Us at Our Best!

Americus–Sumter High South Parents Have Completed 2,705 Positive Activities with Their Teens This Year! Also, 51% of Participating Parents Say They Hear Something Positive About Their Teen Each Month!

Crossroads Academy Spotlights

Second chances are the hallmark of Crossroads Academy. It has become a place where students learn to appropriately communicate and demonstrate their talents. The smaller class sizes provide a learning environment where students and teachers can quickly get to know one another and students can work to build new habits. Students who attend Crossroads Academy have an opportunity to excel at their own pace and find that with real effort, they are able to make up class work, return to their home school, and in many cases, graduate.

Students at the Crossroads Academy focus on character and learn that all the character traits are key to them making the most of a second chance.



Catch Us at Our Best!

Even with a Very Small Enrollment, Crossroads Academy Parents Have Completed 249 Positive Activities with Their Teens This Year! Also, 33% of Participating Parents Say They Hear Something Positive About Their Teen Each Month!

Early College Spotlights

Every morning, Early College students meet for AVID (Advisement/Character Development) for 30 minutes. One day each week is designated for character development, so students work on “I Care” character-building activities.

Early College students show their creative side as class groups develop and perform character plays and skits which they video and later discuss with the larger group to demonstrate their understanding of the character traits they portray.

Early College students know that character matters. The class discussions of character traits during advisement, which culminate in student projects, are more than just an opportunity to creatively express what character traits mean, and how important they are. It is also an opportunity to help classmates see the importance of the monthly character trait and independent student mastery activities that help them to plan for their future.

Here’s an example of a character skit that students acted out recently:

A group of students were divided in half. Students from one half of the class were talking when an elderly person walked past them and stumbled. The students all rushed to help her. The other half of the class watched as a person dropped his wallet. They picked it up, divided the money, and walked away laughing. The narrator of the skits asked questions to the whole group about doing the right thing and how good citizenship was or was not demonstrated in each of the scenarios.

A different class had each student tell something they do in the community to demonstrate citizenship and what it means to be a good citizen. Students dressed for their parts as they acted out being a volunteer at a soup kitchen, voting, attending school, and cooperating with family members. The narrator asked the larger group questions about the importance of each activity and how it represented citizenship within the community.

Catch Us at Our Best!

Even with a Small Enrollment, Early College Parents Have Completed 3,414 Positive Activities with Their Teens This Year! Also, 100% of Parents Have Been Trained!

Performance Learning Center Spotlights

The PLC actively recruits mentors for their students and encourages them to use the monthly character-building and mentoring activities as the focus of discussions with them. This enables the PLC to continually reinforce learning and provide students with a greater understanding of character traits and how they apply to everyday life.



Left to Right: Jim Fowler, Kaylie Arnold, Dr. C. Fernandes, Brittany Cooper, Elbert Solomon, Daniella Eason, Lee Kinnamon, Reginald Harris

“The benefits of integrating character across the subject areas and grades are enormous,” according to Dr. Fernandes, a teacher at the PLC.

Here’s what some mentors say:

“The activities provided are interesting and fun and I’m able to share my work experience and show how the monthly character word benefits me on the job.”

“You always have something positive to talk about using the ‘I Care’ character-building activities.”

Here is a comment from a mentee: *“My mentor takes time to go through all the suggested character activities and we select one to focus on. When our time is up, I always walk away knowing more about the character word and how to use it to help me accomplish my goals.”*

The suggested character-building and mentoring activities allow mentors who use them to have a neutral discussion with their mentees to help them make the connection between good character, right choices, school performance, and personal growth and development.

“For all those caring adults who mentor, we thank you for all you do to help us build good character among all our students—one word at a time!” says Jim Fowler, PLC Director.

What My Mentor Has Meant to Me

by Edward White

My mentor, Mr. Solomon, has helped me to understand life better. I have personally made some positive changes as a result of discussing the character words each week and talking about life experiences. Today, I know that I am a better person and now I have goals for my life.



Catch Us at Our Best!

Even with a Small Enrollment, PLC Parents Have Completed 1,482 Positive Activities with Their Teens This Year! Also, 100% of Parents Have Been Trained!

Community Partners Share the Vision for Sumter

Visions for Sumter leads the “I Care” Community Partnership with SCS and makes it possible for community agencies, businesses, faith-based, and civic organizations to partner in a way that promotes good character.

Mrs. Knowles expressed her gratitude to the community partners who display the monthly character posters and distribute character messages and handbills, and recently said:

“We value our partners and thank them for sharing with us the vision of becoming a community of character where children are character strong, work ready, and prepared to continue their education beyond high school.”



Sample Month

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 “I Care” Activities go home.	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 Feedback Forms go home.	30 Feedback Forms returned.	

When can parents & mentors expect to receive “I Care” Character-Building Activities? This is a sample for any given month.

Sudoku!

4				7			
		7	3			8	5
5	2		6				7
	4		9	6		7	
3						1	
6		2				4	
			4	8		7	3
9		8	7	2	1		5
7	1	4		6	3		

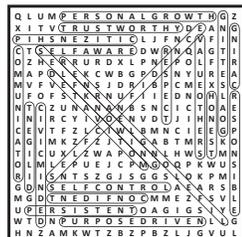
Instructions

Sudoku is a numeric puzzle with one simple rule: The numbers one to nine should appear only once in each row, column, and box.

This Sudoku puzzle has a medium level of difficulty.

Community Partners

- 4E Learning Center
- Americus Area Employers Committee
- Americus–Sumter County Chamber of Commerce
- Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church
- Christians for Change
- Citizens Bank of Americus
- City of Americus
- DOCO Credit Union
- Dorothea’s Barber & Beauty Shop
- Final Faze Barber & Beauty Salon
- First State Bank
- Georgia Department of Labor–Americus Office
- Georgia Southwestern State University
- Gladys’ Restaurant
- Harveys Supermarkets
- “I Care” Products & Services
- Master Kutz Barbershop
- Motivations Barber Salon
- Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church
- Peoples South Bank
- Professional Cuts Barbershop
- Restoration Church of Americus
- South Georgia Technical College
- Sumter Area Ministerial Association
- Sumter Bank & Trust
- Sumter County Board of County Commissioners
- Sumter County Housing Authority
- Sumter County Board of Education
- The Getter Group
- Union Tabernacle Baptist Church
- Victory Worship Center
- Visions for Sumter
- Wachovia Bank
- WISK Radio Station
- Zion Hope Baptist Church



Answers to Word Search on Page 4

Become a Partner!

Become a partner today! It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3.

1. Join the “I Care” Partnership by completing the one-page membership form. (Contact SCS Parental Involvement Program @ 931–8500)
2. Secure and post in a visible location the monthly character posters (poster packs available for Elementary, Middle, and High School).
3. Integrate the monthly character traits into your organization’s work ethics, discussing the benefits of the monthly character word to greater productivity in your setting.

