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Character education program : an evaluation description

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Abstract

In today 's world, all children face great uncertainties in a complex and sometimes troubled society. These traits are not always readily apparent and easy to grasp or learn. Today, schools face the challenge of providing youth with the self-esteem, stamina, and support they need to survive, be successful, and develop into strong, competent, caring, and responsible citizens. To meet the challenge schools have either developed or adopted character education programs.

This paper focused on three elements common to most character education programs: (]) the school program must include parent and community outreach, planning and structure, school climate, curriculum, and assessment; (2) programs on teaching six aspects of character: caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness; and (3) all character education programs would not be an add-on but would be integrated into the school 's existing culture and curriculum. The strengths and weaknesses of some common character education programs and provided along with recommendation and implications for educators and other professionals.

Character Education Program:
An Evaluation Description

A Research Paper Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

In today's world, all children face great uncertainties in a complex and sometimes troubled society. These traits are not always readily apparent and easy to grasp or learn. Today, schools face the challenge of providing youth with the self-esteem, stamina, and support they need to survive, be successful, and develop into strong, competent, caring, and responsible citizens. To meet the challenge schools have either developed or adopted character education programs. This paper focused on three elements common to most character education programs: (1) the school program must include parent and community outreach, planning and structure, school climate, curriculum, and assessment; (2) programs on teaching six aspects of character: caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness; and (3) all character education programs would not be an add-on but would be integrated into the school's existing culture and curriculum. The strengths and weaknesses of some common character education programs and provided along with recommendation and implications for educators and other professionals.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Character education is as old as education itself. Down through history, education

has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good

(http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/history.htm). Good character consists of moral

knowing, moral feeling, and moral acting: Understanding core ethical values, caring

about them, and acting upon them. These values include respect, responsibility,

trustworthiness, fairness, diligence, self-control, caring, and courage

(http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/ce_iv.htm). People do not automatically develop good

character. Children are not born knowing how to respond appropriately to questions that

will test their intellect or their morality, but they are born with the capacity to learn all

they are likely to need to know about decency and decimals. Intentional and focused

effort must be made – by families, schools, faith communities, youth organizations,

government, and the media – to foster the character development of the young. School is

a natural place for youth to learn and develop good character. As a result, character

education programs are needed and have been adopted in schools.

This paper examines the essential elements of character education by evaluating

some common character education programs. The commonalities and differences are

noted, and their implications for education are drawn.

Statement of the Problem

A series of social and cultural problems exist if society loses its morals. Such

problems include crime, prejudice, alcohol use, homelessness, high divorce rate, unwed

parents and teen-age pregnancies, substance abuse, school violence, classroom cheating, and child abuse.

In a recent survey reported by the *Boston Globe*, more than half of ninth-graders in an affluent suburb said they saw nothing wrong with stealing a compact disc or keeping money found in a lost wallet. Fifty percent of U.S. high school seniors say they are currently sexually active; half of these say they have had four or more partners; and the United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate and teen abortion rate in the industrialized world, according to the federal government's 1995 National Survey of Family Growth. Among leading industrialized nations, the United States has by far the highest murder rate for 15- to 24-year-old males which is seven times higher than Canada's and 40 times higher than Japan's (Murphy, 1998).

Excessive divorce rates, loss of family support, relentless exposure of children to media violence and sex, gangs, alcohol and drugs, and individualism have had a devastating effect on the lives of children and created an unclear vision for their future. Too many young people lack the ability to look forward to the long term with hopefulness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998).

Significance of the Problem

As societal moral problems have worsened, character education has made a comeback. Adults realize that the young need moral direction. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to provide it – to pass on a moral heritage. The school has a responsibility to stand for good values and help students form their character around such values. Character education is directive rather than nondirective; it asserts the rightness

of certain values and help students to understand, care about, and act upon these values in their lives, such as respect, responsibility, honesty, caring, and fairness (http://www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/history.htm).

According to Lickona (1991), there are three additional reasons for school to provide character education. The first is that we need good character to be fully human. We need strengths of mind, heart, and will to be capable of work and love, two of the hallmarks of human maturity, that qualities like good judgment, honesty, empathy, caring, persistence, and self-discipline. The second reason to make character education a high priority is the schools are better places when they are civil and caring communities that promulgate, teach, celebrate, and enforce the values on which good character is based, certainly more conducive to teaching and learning. A third reason for character education is that it is essential to the task of building a moral society. It is painfully clear that the contemporary society suffers severe social and moral problems: the breakdown of the family, rampant greed at a time when one of every four children lives in poverty, dishonesty at all levels of society, a rising tide of sleaze in the media, the deterioration of civility in everyday life, the breakdown of sexual morality, widespread drug and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse of children, and epidemic of violence, and the devaluation of human life represented by a million and a half abortions each year. And, as is typically the case, society's problems are most visibly reflected in its youth (Huffman, 1994).

Ten troubling youth trends indicate the dimensions of difficulty: rising youth violence; increasing dishonesty (lying, cheating, and stealing); great disrespect for

parents, teachers, and other legitimate authority figures; increasing peer cruelty; a rise in bigotry and hate crime; the deterioration of language; a decline in the work ethic; increasing self-centeredness, accompanied by declining personal and civic responsibility; a surge of self-destructive behaviors such as premature sexual activity, substance abuse, and suicide; and growing ethical illiteracy, including ignorance of moral knowledge as basic as the Golden Rule and the tendency to engage in behaviors injurious to self or others without thinking it wrong (Del Ray, 1990; Lickona, 1991; & Kilpatrick, 1992).

In response to these moral danger signs, interest in character education is steadily building. The goal of character education is to help young people know, care about, and act on core ethical values such as fairness, honesty, kindness, respect for others, and responsibility. Character educators, parents, and community members need to provide students with positive environment, help them enjoy being in school, help them acquire skills to improve academic learning, and stress the connection between coursework and their life experiences. These experiences motivate students to want to learn more; in other words, standards affect character and vice versa.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are intended to guide schools in providing the basis for the teaching of character education.

Values: moral or professional standards of behaviour; principals.

Character: all those features that make a person who she/he is and different from others.

<u>Character education</u>: the long-term process by which positive personality traits are developed, encouraged and reinforced through example, study and practice.

Organization of This Paper

This paper consists of three chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the paper. It addresses statement of the problem, points out the significance of the problem, provides some definition of terms, and the organization of this paper.

The chapter two, literature review overviews character and character education; its historical background; assumptions; and summary and conclusion.

The third chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents an overview and evaluates five common character education programs. The second section is a summary. The final section shows an implication.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to give readers a clear picture of character

education's origin and background. In addition, it examines the relationship among

family, school and community in character education. The literature review is divided

into four sections. The first section describes what is character and character education.

The second section reviews character education's historical background. The third

section states its assumptions. The final section is a summary and conclusion.

What Is Character and Character Education?

Character comes from the Greek work *Charakter*, which means "enduring mark."

The *Charakter* of a person is considered to be the distinguishing qualities or principles to

which the person subscribes as a guide for his or her behavior. Character influences how

someone makes decisions or chooses to act or not to act; it summarizes the general way

in which a person deals with others (Murphy, 1998).

Character is "engaging in morally relevant conduct or words, or refraining from

certain conduct or words" (Wynne & Walberg, 1989, p.38). Moral character includes

"those enduring aspects of the expression of personhood to which we are inclined to give

moral evaluation across different attitudinal and behavioral contexts" (Boyd, 1989, p.99).

According to Kevin Ryan (1993), Professor at Boston University and Director of the

Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character" "To have good character means to

be a person who has the capacity to know the good, love the good and do the good'

(p.16). Character therefore is a holistic term, concerning the whole person. It means to

have a good head, good heart, and good hands. "Good character," according to the traditional perspective, needs to be taught, imparted; that is, children must be directly instructed in virtuous behavior. The premise of character education is that there are virtues, objective good human qualities, that should be taught to all. These virtues are held to transcend religious and cultural differences (Traiger, 1995).

"Character Education" is an umbrella term used to describe many aspects of teaching and learning for personal development. Some areas under this umbrella are "moral reasoning/cognitive development"; "social and emotional learning"; "moral education/virtue"; "life skills education"; "caring community"; "health education"; "violence prevention"; "conflict resolution/peer mediation" and "ethic/moral philosophy" (Character Education Partnership, 1999, 3).

However, character education lacks a universal definition. In the 1920s, a concerted and deliberate effort to focus on issues related to good character took root in American schools, prompted by concerns about the erosion of society that concerns very similar to those held by character educations today. But the results of large-scale research and evaluation undertaken by Hugh Hartshorne, Mark A. May, and associates (1927), found that despite these educative efforts, values did not predict individuals' choice of behavior in a real-life situation. In other words, individuals' actual behavior remained situational no matter how they had been schooled about values. This key and central finding ran counter to what the researchers wanted to discover, but it sounded a death knell for character education in the public schools in any purposeful sense for many years. In the 1960s and 1970s, educators talked of "moral education" and the acquisition

of "values." Current character education advocates deliberately choose different terms to describe their efforts and goals, quite possibly because they have distanced themselves form what they perceive as ill-conceived efforts to develop moral reasoning or clarify values in youth. As a result, they have settled on the term character education as the semantic vehicle to carry their aspirations. Current character education advocates emphasize the development of "virtue," "life skills," "citizenship skills," and so on. (Lockwood, 1997)

The Character Education Partnership (CEP) which is a national coalition of individuals and organizations concerned about our children's character development, defines character education as "the long-term process of helping young people develop good character, i.e., knowing, caring about, and acting on core ethical values such as fairness, honesty, compassion, responsibility, and respect for self and others." Character education helps young people build their own value system to prepare them to address life's moral and ethical problems, and to delineate rights and responsibilities to help them become mature adults capable of responsible citizenship and moral action. Character education is no panacea. By itself, it will not repair disintegrating schools, neighborhoods, or families; dry up the drug trade; or create jobs. But it can be an important part of efforts to invest in our children's development and well-being.

<div align="center">Historical Background</div>

The American Founders believed that democracy has a special need for character education, because democracy is government by the people themselves. The people must therefore be good, must develop "democratic virtues": Respect for the rights of

individuals, regard for law, voluntary participation in public life, and concern for the common good. Acting on that belief, schools in the earliest days of republic tackled character education head on—through discipline, the teacher's example, and the daily school curriculum. The Bible was the public school's sourcebook for both moral and religious instruction. When struggles eventually arose over whose Bible to use and which doctrines to teach, William McGuffey stepped onto the stage in 1836 to offer his McGuffey Readers, ultimately to sell more than 100 million copies. McGuffey retained many favorite Biblical stories but added poems, exhortations, and heroic tales. While children practiced their reading or arithmetic, they also learned lessons about honesty, love of neighbor, kindness to animals, hard work, thriftiness, patriotism, and courage. Character education remained a central part of the public school's mission until the middle part of the 20th century.

In the 20th century, the consensus supporting character education began to crumble. Darwinism introduced a new metaphor, evolution, that led people to see all things, including morality, as being in flux.

The philosophy of logical positivism, arriving at American universities from Europe, asserted a radical distinction between *facts* and *values*. As a result of positivism, morality was relativized and privatized that made to seem a matter of personal "value judgment," not a subject for public debate and transmission through the schools.

In the 1960s, a worldwide rise in personalism celebrated the worth, autonomy, and subjectivity of the person, emphasizing individual rights and freedom over responsibility. Personalism rightly protested societal oppression and injustice, but it also

delegitimized moral authority, eroded belief in objective moral norms, turned people

inward toward self-fulfillment, weakened social commitments, and fueled the socially

destabilizing sexual revolution. Finally, the rapidly intensifying pluralism of American

society (Whose values should we teach?) and the increasing secularization of the public

arena (Won't moral education violate the separation of church and state?), became two

more barriers to achieving the moral consensus indispensable for character education in

the public schools. Public schools retreated from their once central role as moral and

character educators.

The 1970s saw a return of values education, but in new forms: Dewey's values

clarification and Kohlberg's moral dilemma discussions. In different ways, both

expressed the individualist spirit of the age. Values clarification said, don't impose

values; help students choose their values freely. Kohlberg said, develop students' powers

of moral reasoning so they can judge which values are better than others (Lickona, 1993).

They both avoid the virtue-centered approaches to character education, emphasizing

instead the *process* of moral decision-making and the importance of individual freedom

and autonomy. Both believed that their open-ended approaches offered a moral

education consistent with contemporary American lifestyles. In both of these systems,

teachers are not to moralize; teachers are facilitators of student-generated discussion,

creators of cognitive conflict, and/or stimulators of social perspective-taking in students

(Reimer et al., 1983; McClellan, 1992). Research on the effectiveness of these two

approaches has shown that the moral discussion approach is effective, that is, one can

measure increases in cognitive reasoning levels through the use of moral dilemma

discussions; but values clarification research findings are inconclusive; it does not seem "to work." However, it is also hard to define exactly what it would do effectively if it did work (Leming, 1993). Values clarification and moral reasoning can be classified as process-oriented approaches to moral education that lack a contextual base (Murphy, 1998).

Today, the escalating problems in society, such as crimes of violence by young people, make it imperative that schools once again directly address the subject of values and character (Traiger, 1995). The teaching of human virtues and the subsequent shaping of "good character" needs to be restored to its historical place as the central desirable outcome of the school's moral enterprise (Lickona, 1993).

However, here are some of the factors that present the challenge and thus the need for character education, such as parents, media, and social problems.

1. Parents who do not teach or model

Children whose parents do not teach or model morality are more likely to engage in violent, dishonest, and irresponsible conduct. Behind almost every teenager committing a violent crime is a parent who did a lot of things very wrong. According to Hackley (1998), huge percentages of young people admit that they lie to their parents, cheat on tests, and steal from stores.

2. Media that doesn't condone character building

The mass media including books, comics, radio, television, and video games, have been shown to have an influence on a broad range of behaviors and attitudes,

including aggression, social stereotyping, prosocial behavior, and social attitudes (Donnerstein & Smith, 2001).

According to Signorielli (1990), the media provoke delinquency and violence, cause moral depravity and undermine family life. The media reduce educational achievement, destroy children's intellectual and imaginative abilities, and brainwash them into racism, sexism and consumerism.

3. Social problem

Crimes are committed on or near school property; students carry guns to school daily; suicides among young people have risen; drug and alcohol use is widespread; and teenage sexual activity seems to be at an all-time high. Therefore, teachers do not want to teach because of student misbehavior.

These behaviors are troubling enough, but just as worrisome are the attitudes that accompany them. Many youngsters have a difficult time seeing any moral dimension to their actions (Kilpatrick, 1992).

4. Character education is the answer & school is the place for it

Children hold up a mirror to society; in it, we see ourselves. Disturbed by that image, increasing numbers of schools and their communities are coming together to return schooling to its most important mission: the formation of good character.

Forming character must begin in the home, starting in the earliest childhood years, but after that, school must help. To be successful, we must have character being taught within the "ethos" or life of the school. The schools have the greatest potential for overcoming the crisis of character that is raging all around us. From kindergarten

through the university, character education was considered just as important as intellectual knowledge. (McDonnell, 1998).

<div align="center">Assumptions</div>

Character education is implemented under the following assumptions:

1. A child needs to be ready for school before he can get anything out of it. Parents are the primary moral educators of their children. Although there is growing chorus of voices calling for the schools to take a more active role in character education, parents have the major responsibility for their children's knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good. Parents bring children into the world, feed and clothe them, and prepare them first to take their place in school and then to take their place in the larger society. Parents' emotional bonds with their children greatly enhance their power to influence their children's moral values and sense of right and wrong.

Character development is not by and large the result of special lessons. It is embedded in and the product of the child's growth. The totality of the process of child development gives structure and depth to a child's character, especially in the preschool years. What parents do makes up the raw material from which the child's values develop. The value the parents place on the child is his first "value," and helps define the child's image of himself form the very beginning. We notice that the process of loving the child gets started before the inception of his separate existence, with the twinkle in the eye of the man and woman who wish for a child (Berger, 1999).

At a very young age, children gain most of their sense of self from their parents. In fact, children see themselves as an extension of their parents during the first few years

of life. Over time, other factors, such as peers and non-family authority figures, influence identity development.

2. Community involvement.

Individual families find it extremely difficult to fight alone to save their children and create safe neighborhoods. They must have the support of their neighbors to build a caring, child-centered community. In order for each child to be safe, all the children must be safe. Then adults can teach children values, good manners, a work ethic, good health habits—and that character is no less important than calculus. A positive response to changing unethical behavior and the cynicism it engenders will not develop by chance. It requires deliberate, unending, cooperative action. The community is the only place where this action can take form and a better society can be brought about.

Summary & Conclusion

The rise of teenage drug and alcohol use, early teenage pregnancies, hate crimes, gang-related activities, random violence, and the decline in the national average of academic achievement have become major societal issues resulting in a need for a commitment by community, business, and educational leaders to remedy these social ills. These problems are driven by the lack of values and character in the society and that the place to address these concerns. As a result, character education is to be of great urgency. One side of character education is to create schools and communities that are caring, civil, and challenging (both academically and behaviorally). The other side is to develop young citizens who are smart, decent, and responsible. Character education

programs are helpful in reaching goals. To make a program effective, it must occur within a positive school climate, and students must have opportunities outside of the classroom to practice good character through service programs, classroom decision making, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring (Lickona 1991; Kilpatrick 1992; Wynne 1997). The next chapter will describe and evaluate some common character education programs.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Character development is the other broad goal of education, along with academic development. Character education helps children and youth to understand, care about, and act on core ethical and citizenship values. Quality character education helps schools create a safe, caring and inclusive learning environment for every student and supports academic development. It fosters qualities that will help students be successful as citizens, in the workplace, and with the academic curriculum. It lays the foundation to help students be successful in all of the goals we have for public schools. It is the common denominator that will help schools reach all of their goals.

Here are some examples of effective character education programs. Once again, "It's not really even a program -- it's more of an awareness. At the end we won't really have a product to show, just a path we traveled," says Principal Jim Watson of Al Tahoe Elementary School (http://www.clre.org/program/ce/ccephome.htm).

Community of Caring

Community of Caring (COC) (Jones & Stoodley, 1999) works to implement and encourage five values in our nation's schools: caring, responsibility, respect, trust, and family from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. COC research indicates a strong link between mental retardation and teen pregnancy. Thereafter, this program is an effort to prevent teen pregnancy and lower the incidence of mental retardation.

Through training for teachers, values discussions, teen forums, parent involvement, COC addresses destructive attitudes that lead to early sexual involvement, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, delinquent behavior, and dropping out of school. The program gives students opportunity to explore the impact of ethical values on their life. Furthermore, it gives students opportunity to explore the central role values play in their decisions and their actions.

The COC is not a curriculum. Instead, it is an interactive process of questions, thoughts, reactions, and discoveries woven into an existing curriculum. Components of the program include teacher and staff training, site facilitator, coordinating committee, comprehensive action plan, values across the curriculum, student forums and class meetings, family and community involvement, and service learning. Teachers learn to incorporate values discussions into textbook materials, athletics, and everyday school activities. The five values are articulated and demonstrated in relation to real-life, tough situations where students develop an understanding of how the values affect life choices and behavior.

The COC reaches and teaches the whole child by integrating Community of Caring values of caring, respect, responsibility, trust, and family into every aspect of school life; by having students conduct forums or class meetings where they talk about the things that matter most to them; by providing students with opportunities to participate in service learning, and by ensuring that students' first and most important teachers, their families, are consulted and included in the character development process.

Through a total community approach, this program creates a caring, respectful school environment that supports students as they develop positive values. The school, family, parents, and the community work together. Students accept responsibility for themselves and their future and grow toward adulthood with a clear sense of purpose, motivated by an understanding of the community good.

Evaluation

In 1991, the Center for Health Policy Studies of Columbia, Md., completed a three-year evaluation of the Community of Caring program. The evaluation included more than 1,700 students in three school systems across the country. The result indicated that the COC builds confidence, decision-making skills, responsibility, and a commitment to values. Teens make decisions that strengthen family relationships and encourage caring, and they experience a greater sense of confidence and self-worth. In addition, their academic performance improves. Incidences of teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and truancy decrease, while the drop out rate declines.

Evaluations of this program support the "whole school, whole community" approach as more successful than topical programs designed as modules. For example, (a) students in three COC schools raised their grade point averages 43%, 46%, and 71%, respectively; (b) COC schools report reduced pregnancies; (c) COC students show greater gains in knowledge about the adverse consequences and risks of early sexual activity; (d) COC "high-risk" students were significantly more likely to plan postponing sex until after high school; and (e) COC students had fewer unexcused absences and, in

general, fewer written disciplinary actions

(http://www.communityofcaring.org/results.htm).

The program works like a participant summed up her feelings in 1998: "The Community of Caring is like being in a small town where everyone knows everyone else and people look out for a kid who is supposed to be home. There was a tendency away from community at my school. Now we are trying to get back to that. All the kids are our kids" (Jones & Stoodley, 1999).

<div align="center">Community Action Reaching Everyone</div>

Community Action Reaching Everyone (CARE) (Fisher, 1998), has been implemented throughout the school systems in the community of Bordentown, New York, since in the fall of 1996 from kindergarten through the twelfth grade.

The CARE has a mission statement: Community Action Reaching Everyone (CARE) is a community-based organization committed to support the nurturing of shared values and positive means for resolving conflict. The membership includes parents, students, teachers and administrators from local public and private schools, representatives from local service and religious organizations, and community leaders from business, government and police.

This mission statement provides the two major aspects of the CARE program. The first aspect is the nurturing of shared community values. The program would focus on one priority value during each month (see the table 1 for monthly priority value), and continue throughout the summer of 1996. The list of monthly priority value themes included six core values from the Aspen Declaration, the product of a 1992 character

education conference. Character educators were uniting around a strategy of teaching core values developed through community consensus (Cohen, 1995). Community consensus is a most important aspect in the development of and community-wide program in character education.

Table 1

Monthly Priority Value

Monthly Themes for 1996-97	
September	Respect*
October	Responsibility*
November	Cooperation
December	Tolerance
January	Courage
February	Trustworthiness*
March	Self Discipline
April	Fairness*
May	Citizenship*
June	Caring*
July and August	Safety and Risk Assessment
*core values	

The second major aspect declared in the mission statement is a positive means for resolving conflict. During the 1995-96 school year 14 peer mediators were trained at one of the elementary schools on a pilot basis. The peer mediators were trained in the fall of 1996 at both the high school and junior high school levels. The whole school year all children and staff learned strategies for resolving conflicts constructively in each of the elementary schools in the Bordentown Regional Public School District. Resolving conflicts constructively has also been examined through the junior and senior high school health curriculum.

The program is comprehensive in that it occurs throughout the school system, including the school bus program, the playground, and all extracurricular activities. CARE team members developed activities for the theme of the month and distributed these activities to each teacher. The teachers then integrated them into teaching schedules for the appropriate grade level. All school activities aim to engender an atmosphere of respect, kindness, and caring, while using all monthly themes. Large banners are displayed in all schools to remind everyone about the mission of CARE. In addition, comprehensive values education takes place throughout the entire community which includes parents, students, teachers, school nurses, administrators from public and private schools, representatives form local service organizations and religious communities, and leaders from business, government, and police. In other words, this model is the modeling of values.

Young people deserve to see adult role models whose possess integrity and a joy for living. They also deserve opportunities to learn responsible decision-making skills.

CARE encouraged all staff members and parents to model values and help teach young people problem solving and decision-making skills. CARE also stresses using literature to teach and model values.

Evaluation

It is effective as Kirschenbaum (1995) says this about Value-a-Month Programs: "Teahcers have many, many items to 'cover' in the course of a year's curriculum and instruction.... Many teachers and schools have attempted to solve this problem by using a 'Theme-of-the-month' approach to organizing their values education program. Each month...the whole school focuses on the target values.... Obviously, other important values are not ignored during the period when a class or school is focusing on the Theme-of-the-month, but special emphasis is given to the highlighted value.... In all of these activities, there is an overlay of the values them and, whenever possible... (all) school personnel try to integrate the special theme into their normal activities. School continues as usual, but not really; because something very unusual is happening here. A whole school is learning values" (pp 96-97).

However, the CARE program has some criticisms. Critics argue that the program is a fragmented approach, isolated attention to individual values, staying on surface level but no depth; educators and parents may discharge their responsibility beyond its activities; method is more didactic and less student-centered; impact may be on partial development (DeRoche & Williams, 2001b).

The Heartwood Program

This literature-based ethics curriculum is designed to foster, in children from kindergarten through the sixth grade. The content of each grade level kit contains seven universal values: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty, and love. Coupled with a teacher-training component and a teacher's resource manual, the program proposes addressing one attribute per month through the use of a kit containing 14 books (2 for each attribute), activity cards, flags, a world map of the countries represented in the classic multicultural children's stories from around the world (http://www.heartwoodethics.org/index.html).

The Heartwood lessons follow a framework that begins with a brief introduction or Preview. The Preview draws upon the student's prior knowledge and sets a purpose for listening. The teacher shares her knowledge and excitement about the story - perhaps mentioning related experiences from her own life. Some examples (stories) follow. In the discussions of stories, teachers and children share what really matters to them, such as how they have shown courage or honesty in their lives. Activities build interactions with families and communities that are truly meaningful. Opportunities are created for deeper appreciation and respect of other viewpoints. The following diagram (see Figure 1) shows the steps in a Heartwood lesson.

Design of a Heartwood Lesson

Click on the boxes for descriptions of each step. _

Preview:
Map the attribute
Ask a question
Share an anecdote

Concepts:

Courage

Loyalty

Justice

Respect

Hope

Honesty

Love

Story:
Read aloud
Show illustrations

Discussion:
Focus on the attributes
Relate to children's lives

Activities:
Plan, Write, Research,
Create, Present,
Serve, Invite, Cook...
Have fun together

Wrap-up:
Reflect
Write
Share

Interdisciplinary Ideas:
Explore cultures and places
Analyze choices and actions
Make music and art

Extension:
Take Heartwood home
Connect with community
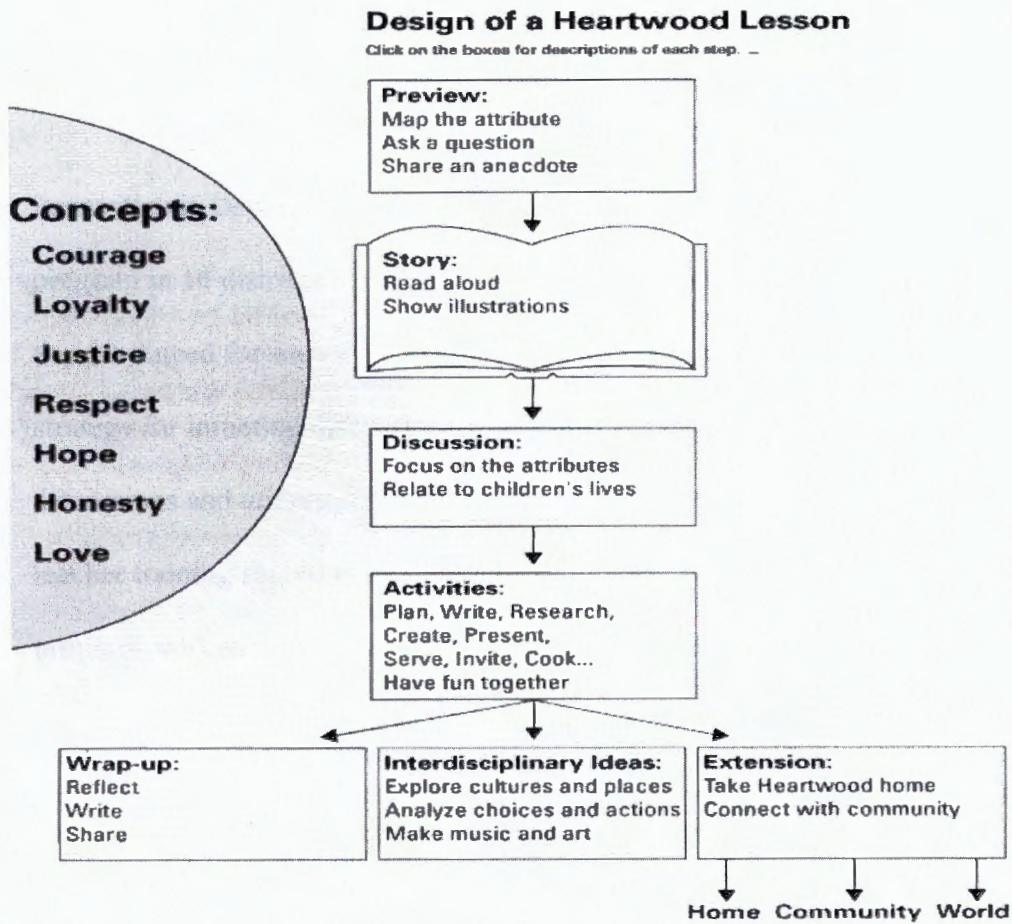
Home   Community   World

Figure 1. Design of a Heartwood Lesson. (Source: The Heartwood Ethics Institute,

http://www.heartwoodethics.org/resources/introduction/hwd_design.html)

Evaluation

A 1990-1991 report of implementation seven elementary schools by Marina

Piscolish (Research and Evaluation Coordinator on the Pittsburgh Public Schools)

showed that teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the program and its materials,

and for the freedom and flexibility it provides. Students and teachers stated that the

program seemed to influence classroom climate and relationships. Student responses indicated personal knowledge and understanding of the attributes and their application.

Another study conducted by Research for Better Schools in 1991-92 for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Federal Programs field-tested the program in 16 districts in Pennsylvania. Major findings suggest that teachers believed there is a need for such a program. It is teacher-friendly and it provided a constructive strategy for initiating discussions with students. The program enhanced students' in-depth discussions and understanding of the seven attributes. Moreover, it also suggests that teacher training should be more intensive to assist teachers in using the materials. The program worked best when used on a consistent and interdisciplinary basis.

A third study (Leming, 1998) found consistent and strong curriculum effects with regard to cognitive understanding. After only one year, Heartwood students at all grade levels were better able to define and recognize instances of the attributes. Results on the other two variables were more mixed, for example, the curriculum significantly improved respect for diversity among Caucasian students in grades 1-3, but not among older students. Teachers reported improved conduct at all grade levels, but the data suggest interaction effects with teacher and classroom variables such as moral character of the teacher and attitudes toward the curriculum.

We the People...Project Citizen

We the People...Project Citizen (http://www.civiced.org), developed by Center for Civic Education, is a civic education program for middle school students that promotes competent and responsible participation in state and local government. Project

Citizen implementation in its present form began in the 1995-96 school year. In just three years (up to 1998), Project Citizen has blossomed into a national program with state coordinators in 45 states. An estimated 460 teachers have used or are using the Project Citizen text in over 1,000 classes with 28,000 students (Tolo, 1998).

The program actively engages students in learning how to monitor and influence public policy and encourages civic participation among students, their parents, and members of the community. As a class project students work together to identify and study a public policy issue, eventually developing an action plan for implementing their policy. The teaching materials present the history, the principles, and the political process of American Constitutional democracy. Teaching methods include cooperative learning, reading and discussion, problem solving, research projects, simulations, and service learning. The civic values, especially justice, freedom, and responsibility, are stressed throughout the lessons. Students are presented with information, challenged with current civic issues, and guided through cooperative activities to find solutions. Some activities include simulations or service projects that require in-depth analysis and presentation skills. There is a strong emphasis on civic participation and solving problems through the democratic process and the rule of law.

The final product is a portfolio displaying each group's work. In a culminating activity the class presents its portfolio in a simulated legislative hearing, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of how public policy is formulated. Classes may also be able to enter their portfolios in a local competition with other classes. Local winners

submit their portfolios for a statewide competition, and state winners go on to be evaluated in the Project Citizen national finals.

A very high correlation exists with many of the core elements critical to character education such as justice, freedom, responsibility, and civic virtue. The depth of the program and the ability of students internalize this material comes from the curriculum's emphasis on small groups, struggling with problem-solving scenarios. There is strong emphasis on patriotism. Students learn to appreciate the purpose of political institutions and the importance of being active citizens. Current issues are presented in ways that engage student interest. The content is clearly aligned with the History-Social Science Framework, especially in relation to Constitutional principles, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the participation skills that enable citizens to support the democratic process. Students are not only told about the importance of civic participation, they are guided through activities to practice those skills.

Evaluation

We the People...Project Citizen materials provide ample opportunity for students to engage in a higher level thinking. At the conclusion of many units, students are given a Critical Thinking Exercise. These exercises ask students to evaluate, defend, examine, and develop ideas about the subject matter covered. A major strength of this program is its persistent and thorough effort to evoke higher level thinking from students. Materials also provide frameworks for students to work in groups to solve problems and deal with current issues in relation to Constitutional principles.

An assessment project conducted in 1998 (Tolo, 1998) showed students and teachers like using Project Citizen and believe it helps students learn valuable skills and information. Indeed, 97 percent of the Project Citizen teachers surveyed state the program is a good way to teach civic education.

Nine key findings of the assessment project are that (1) students using Project Citizen believe they can make a difference in their communities; (2) students *do* make a difference in their communities through Project Citizen; (3) students and teachers believe Project Citizen helps students develop a greater understanding of public policy; (4) students and teachers believe Project Citizen helps students learn how their government works and develops student commitment to active citizenship and governance; (5) students and teachers believe Project Citizen involves students in their communities and helps students learn about specific community problems; (6) students and teachers believe Project Citizen encourages students to work in groups; (7) students and teachers believe Project Citizen teaches students important communication skills; (8) students and teachers believe Project Citizen teaches students important research skills; and (9) students enjoy Project Citizen.

The Giraffe Project

The Giraffe Project (http://www.giraffe.org) contains several programs. The Giraffe Heroes Program is the core. It is a story-based K-12 curriculum that teaches courageous, compassionate, and active citizenship. It also provides an engaging and effective structure for service learning and for meeting community service requirements.

The program includes teaching guides that begin by telling students the stories of real-life heroes, taken from a story bank of more than 850 Giraffe Heroes. Students then look in their schools, families, and communities to find more real heroes, whose stories they bring back to school. In the final phase of the program, the students create and carry out a service project they design to address a community problem that concerns them. Giraffe Heroes training gives educators from a school or an entire community a firsthand experience with classroom materials.

The other programs play with the Giraffe Heroes Program side by side. The Giraffe Media Service has placed Giraffes' stories on all the major television networks and in hundreds of publications. Giraffe speeches and workshops bring inspiration and street-smart strategies to communities, conventions, companies, service organizations, and government agencies. Giraffe Productions is developing television programming for families and for children, based on Giraffe stories and themes.

Evaluation

A formal, third-party study of The Giraffe Heroes Program was completed by a team of evaluators at the University of Washington in late 1997. Results indicated that one hundred percent of teachers in the study stated that they observed some or many positive attitude and behavior changes in students as a result of using The Giraffe Heroes Program. They particularly noted an increase in self-esteem, caring, teamwork and problem-solving skills. Seventy-five percent of teachers said they observed positive changes in their own attitude or behavior as a result of using the Program. Ninety-two

percent of teachers rated the overall effectiveness of the Program as excellent. One hundred percent rated its user-friendliness as excellent. Eighty-three percent said they would encourage other teachers to use it.

A formal assessment of the program by a team from the University of Washington in August 1996 showed strongly positive results as well. It indicated that ninety percent of teachers returning surveys reported positive changes in the attitude and behavior of students taking The Giraffe Heroes Program. Eighty percent reported positive shifts in their own attitudes and behavior. These results track anecdotal feedback that both students and teachers gain confidence and competence from The Giraffe Heroes Program.

"The curriculum underlies everything the children do the rest of the year," reports one third-grade teacher, "because it changes them into a community of learners" (NEA 1/99; www.nea.org/neatoday). Students put what they learn about heroes' courage, compassion, and responsibility into action. The kids look around, decide what they want to change for the better, then design and carry out a project to make it happen. Making their own observations and creating a response is critical to their sense of taking personal responsibility for something beyond their own lives. When they hear stories, tell stories, and become the story, the element of character emerge in their thoughts, feelings, and actions that out of their own experience. Children end up with a sense of responsibility and self-respect that spills out all over their lives. The process helps them come upon their own compassion and experience their connection to other individuals and to their community. Students find the courage to overcome their own fears, they see their taking

responsibility lead to results, and they recognize that results are good. It happens by using stories to reach straight into the heart (Medlock, 1995).

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) (http://www.esrnational.org), a program of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), is a research-based K-12 school program in social and emotional learning. It is the nation's largest and longest-running school program focusing on conflict resolution and inter-group relations. RCCP is characterized by a comprehensive strategy for preventing violence and creating caring and peaceable communities of learning, which is implemented over several years. The primary goal of RCCP is to ensure that young people develop the social and emotional skills needed to reduce violence and prejudice, form caring relationships, and build healthy lives. RCCP works to change school cultures so that these skills are both modeled and taught as part of the "basics" in education.

RCCP began in 1985 as a collaboration of the New York City Public Schools and Educators for Social Responsibility's New York chapter (ESR Metro). The RCCP National Center was established in 1993 to forge multi-year partnerships with school districts to support RCCP dissemination efforts throughout the country. Currently, RCCP serves 6,000 teachers and 175,000 young people in 375 schools nationwide.

The RCCP model supports school staff, parents, families, and the community in teaching young people conflict resolution skills, promoting intercultural understanding, and providing models for positive ways of dealing with conflict and differences. K-8

model includes the following components: Professional Development For Teachers, Classroom Instruction, Peer Mediation, Administrator Training, Parent Training, Support Staff Training, and Training of Trainers. High school model, Partners in Learning, includes the following components: Planning and Needs Assessment, Professional Development for Teachers, and Student Leadership Training and Youth Development.

<u>Evaluation</u>

In 1993, ESR Metro initiated an intensive study of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) in schools in New York City. The study, one of the largest scientific evaluations of a school conflict resolution program ever conducted, involved 5,000 children and 300 teachers from 15 public elementary schools in New York City over a two-year period.

The findings reveal that compared with children who had little or no exposure to the curriculum, children receiving substantial RCCP instruction from their classroom teachers (on average, 25 lessons during the school year), developed more positively. They perceived their social world in a less hostile way, saw violence as an unacceptable option, and chose nonviolent ways to resolve conflict. The most positive change occurred in children who received the most consistent instruction over the two-year period. Children in the "high lessons group" also received significantly increased ratings from their teachers on their positive social behaviors and emotional control. Additional results indicate that RCCP benefits all children regardless of gender, grade, or risk-status. In addition, children who received substantial instruction in the RCCP curriculum

performed significantly better on standardized academic achievement tests than other children.

Additionally, Metis Associates released an independent evaluation of three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in RCCP's Atlanta site in May 1998. Some of the key findings were: (1) sixty-four percent of teachers reported less physical violence in the classroom; (2) seventy-five percent of teachers reported an increase in student cooperation; (3) ninety-two percent of students felt better about themselves; (4) over ninety percent of parents reported an increase in their own communication and problem solving skills; (5) the in- and-out-of-school suspension rates at the RCCP middle school decreased significantly while non-RCCP middle school rates increased during the same period; and (6) the dropout rate at the RCCP high school decreased significantly while non-RCCP school rates increased during the same period.

Summary

School climate, adult modeling, curriculum integration, and parent and community outreach are four key focus areas for character education project planner (California Dept of Education, http://www.clre.org/program/ce/ccephome.htm). Because each school is in a different community and has different strengths and resources, the character education site plans developed by each school are custom-made.

Each school program is different, however, all programs are guided by Eleven Principles (Schaps, Lickona, & Lewis, 1996). Besides, there are three common elements. First, all of the school programs include parent and community outreach, planning and

structure, school climate, curriculum, and assessment. Second, all programs also focus on teaching six aspects of character: caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness. The core values help to give children a foundation on which they can base decisions about right and wrong. These are also the values that help to ensure harmony in social settings. Finally, all character education programs are not an add-on but are integrated into the school's existing culture and curriculum. Developing character is not a separate unit in the curriculum; it is integrated throughout from math to language arts to physical education. This way students understand that character is not a separate aspect of their lives. No new curriculum needs to be created because the existing curriculum is an excellent resource for character education.

The differences of these character education programs are: they use different approaches, different curriculum materials and emphasize on different core values, but to reach a same goal--to teach or to guide youth to be good. Some programs deal primarily with classroom climate and interpersonal dynamics, while others are heavily literature based. Others have a list of values they are trying to teach, some focus only on few core values. Others try to infuse character education principles into the entire curriculum. Still others are behavioral in nature, while some are developmental in their focus (Lockwood, 1997). Each plan is different because each school is different. Each school selects a team of staff, parents and community members who receive training on how to design a plan that reflects the needs of their community. The project encourages

schools to build on their existing strengths and to use character education as a way of meeting existing needs.

Implications

Religious traditions have always offered guidelines to help individuals recognize and develop the traits required of good character. Within the intellectual traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam we find similar teachings:

- You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:16)

- But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

- Worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and conduct yourselves with beneficence towards parents, and toward kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and toward the neighbor, that is of the kindred, and the neighbor that is a stranger, and the companions by your side, and the wayfarer and those who work for you. (Koran 4:37-38)

- Help one another in righteousness and virtue: but help not one another in sin and transgression. (Koran 5:3)

The teachings of Buddha and Confucius also offer many guides for a virtuous life. From Buddhism we recognize writings on the importance and power of love, which are recapitulated in the Judeo-Christian tradition:

- Hatred does not cease by hatred;

  Hatred ceases only by love.

  This is an eternal law. (Dhammapada 1960, 5)

- Let a man overcome hatred by kindness, evil by goodess, greed by generosity, and lies by telling the truth. (Dhammapada 1960, 223)

The Analects of Confucius (1993) records various conversations between Confucius and his disciples. One conversation concerns how a person could obtain Zen, or perfect virtue. Notice how the advice parallels the teaching of Jesus regarding how we should treat others.

These teachings, as well as many others from various religious and ethical traditions, provide guidelines to help us live better lives with respect to others (Vincent, 1999). Therefore, character education is universal, no matter whom you are, where you are from. People all over the world use different terms to describe similar core values. For instance, golden rule--how you treat others, how you will be treated-- makes sense to every cultural background.

The standard of morality in China since the "open-door" policy in the early 1980s has been declining in a reverse direction with the remarkable economic development. One of the causalities was because the official education of morality was focused on the 'isms' (such as the Marxism, Maoism, Deng's Theory and so on), forcing people to accept them no matter whether they like or not, rather than nurturing them with acceptable 'ism' and morality education. In the past two decades, the official 'isms' have been neglected

and ignored by most of the ordinary people who are more caring about making money for survival, which should not be criticized. However, their means of making money were without considering the legalization and morality, and will result in the poor quality of society, low standard of morality in China. Based on this background, Character education is a readdressed issue in China.

Overall, character education is really the trend in China. We can adapt the approaches of character education from the United States, and make some changes to fit the unique situations. We learned that developing character is not a separate unit in the curriculum. It is integrated throughout from math to language arts to physical education. Through this way, it helps students understand that character is not a separate aspect of their lives.

From a Chinese viewpoint, the process of moral education, in fact, is an interaction among knowledge, emotion, will power and behavior. A teacher should help his or her students to understand the importance of morality in a society of which they are members, to emotionally acquire righteousness in terms of distinguishing right from wrong and fighting the wrong as against an enemy, and to stand firm on the course of achieving good moral behavior.

Teachers of Chinese and other subjects have the responsibility for moral education. The subject contents of a Chinese textbook should include areas of knowledge, emotion and will power. Since Confusianism and the philosophies of other Great Masters have a substantial portion of their contents in moral education, if a teacher can make good

use of these contents, students will benefit a great deal from him or her. The famous Six

Books in Chinese literature also have major parts in Chinese philosophies and culture.

The characters in Chinese writing, which were invented by our forefathers, also have

profound meanings in morality and familial quality. Undoubtedly, moral education is

embedded in many publications in Chinese literature, revealing the authors' superb

morality which guides students to raise and consolidate their acquired levels of

knowledge, emotion and will power. In addition, it is easy to handpick relevant contents

from the teaching of Chinese composition and reading comprehension and the

extracurricular activities using Chinese subject matter in order to teach students moral

education. Moral education in Chinese lessons is taught by inculcation and begins with

the basics of humanity. If teaching is built on these basics, it would be an effective and

efficient way to teach students citizenry, politeness, discipline, laws and orders.

However, character education in China has a long way to go. First of all, few

practicing teachers are knowledgeable about character education since it has not been part

of the teacher education curriculum for decades. Thus, there is a substantial need of staff

development for character education among practicing educators. Moreover, teachers

need a clear mandate to engage in character education. They need support from their

principal, the school board, parents, the community, and from one another.

Unfortunately, the lack of communities' involvement makes character education become

difficult to carry out. Since 80s, Chinese people have been materials wealthier than

anytime in Chinese history. However, people's selfishism has developed at the same

time. On the other hand, the "one couple one child" policy also generates selfishness to

new generation. The factors definitely create some problems in promoting character

education. Therefore, making the entire society involved in character education takes

time.

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