What is *Character*?

By "character" we mean those qualities that define us as persons -- who we are, what we stand for, and how we treat others: in essence, our personal *identity*. These personal qualities are acquired from multiple sources throughout life, although the formative years during youthful development are the most influential. Individuals and families, communities and societies that seek to promote ethical character are more enduring, peaceful, productive, and compassionate.

What is Character Education?

Character education is the systematic teaching of ethical principles and standards. The premise for character education is that people, especially young people, can be taught to value and to live by high ethical principles and standards in spite of negative influences around them. It is preventive in nature rather than a reactionary response to a crisis. Effective character education targets a manageable set of character qualities that have universal relevance and contributes substantially to the development of ethical character and the critical sense of identity that emerges from its acquisition.

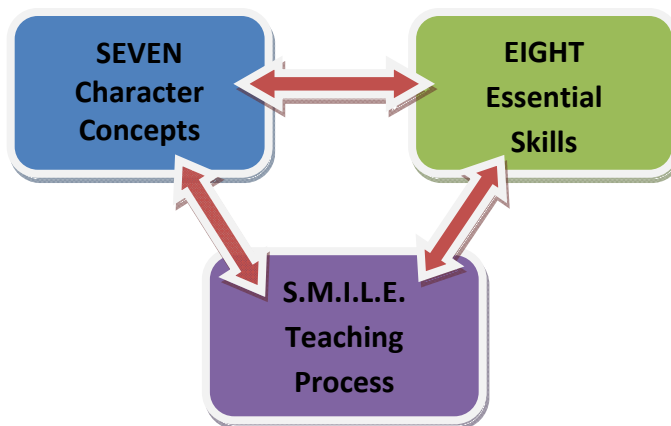## What is AEGIS Character Education?

The AEGIS (ee jus) program is a unique **prevention** approach that addresses basic, root causes of high risk behavior. It is designed to help children learn to resist negative peer pressure, acquire a strong sense of personal responsibility, and build respect for themselves and others.

"AEGIS" comes from a Greek word meaning shield. The shield was believed to provide protection from "both physical and moral danger". Like the shield, the concepts and skills taught in the *AEGIS Character Education Program* will help students develop internal protections from external "physical and moral danger".

This comprehensive program is research based, age appropriate, applicable to real life, and most of all, effective. The *AEGIS Character Education Program* uses a systematic approach for teaching concepts and skills which creates the understanding of, value for, and commitment to positive, ethical behavior.

The AEGIS program has three key components that are interrelated and systematically delivered. These components are:

AEGIS Character Education

There are many positive qualities and characteristics that are worth teaching. The AEGIS curriculum concentrates on a manageable set of seven universal concepts. The AEGIS program also focuses on eight essential skills that enable the development and expression of good character. These concepts and skills are useful and applicable across various cultures, races, religions, and moral codes. They are explained, modeled, practiced, and applied to real-life situations using the S.M.I.L.E. teaching/learning process.