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Character Education Newsletter

CHARACTER MATTERS!

Issue 1, Volume 1/September 2006

Researchers Urge Broad View on How to Build Character

In a research lab at South Carroll High School, rare diamondback terrapins thrive in an oversized aquarium, a fungus that is threatening the American chestnut tree cultivates in petri dishes awaiting further study, and a beneficial sea algae begins to sprout on a reef of plastic pods that students designed to be environmentally friendly.

Such moral and ethical principles often go hand in hand with academic content, educators here say.

But a new study promotes just such a broader view of character education, one that goes beyond the traditional emphasis on morals and values to incorporate the intellectual and personal habits and characteristics of productive citizens.

While many initiatives have focused on the morality part—primarily by emphasizing positive behaviors and relationships—it is the addition of the performance aspect that will push students to do their best work,

according to the report's authors, Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson, researchers at the Center for the 4th and 5th R's (Respect and Responsibility) at the State University of New York College at Cortland.

'A Higher Standard'

"To develop the positive intellectual and ethical potential of adolescents, reduce negative teen behaviors that injure self and others, and create safe, caring, and effective schools, high schools must embrace educating for character as central to their mission," the researchers write in a study on character education released this fall.

Such schools, they say, promote those ideals through all phases of school life: the curriculum content, interactions between students and staff, high academic standards, rules and discipline, conflict resolution, co-curricular programs, parent involvement, and the overall school environment.

"When you have an effective character education program, it does affect academics."

"This is about creating an intentional culture, ... a school that imprints or leaves a distinguishing mark on students." "This is hard work. It's not just a matter of incorporating life lessons or enforcing a code of behavior," he said.

"But if you don't make that kind of investment [in building character], you are not going to reach your goals."

-Adapted from "Researchers Urge Broad View on How to Build Character," *Education Week*, 12/14/05

A full copy of the report, "[Smart & Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond.](http://www.cortland.edu/character/)" <<http://www.cortland.edu/character/>>

FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE:

Integrating Existing Character Education Initiatives

"There is a shift in thinking—from the focus of developing moral character in isolation to a more integral approach that focuses on developing both performance character and moral character."

Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson "Character Education In a World of Budget Cuts and Standardized Testing!" <https://www.conferences.icohere.com/>

What is Character Education?

Character Education is an intentional **process** of fostering character development by **integrating** the teaching of cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral skills into all aspects of school life. It assists students in developing qualities that enable them to treat self and others with respect and compassion, to act with integrity in their ethical lives, and to strive for excellence in all their pursuits.

Who Can I Go to for Help at MSDE?

We are here to support you...

MSDE Character Education Specialists

Division of Student, Family, and School Support Services

Laurie Fogleman

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A Brief History of Character Education

In a large and growing number of schools around the country, students are learning more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. They are learning what character education advocates call the fourth and fifth R's: respect and responsibility.

The formal teaching of morals and values is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has been part of democratic thought throughout history. Plato and Aristotle in the Greece of the 4th century B.C.E. believed the role of education was to train good and virtuous citizens.

A program developed by the late Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg...in the 1960s... held that students must be allowed a certain degree of moral reasoning.

Character education, as it is known today, began to appear in the early 1990s. A 1991 book by Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character*, reintroduced the idea that there is a set of common beliefs and values upon which all people can agree.

Most character education programs today are based on the traits developed from the civic virtues found in the U.S. Constitution and the United Nations charter—as well as common civil and moral values such as honesty, courage, and respect for others.

Advocating that honesty is better than dishonesty, or that free speech is better than censorship, rarely invites controversy.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning recently examined 242 health, prevention, and positive-youth-development programs. Its examination resulted in the report "Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs," (2003) which reviews 80 nationally available, multiyear, sequenced programs for general education classrooms.

The report identifies 22 programs that are especially effective in preventing substance abuse, improving academic performance, promoting general health, or supporting other social behaviors.

-From *Character Education* from edweek.org, 2006

...as you facilitate social development, you are concurrently, for many kids, advancing their academic function."

Stephen N. Elliott
(Viadero, D., "Nice Work,"
Education Week, 22 (33), pp. 38-41, 2003)

"Intelligence plus character—
that is the goal of true
education."

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Where Does Character Education Fit in Your District's Master Plan?

Are Your System Goals Aligned with National and State Goals?

The Federal Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (NCLB)

Performance Goal 4: All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.

Maryland State Department of Education Achievement Matters Most

Goal 4: All schools will be safe, drug free, and conducive to learning. Establish an environment that is safe, drug free, and conducive to learning so that children are engaged in school and feel safe and welcome.



Components of the New Character Education Paradigm

* *Before Planning Begins There Must be a **Vision!***

* Local School Systems committed to developing good character in students and staff establish character education as part of the district's **vision**, mission, goals, and objectives.

DATA

* The portion of the Master Plan that deals with character education should **contain all the components of a well-developed action plan.**

DATA

* **Data** is the key to developing your character education goals, objectives, and strategies.

"Progress is most evident in school systems and schools that use local and State performance **data at all levels to drive operational, programmatic, and instructional changes... and have aligned local curriculum and assessments with the Voluntary State Curriculum."**

THE 2005 MASTER PLAN UPDATE,
Maryland State Department of Education

A Character Education Mission Statement from Wake County

The Wake County Public School System will educate each student to be a **responsible and productive citizen** who can effectively manage future challenges.

Wake County Public Schools,
North Carolina

The Wake County Public School System staff will develop an **integrated curriculum** emphasizing the elements of character, promote a **climate** permeated with the **culture** of character, and provide opportunities to **practice the habits of character** at school and in the community.

The **Character Education Community Involvement Committee** will mobilize individuals and groups throughout Wake County to teach, model and affirm character development, resulting in a community committed to character.

Components of a Well Developed Action Plan

- <Needs Assessment-Gather **Data**
- <Clearly Identified Goals-Based on the **Data**
- <Measurable Objectives-Measured by **Data**
- <Researched Based Strategies-The **Data** says that the strategy works (**caution**)
- <Assessment-Gather **Data**
- <Review and Revise based on Analyzed **Data**

Our character is basically a composite of our habits. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character.

Stephen Covey

