



**AHFACHKEE**  
**SCHOOL** ◆◆◆◆◆

RESPONSIBILITY • CITIZENSHIP • TOLERANCE • KINDNESS • RESPECT • HONESTY • SELF-CONTROL • COOPERATION

**BIG CYPRESS** — “Character Counts” could be the new mantra at the Ahfachkee School, which has implemented a character education program across the curriculum in all grade levels.

Each month, teachers incorporate one of eight character traits into the daily lessons and activities in every pre-K-12 class. At the end of each month, a student of the month will be awarded a certificate for displaying that character trait consistently.

“We want the students to understand and identify these important character traits,” said Yvonne Thomas, Ahfachkee guidance counselor. “When they know what they really mean, they can implement them every day.”

The eight character traits are cooperation, responsibility, citizenship, kindness, respect, honesty, self-control and tolerance.

“These traits will create strong leaders,” said Principal Dorothy Cain. “We know studying these traits will make strong, well rounded students and citizens.”

The curriculum is based on other successful existing programs, but it has been tailored for Ahfachkee with its small and homogeneous student population.

Character education programs have been shown to develop a positive school atmosphere, reduce the number of discipline referrals, increase academic achievement, reduce absenteeism and guide students into leadership roles.

“Students will practice the traits all year,” Cain said. “One trait will build on another so they become part of students’ everyday life. Leaders exhibit those traits and we want our kids to be leaders.”

The traits appear to be straight-forward, but it cannot be assumed that students understand the true meaning of the words. That’s where the activities and integration into the curriculum come in; by the end of the month the students should understand and demonstrate those characteristics.

To bolster the monthly message, starting in October, Thomas will include the program in the 21st Century after school program with a group for third-to-fifth-graders, complete with fun activities and projects.

“The program will allow students to make better choices, get along with everyone and become a productive member of society,” Thomas said. “We hope this program will make our school a better place.”

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