

Character Education

By Ann Shoemaker

Dozier Elementary The First *Manners of the Heart*[®] Model School in Alabama



Pizza, Puppets, and Polite Behavior—an unlikely combination that has yielded amazing results. In 2000, Domino's Pizza owner, Jeff Brigner, provided initial funding to have the *Manners of the*

Heart[®] character education curriculum placed in Dozier Elementary. With help from Wilbur, “the Wise Old Owl” puppet, 36 life lessons have been used to emphasize that respect for others is foundational in how we treat one another. Two years later, teachers at this outstanding school report significant improvements in classroom behavior. Of course, less time spent on discipline issues leaves more time for instruction and provides an atmosphere more conducive to learning.



Parents, teachers and students use puppets to teach manners at Dozier Elementary in Montgomery! Pictured (from left) are parent Joelen Beckham, student Jessica Beckham, ASU student teacher Angela Hutton, and teacher Kathy Black.

Partnering with Character@Heart, the non-profit organization that secures funding to provide curriculum and training, the Dozier faculty and parents have wholeheartedly embraced the program. Principal Cindy McKenzie has worked tirelessly to see that this three-pronged approach to “*building character today for a better tomorrow*” would flourish among her students. As a result, the triad of school, home and community support has succeeded so well that Dozier Elementary has been named a *Manners of the Heart Model School*, the first recipient of this honor in Alabama.

Model school criteria include: excellence in instruction, significant parent involvement, and notable improvement in classroom environment as revealed by desirable student behavior. Word of the success of Dozier's program has spread across Central Alabama. As a result, staff and teachers from Ft. Dale Academy in Greenville recently visited Dozier to observe this award-winning school in action.



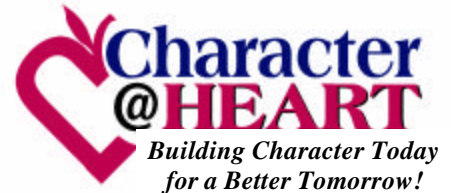
Fort Dale Academy staff and teachers learn from teachers and students at Dozier Elementary. Pictured (from left) are student Bettie Bailey, teacher Candy Cook, student Anna Terry, and Michael McLendon from Ft. Dale Academy.

The PTO's endorsement has been evident with over 75 parents purchasing the companion guide for parents to reinforce the classroom lessons. In addition, parents serve as classroom volunteers. The organization has also provided funding for additional *Manners of the Heart* curriculum.

Congratulations to Dozier students, teachers, and parents for a job well done in modeling a self-giving attitude of the heart! Clearly, they, like Wilbur, “give a hoot” about good manners and are willing to “go out on a limb” to prove it!

Ann Shoemaker, with over 27 years of experience as elementary school teacher, became Director of Home and School Support for Character@Heart, Inc. in 2001. To find out how you can bring Manners of the Heart to your school, contact Character@Heart at 334-272-4276 or by email: characteratheart@aol.com.

“*Manners of the Heart*,” by Jill Rigby, is a registered trademark of Respectfully Yours, Inc. For more information, go to:
www.mannersoftheheart.com.



Founded in April 2000, Character@Heart, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to building character in the youth of America. All contributions are tax deductible. Because of the leadership and support of corporate and community leaders, and schools and parents across Alabama, over 15,000 children in 100 schools in 20 counties are *building character today for a better tomorrow in Alabama!*

A Special Thanks!



Caddell Construction
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Thank you for helping build character today for a better tomorrow for the children of Montgomery!

Manners in My Heart

Today at school was awful.
My best friend was very sad.
I'd said mean things about him.
And hit him on the head.

My teacher was disappointed
I could see it in her eyes.
I bowed my head in shame.
And cried, cried, cried.

I reflected on my day
As I lay upon my bed.
Alas, I found the answer
Why my day was bad.

I forgot to use my manners.
I'd left them by the door.
Now where could I put them
So this won't happen anymore.

Perhaps inside my backpack.
No, that's not very smart.
The one place I can't lose them
Is if I keep them in my heart.

Written by
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