

The following narrative is a sample response to the leadership, service, and character prompts on the student survey form. NHS leadership would like to thank the student who gave permission to the Massaco Chapter to use her statement as an exemplar on the NHS website. The student's name has been removed.

Service to School and Community

One way I have served in my school was by helping Principal O'Brien with the planters next to the picnic tables. He needed people to help plant and water them. I volunteered to help and I will continue to help watering them and plant new plants in the courtyard during the spring. Having been in high school for two years now, I have noticed that during the winter the school seems so dreary and gloom. I am so happy that I have volunteered to help keep the planters in our school alive and healthy because having bright green plants will make the school feel more fresh and alive, even in the winter. I had also volunteered in a nursing home in West Hartford for three consecutive summers. I volunteered twice a week, for three hours each day and it felt so great to volunteer there. I would play balloon volleyball, bingo, and many word games. One woman was a new resident at the nursing home; however, she was very adamant about not going outside. She seemed depressed but with the help of another woman we were able to have the elderly woman agree to come outside. After trying extremely hard to start a two-sided conversation with this woman, she finally opened up and started telling me all about her childhood stories. After sitting with her that afternoon she did not want to go inside because she realized how much she missed the fresh air and natural beauty. After that day with her, I really felt like I served the community because I helped change the attitude of someone in our community.

Leadership in School and Community

I have demonstrated leadership in our school because I was on the officer board of a club called Best Buddies for my freshmen and sophomore year but now I am the president of the club. It is a club that fosters friendships between students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. This club is serious to me and I lead my other officer members with my organization, enthusiasm, and positive. I am a role model to my other club members and I am extremely willing to delegate responsibilities like: emailing parents, emailing teachers, texting other club members, or getting group events approved. Part of being a leader is not being too controlling and overpowering and I think delegating roles to my other officer members makes sure that I don't become too overpowering. Last spring I went to the prom with a boy who has special needs. I believe that I set an example for my peers because I was not scared of what people thought about me or who I went to the prom with. All I was focused on was making sure that my date had a good time and did not feel isolated. I think that this led my peers in a direction of acceptance, after realizing that it is okay to be different. Although I directly demonstrate leadership in Best Buddies, I believe that I demonstrate leadership in more general ways. I try to demonstrate leadership by showing people that saying hi to someone with special needs in the hallway does not make you weird, but brave and kind. Also, sitting with someone at lunch who other people view as weird makes you compassionate, not a loser. Leaders exemplify what they want other people to do and how they want other people to act. Eventually, the leader will not have to be a leader because everyone will demonstrate those same morals. I aspire for that to happen with acceptance. I have started and want to continue leading people to become accepting of differences, whether it is people in our school or our community.

Character Evidence in School and Community:

The past two years I have received a Trojan Character Award. This award shows that I have never received a detention and that I have embodied the pillars of our Trojan Code. Although I was happy to be recognized for this; I do not find it to truly represent my true

character. I am always willing to accept criticism. One time I showed my character was in my biology class last year. We all had to make a cell diagram but our teacher told us that someone had plagiarized. I based my cell diagram on the illustration in our textbook. I was so nervous that I was the one accused for plagiarizing; therefore, I emailed my teacher telling her that it could have been me but if it was, I was terribly sorry. Although I was not even certain that my teacher was talking about me, I felt the need to make sure that I was being honest and taking responsibility for my actions. I think that this shows my character because even though I was not sure if I had plagiarized by accident, I needed to be honest and no cheat and lie. My teacher then told me that I was not the one who had plagiarized. This past summer I went to a Yankee game at Yankee Stadium. As you could have probably guessed after reading this, I hate when people use the "R" word. There were about four men and three women in front of us who looked like professionals, businessmen or lawyers of some sort. However, the entire night I could not focus on the game because throughout the game the people sitting in front of me were using the "R" word like it was a usual word in their vocabulary. Not one other word can make me cringe as much as the "R" word. My sister has Down syndrome and not only is it offensive to her but it is offensive to every single person with an intellectual or developmental disability. It almost ruined my night to hear them use this word so casually. Instead of letting it ruin my night, I decided that instead of getting angry, I should educate. I knew that this intimidating bunch of professionals would not want to hear me speak and try to educate them about how the "R" word should not be used. However, I was extremely nervous to say anything to any of them, but I did it anyway. Right before I left, with my shaking index finger, I tapped one of the men on the shoulder. He turned around looking annoyed that he had to give up thirty seconds to talk to me. I came right out and said how I felt about the "R" word, and how it is extremely offensive. My voice could not have been shaking more than it already was but I told him in a kind voice that this word should not be used and there are many substitutions that could easily replace that word. The man and all of colleagues were now staring at me, they did not want to listen or even remotely give me their understanding. After saying a few final words, I left the game. Even if those professionals still use this word today, at least I showed them and the people around me that anyone can stand up for what is right and what they believe in, whether it makes a large impact or a minute one. To me, character means that you need to stay true to yourself and to what you know is right. I think that I have exemplified my character when talking to those people at the end of the baseball game.