ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Character education promotes an environment where all people are treated with respect and dignity, with students taking responsibility for their behavior. This kind of education has made a huge comeback with many programs being implemented to help with the promoting of values and with making good decisions when disagreements arise. Through their books, Stan and Jan Berenstain have helped to instill these good qualities in children through the Berenstain Bears’ characters.

Whether the topic is bullying, teasing, telling the truth, or lending a helping hand, the Berenstain Bears always show a foundation of good values. Encouraging such traits as responsibility, perseverance, caring, self-discipline, citizenship, honesty, courage, fairness, and respect promotes empathetic behavior, making any situation better. This guide is the perfect resource for stimulating thoughts and discussion to implement character education in your daily activities.
HONESTY  RESPECT  RESPONSIBILITY  FAIRNESS  PERSEVERE

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS’ NEW NEIGHBORS

About This Book
A new family moves in across the street from the Berenstain Bears. See how the Bears convince Papa Bear to befriend the Pandas even if they’re different.

Respect—Discuss the importance of respecting others and appreciating different beliefs, behaviors, and appearances. Discuss how boring we all would be if we were the same. Ask students to brainstorm some things about themselves that they are proud of and are different from anyone else. Reproduce the “Celebrating Our Differences” sheet, then have students write and illustrate how they are different. Collect to make a book and share with the class.

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS AND THE BLAME GAME

About This Book
Who’s to blame? The Berenstain Bears learn what really matters is how we work together to fix the problem.

Responsibility—Discuss the importance of being responsible for one’s own actions and facing the consequences for those actions. For every action there is a consequence, one that often needs a solution. What caused the window and the vase to break? How did the Berenstain Bears solve the problem of the broken vase and the window? Use the reproducible “The Berenstain Bears Explore Cause and Effect” sheet to help extend this lesson.

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS LEND A HELPING HAND

About This Book
When Mama concludes that there’s too much “Me, me, me!” in Brother and Sister’s behavior, she encourages them to help elderly Widow McGrizz to see that there are rewards in giving a helping hand to those less fortunate.

Caring—In the story Brother and Sister only think of themselves—they even cringe when Mama Bear offers their assistance with cleaning Widow McGrizz’s attic. However, once they start sorting through all the interesting items, they find that helping other can be fun and giving at the same time. Have the students brainstorm different ways they can help their neighbors or community, then choose one to have as a class project.

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS AND THE HOMEWORK HASSLE

About This Book
Mama and Papa Bear receive a letter from Brother Bear’s teacher reporting that he has not been completing his homework assignments. They soon realize that there’s a whole lot of activities distracting Brother’s attention.

Self-Discipline—Brother Bear and Papa Bear both have difficulty keeping up with their work. What lesson did Brother Bear learn by going to Grandpa and Grandma’s house? What lesson did Brother learn after seeing the BRS agent speaking with Papa? Do you think they both learned their lesson? Define the term self-discipline, as doing something that you are supposed to, even if there are sometimes you may not want to. Ask students if they put things off that they shouldn’t and have them give examples. Then as a class comes up with some strategies to help fellow classmates find a way to exercise self-discipline. Use the “Berenstain Bears Help with Homework” sheet to keep track of assignments and chores.

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS AND THE IN-CROWD

About This Book
Queenie McBear, the bossy new she-cub in town, tries to take over by putting other cubs down. Sister Bear decides not to give in to Queenie’s peer pressure tactics.

Courage—Discuss the pressures one goes through in hopes to keep up with the in-crowd. It takes courage to stand up to others, even when the others are some of your friends. Mama Bear tries helping by buying Sister Bear a new designer outfit, hoping that she will fit in with Queenie. Why was that not the best solution? How did Sister gain that insight and how does she overcome the need to fit in with the in-crowd? Using the “Berenstain Bears Stomp Out Peer Pressure” worksheet, have students think of situations where there may be pressure to do something they don’t want to do and write them inside the circles. Tell students to use the spokes to record ways to handle each situation.

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS AND THE EXCUSE NOTE

About This Book
Sister Bear loves school except for gym class. But when a slight twist of fate gives her the chance to sit on the sidelines, will Sister stretch the truth instead of her arms?
Honesty—Define honesty and discuss as a class why being honest is important. Was Sister being honest with Teacher Jane by using the note Mama gave her even when her ankle was feeling better? Ask students to write in their journals about a similar situation where they chose to be honest with another person. How did that make them feel?

**THE BERENSTAIN BEARS DON’T POLLUTE (ANYMORE)**

About This Book
When careless citizens pose a threat to Bear Country’s environment, Brother and Sister Bear form the Earthsavers Club to deliver a timely message about polluting and wasteful ways.

Citizenship—Brother and Sister learn the importance of ecology, conservation, and recycling. Define these terms then as a class, then brainstorm some different ways they help stop pollution. Have students make posters to help encourage people not to pollute and display them for the whole school to see.

**THE BERENSTAIN BEARS GO OUT FOR THE TEAM**

About This Book
When backyard sluggers Brother and Sister join the Bear Country Cub League, they get real uniforms and play on a baseball field. But can Mama’s advice help them prepare to overcome the pressure and competition?

Perseverance—Brother and Sister put in a lot of time to try out for the Bear Country Cub League, and even the missed ground balls don’t stop them from trying. Ask the students why they think Brother and Sister continued practicing. Define perseverance and how important it is to keep trying, no matter how difficult the task may become. Have students write and illustrate an experience they have had that was very challenging, but they succeeded only because of their hard work.

**THE BERENSTAIN BEARS AND TOO MUCH TEASING**

About This Book
Brother Bear is a master at teasing—until the tables are turned and he’s the one being heckled for being the principal’s pet. And when Brother finally understands that teasing isn’t just mean, it’s also dangerous, he actually decides to stick up for the new kid at school.

Fairness—Brother loves teasing Sister, even though he knows she hates it. When Brother in turn gets teased once he becomes Mr. Honeycomb’s special messenger, some would think he got what was fair or “what comes around, goes around.” Ask students what they think about teasing and if it is fair to tease back. Discuss how Brother does what is fair when he finds a way to stop the others from teasing him.

**THE BERENSTAIN BEARS THINK OF THOSE IN NEED**

About This Book
Mama Bear convinces the family that cleaning out the house can not only simplify their cluttered lives, but can also benefit those who are in need!

Caring—Discuss the importance of helping those in need. Review the different charitable actions of the Berenstain Bears in the story. Ask the class to brainstorm things they could do to help those in need. Choose a project to work on as a class.

**INTERNET RESOURCES**

Goodcharacter.com — www.goodcharacter.com
Free character education resources. Curriculum materials, discussion questions, and more!

National Character Education Center
www.ethicsusa.com
Includes information about national seminars.

Character Counts! — www.charactercounts.org
Character Counts! is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nondenominational organization of schools, communities, and nonprofit organizations working to advance character education.

The Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character — www.bu.edu/education/caec
This network is a place for students, teachers, schools, and communities to facilitate character education.