

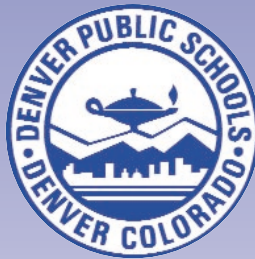
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# EDUCATING FOR C H A R A C T E R

IN THE  
DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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“A Call to Action”



IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL

**W**e thank the many people who are making educating for character a reality in the Denver Public Schools. We wish to specifically acknowledge the Rose Community Foundation and the U. S. Department of Education for making this work possible. May the young people of Denver live flourishing lives, contribute to their communities, and be of benefit to the generations who follow them.



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“We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

-Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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# Introduction

The Denver Public Schools is working at the leading edge of research and best practices in developing schools of character. DPS believes that students develop best when they are encouraged to meet high academic standards as well as high standards of ethical behavior. We also believe that students develop best when adults work to reduce the loose connection that often exists between classrooms and strive to transmit a coherent and consistent set of academic and character expectations.

## What is Educating for Character?

We agree with the Character Education Partnership (CEP)—a non-profit, non-partisan clearinghouse in Washington, D.C.—that character consists of “understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values.” Educating for character, then, is the deliberate process of developing dispositions and habits that enable us to lead fulfilling lives and build a better world. Schools are constantly engaged in shaping character—whether they are aware of it or not—and the challenge is to become more intentional about that process.

In its most effective form, educating for character involves an entire school community and is embedded in the school culture. A vibrant and intentional school culture not only assists in developing positive habits and dispositions in its students, but also nurtures and sustains staff. Furthermore, it enriches healthy partnerships with parents and other community stakeholders.

Educating for character is the deliberate process of developing dispositions and habits that enable us to lead fulfilling lives and build a better world.

-Character Education Partnership

Many schools today host a prolific number of prevention programs to deal with discipline problems, absenteeism, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, gang violence, emotional distress and poor academic performance. Unfortunately, because these programs are not always compatible with the school culture or aligned with stated or unstated staff commitments, they are sometimes viewed as “add-ons” and are often championed by only a few faculty members. Thus, they tend to be short-lived or have limited impact. We promote a comprehensive approach to educating for character, which involves an honest appraisal of your school culture and rests on a commitment both to create a caring community and to articulate and embed shared values into the daily life of the school.

This comprehensive approach can leverage the power of well-designed programs, add coherence to your character education initiative, and expose aspects of your initiative that are either redundant or incompatible with your larger goals.

Educating for character has been part of the mission of public schools since the founding of our country.

A recent study involving 12,000 seventh through twelfth graders reinforces the importance of building school community. The study found two major factors that bolstered resistance to seven high-risk behaviors. One was feeling connected to family, and as Eric Schaps reports, “the other major factor, and here was the relevance to school safety and school-based character education, was feeling connected to school—feeling close to people at school, feeling fairly treated by teachers, feeling part of one’s school. Instead of juggling so many separate programs, educators would do well to focus on building students’ sense of community...thereby making the ordinary school day itself the school’s basic character and prevention program,” (Schaps, 2000).

## Educating for Character is Not New

Educating for character is not new in this country; developing good citizens was one of the main purposes of public education early in our nation’s history. Educating for character is not new in Denver Public Schools, either. In a monograph from 1929 titled, “Character Education in the Denver Public Schools,” DPS Superintendent A. L. Threlkeld noted that the school day is filled with character-shaping opportunities and that our challenge as educators was to deliberately take advantage of those opportunities. He wrote:

*Every recitation and every activity, curricular or extra-curricular, is a life situation in which character is being developed in one way or another. The problem before the schools is so to organize and develop these activities as to develop insight, will, and habit to the end of good character.*

We agree that “character is being developed in one way or another” each day in our schools and that the most effective approach to educating for character is to intentionally design and organize learning environments with the aim of developing proper habits and dispositions.

## The Connection Between School Culture and Educating for Character

We believe that the development of one’s habits and dispositions is profoundly affected by the values promoted in his or her environment. If we believe that it is important to develop responsible, respectful, and caring students, it is essential that they are immersed in a school culture that reflects these values. Quite simply, caring people are more likely to develop in caring environments than in ethically ambiguous or toxic environments.

The impact of a culture is reciprocal: each and every act by an individual can help shape a healthy school culture. Each time a teacher holds a student accountable for producing high-quality work, he reinforces the school's commitment to the values of personal responsibility and hard work. Each time a student participates in a service-learning project, he broadens the school's commitment to caring for others. To overlook the importance of school culture would be to ignore a vital influence on the shaping of a child's habits and dispositions, which evolve into what we refer to as "character."

### **The Connection Between Educating for Character and Academic Achievement**

A growing body of research supports the link between educating for character and high student achievement. For example, research indicates that the Child Development Project, a K-6 program that focuses largely on creating a positive and caring school climate, boosts academic achievement (Developmental Studies Center, 2000.).

"The pendulum is swinging back from the romantic idea that all societal values are oppressive. But educators went along with all of this craziness, so we've ended up with students who are ethically illiterate."

-Bill Honig, Former Superintendent of Schools, California

Recently, an Italian study that tracked 294 students from 3rd grade to 8th grade found that the most powerful predictor of academic achievement in 8th grade was the students' positive social skills five years earlier (Caprara, et al., 2000). A recent study of California elementary schools revealed a consistent and significant relationship between quality of character education and state test scores (Berninga, Berkowitz, Kuehu, and Smith, 2003). Thus, creating a vibrant school culture and helping students develop dispositions that help them connect with others not only helps build character but also contributes to academic success.

It is not surprising that schools that make gains in educating for character also make gains in academic performance. The primary reason is because when students have their basic social and emotional needs met, they are able to focus more on their learning. Conversely, students who do not feel safe and cared about are often disconnected from their studies. For instance, an alarming number of students around the country report skipping school for fear of being bullied, a practice that has clear implications for academic performance.

Another reason for the strong connection between character development and academic achievement is because dispositions that promote strong character also tend to promote strong academic achievement. For instance, students who are caring and empathetic tend to approach situations from multiple perspectives and with flexibility, a hallmark of an educated mind. Top students also tend to be self-motivated and exhibit perseverance, self-control and personal responsibility, qualities central to educating for character.

In his recent book, *Intellectual Character* (2002), Harvard researcher Ron Ritchhart extends the argument for broadening our conception of character to include both social/emotional and intellectual dispositions. He argues that what stays with us from

Many successful schools develop a touchstone that incorporates the school's core values and helps guide their approach to educating for character.

our education are patterns: "patterns of behavior, patterns of thinking, patterns of interaction. These patterns make up our character, specifically our intellectual character." Drawing on other work in the field, he developed a list of six dispositions that compose what he considers "intellectual character:" being open-minded, curious, metacognitive, strategic, skeptical, and seeking truth and understanding (Ritchhart, 2002). Ritchhart's work, and others like it, is a call to view character broadly and to pay attention to the patterns, dispositions and ways of

being that we are shaping daily in our students. For it is these patterns and ways of being that will remain with our students long after they leave our classroom walls.

### The DPS Approach to Building Schools of Character

Our approach to educating for character resonates with the approach advocated by DPS Superintendent Threlkeld back in 1929: to nurture positive habits and dispositions by deliberately shaping the learning environment, including the school culture.

"Top drawer teaching and learning can never flourish in a sterile or toxic environment."

-Terrence Beal and Kent Peterson,  
*Shaping School Culture*

There are hundreds of packaged programs on the market that aim to promote core values, some of which are well-designed and have a strong research base. However, one of the lessons learned from schools around the country, as well as here in DPS (during a four-year, federally funded pilot project) is that character-education initiatives that do not penetrate the school culture tend to be short-lived. In other cases, programs wither because they do not match the true needs of the school.

Therefore, a significant part of our approach in DPS involves recognizing the needs of the school, identifying shared values, and building a school culture that promotes these values.

We agree with the Character Education Partnership that the goal of this work is not to simply have students respond to the given word of the week (e.g., "honesty" or "obedience") but rather to deliberately shape a caring and vibrant school culture that holds high ideals for each member. We also believe that schools should invite students to actively join in shaping this culture. According to the CEP, "The best forms of character education are those that enlist students as active, influential participants in creating a caring and just environment in the classroom and in the school at large."



An important part of the DPS approach is developing a touchstone for each school that incorporates a shared set of values and aspirations for all members of the school community. In its most general terms, a touchstone is a test for a standard, such as for the purity of precious metals like gold or silver. For our purposes, a touchstone

is a test for how well daily actions align with the core values of an organization or community. The most successful organizations—schools, businesses, and non-profits—operate from a shared set of values and incorporate them into their creed, code of conduct, or their “way” (the “Hewlett-Packard Way,” the “Place Middle School Way,” etc.). Developing this touchstone is essential in schools because it helps the adults in the school community (teachers, administrators, staff members, parents) reinforce the same values. As educator William Damon notes, “children take values seriously only when they perceive at least a rough consensus on them among the adults whom they respect.”

“Community is the tie that binds students and teachers together in special ways, to something more significant than themselves: shared values and ideals. It lifts both teachers and students to higher levels of self-understanding, commitment and performance...thus providing them with a unique and enduring sense of identity, belonging and place.”

-Thomas Sergiovanni,  
*Building Community in School*

Below, we outline four phases for developing a school of character in DPS and include a suggested timelines for each phase. These phases and timelines provide a road map and are meant only as guidelines because the process will inevitably be somewhat unique at each school.

### **Phase I: Getting Started — 3 to 4 weeks**

Staff from the Office of Educating for Character (OEC) assists the principal, site coordinator, and a group of faculty (or in some schools, the entire faculty) in deepening their knowledge of the purpose and practice of character education. We read articles that help distinguish “shallow” character-education initiatives from “deep” ones. This is also an opportunity for a staff to recognize the many ways in which they are already educating for character.

### **Phase II: Developing a School Profile — 3 to 4 weeks**

The school identifies both the aspects of its culture that it wants to celebrate and further develop as well as those that need to be transformed. This assessment creates an awareness and provides a starting place for a character-education initiative. It is important to find out such things as the degree to which students feel cared about and connected to the school, how much bullying they perceive at the school, and what the school’s strengths and weaknesses are. The OEC provides several survey instruments to assist in this process and can recommend additional means of collecting data.

### Phase III: Creating a School Touchstone — 3 to 4 weeks

The school touchstone articulates the school's vision. The crafting of this touchstone provides the staff with an opportunity to envision the kind of school that they want to create and to identify what values are embedded in that vision. During this phase the Character Education Committee (CEC) solicits input from all relevant stakeholders in the school community and distills the shared values of the school. They then shape these values into a creed, code of conduct, or "way" that will become a touchstone for the entire school community in the character-building process. The touchstone clearly states the academic and character expectations for all members of the school community, helps guide the daily decision making of both adults and students, and serves as a mirror for reflecting on one's actions.

### Phase IV: Integrating Core Values into Daily Life of School — 4 to 6 weeks, then ongoing

School members deliberately and continually breathe life into the touchstone by reinforcing the core values including: reflecting on the role and actions of the

teacher; integrating core values into curriculum and classroom instruction; developing rituals and traditions to support them; creating opportunities, such as through service learning and cross-age initiatives, in which students can act upon these core values; promoting them by teaching critical thinking and conflict-resolution skills; partnering with parents and community groups; creating a culture of collaboration within the school; addressing specific school needs such as bullying; incorporating them into classroom and school governance; manifesting these values in their interactions with others in the school community; providing opportunities for students to develop these dispositions through leadership opportunities and other strategies that might be unique to each school. Through these strategies the school assists students in understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values.

"We, as educators, must find that balance between the world of the mind and that of the heart and soul. It is the mind that preoccupies our time and that will take us to the information age. But it is the heart and soul that will allow us to remain connected to our humanity that will build that bridge between us...and create a good society."

-Paul D. Houston

### Conclusion

Schools shape the character of their students every day. Either subtly or overtly, schools contribute to the development of habits and dispositions—both academic and social—that impact the lives of students and their community. The impact can be positive or negative: students can learn to become intellectually curious or

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intellectually passive; inclined to connect with and promote the welfare of others or to look out only for themselves; inclined to be active citizens or to be passive members of a community. The Office of Educating for Character stands ready to assist schools in intentionally designing environments that develop healthy habits and dispositions.

#### **MENU OF SERVICES: OFFICE OF EDUCATING FOR CHARACTER**

The OEC can provide assistance, either directly or through the principal and site-coordinator, during all phases of becoming a school of character. Through on- and off-site coaching and workshops, we can help you and your faculty:

- Deepen your knowledge of character education
- Develop a school profile that highlights important aspects of your school culture
- Distill shared values in your school
- Create a school-wide touchstone
- Integrate values in the touchstone throughout the school by addressing the areas outlined in Phase IV (reflecting on school rituals, creating service-learning opportunities, developing cross-age initiatives, etc. See pages 45-74)

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An Italian study that tracked 294 students from the 3rd grade to the 8th grade found that the most powerful predictor of academic achievement in the 8th grade was the students' positive social skills five years earlier.

-Education Week, April 30, 2003

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We encourage you to either contact our office directly at 303-764-3830, or work through your site coordinator and principal to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

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# Denver Public Schools Character Education Evaluation Logic Model

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**This Logic Model describes some of the outcomes, both for teachers and students, that we expect to result from the following character education activities.**

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## ACTIVITIES

- Creating and using a touchstone: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J
- Studying character education: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, C, D, H, I
- Developing a profile (self-reflection on school culture): 1, 2, 4, 6, B, C, D, G, K
- Teacher inservice including roles of caring, listening, knowing students, fairness and respect, promotion of enthusiasm and motivation of learning, and regarding the importance of teachers manifesting touchstone qualities: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K
- Best practices in service-learning workshop: 2, A, C, E, F, H, J
- Leadership workshop: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, D, F
- Parent education workshop: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, B, D, G, H, I, J, K
- Aligning markers, rituals, rites of passage through workshops: 2, 3, 4, 6, A, C, D, G, I, K
- Advice in program selection: A, B, D, E, G, H, I, J, K

The numbers and letters preceding each outcome item correspond to the numbers and letters following each bulleted item above.

## TEACHER OUTCOMES

1. Positive interdependence.
2. Feel part of the ongoing creation of an intentional and coherent school culture.
3. Feel nurtured and sustained, motivated, and at times, inspired by the school culture.
4. Feel part of a community of learners.
5. Feel more committed to quality teaching.
6. Increased morale.
7. Feel safer.
8. Feel more respected by students, colleagues, parents.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

- A. Feel more responsible for our learning.
- B. Feel safer.
- C. Feel more connected to school.
- D. Feel more cared about by adults and students.
- E. Feel more comfort expressing selves in the classroom.
- F. Increased sense of being heard (rather than voice) and identity as a shaper.
- G. Protective factors like resilience and efficacy.
- H. Increased pro-social behavior, includes altruism and empathy.
- I. Increased academic performance.
- J. Increased social responsibility.
- K. Feel more respected.

# I. Getting Started

Because “character education” is a broad term that has been attached to many different approaches and agendas, we have included several writings designed to familiarize you with some of the main arguments for, and principles of, the type of approach that we support in DPS. While there are many approaches to educating for character—and the process will undoubtedly look different in each school—some approaches tend to reap shallow results and other approaches tend to establish deep, sustaining roots. The background writings in this section will help identify characteristics of

each approach. Because these articles provide a common framework and reference point, we encourage all faculty members to read and discuss them.

Becoming a school of character requires a real commitment from a strong majority of the faculty and especially a commitment from the principal and administration. A school cannot educate for character in a comprehensive manner when only a handful of teachers are carrying the torch. The Office of Educating for Character (OEC) will provide ongoing training to the principal, site coordinator and faculty to support them in this effort. In addition, we will conduct workshops for a school’s parents, PTA, or CDM, as requested.

“Because we have helped students learn to solve their own problems, I have much more time simply to teach. Also, staff morale has really improved since we’ve developed a common language around character education.”

-Staci Porter, teacher  
Columbine Elementary School  
Denver Public Schools

Two main commitments are needed. First, faculty and staff must be willing to examine the ways in which their actions—including the way they greet students, how they speak about their school and profession, and the approach to their teaching—contribute to the overall school culture and must have a willingness to alter those actions that are out of alignment with shared school values. Second, each faculty and staff member must be willing to act as a team player and work to limit the loose connections (or “loose-coupling,” as it is sometimes called) between classrooms in the school. This includes an investment in the success of other teachers in the building and holding all students accountable—not just their own—to the character standards developed by the school. This also includes a commitment to manifest the values contained in the school touchstone, and to constantly reference them throughout the school day. Becoming a school of character means that a strong majority of adults in the school honors these commitments and strives to create a cohesive, consistent school-wide culture.

## Actions to Consider

- ✓ Form a planning group of educators, parents, business people, and religious and civic leaders.
- ✓ Read the articles in this section and choose a team of two to lead a discussion on each article.
- ✓ When discussing the “10 Good Reasons for Character Education,” see if your group can think of any additional reasons for character education.
- ✓ Discuss which of the “Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education” will likely be easiest to adhere to in your school and which will likely be more challenging.
- ✓ Identify ways in which your school is already educating for character. Pair up, read “100 Ways to Bring Character Education to Life,” by Kevin Ryan and circle the activities you already do; star those you are interested in trying.
- ✓ Schedule a faculty in-service with the OEC on becoming a school of character.

## Contents of this Section

“10 Good Reasons for Character Education,” by Thomas Lickona

“The Character Education Partnership’s Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education,” by Thomas Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Catherine Lewis

“What’s Right and Wrong with Character Education Today,” by Eric Schaps, Esther Schaeffer, and Sanford McDonnell

“100 Ways to Bring Character Education to Life,” by Kevin Ryan

“To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”

-Theodore Roosevelt

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# 10 Good Reasons for Character Education

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Thomas Lickona, Director, Center for the 4th and 5th R's, State University of New York at Cortland

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**1 There is a clear and urgent need.** Young people are increasingly hurting themselves and others, and decreasingly concerned about contributing to the welfare of their fellow human beings. In this, they reflect the ills of societies in need of moral and spiritual renewal.

**2 Transmitting values is and always has been the work of civilization.** A society needs values education both to survive and to thrive—to keep itself intact, and to keep itself growing toward conditions that support the full human development of all its members. Historically, three social institutions have shared the work of moral education: the home, the church, and the school. In taking up values education, schools are turning to their time-honored role, abandoned briefly in the middle part of this century.

**3 The school's role as moral educator becomes even more vital** at a time when millions of children get little moral teaching from their parents and where value-centered influences such as church or temple are also absent from their lives. These days, when schools don't do moral education, influences hostile to good character rush in to fill the values vacuum.

**4 There is common ethical ground** even in our value-conflicted society. Americans have intense and often angry differences over moral issues such as abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, and

capital punishment. Despite this diversity, we can identify basic shared values that allow us to engage in public moral education in a pluralistic society. Indeed, pluralism itself is not possible without agreement on values such as justice, honesty, civility, democratic process, and a respect for truth.

**5 Democracies have a special need for moral education,** because democracy is government by the people themselves. The people must care about the rights of others and the common good and be willing to assume the responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

**6 There is no such thing as value-free education.** Everything a school does teaches value—including the way teachers and other adults treat students, the way the principal treats teachers, the way the school treats parents, and the way students are allowed to treat school staff and each other. If questions of right and wrong are discussed in classrooms, that, too, teaches a lesson about how much morality matters. In short, the relevant issue is never, “Should schools teach values?” but rather “Which values will they teach?”—and, “How well will they teach them?”

**7 The great questions facing both the individual person and the human race are moral questions.** For each of us as individuals, a question of the utmost existential importance is: “How shall I live my life?” For all of humanity,



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## 10 Good Reasons for Character Education (continued)

two of the most important questions facing us as we enter the next century are: “How can we live with each other?” and, “How can we live with nature?”

**8 There is a broad-based, growing support for values education in the schools.** It comes from the federal government, which has identified values education as essential in the fight against drugs and crime. It comes from state-houses, which have passed resolutions calling upon all school districts to teach the values necessary for good citizenship and a law-abiding society. It comes from business, which recognizes that a responsible labor force requires workers who have character traits of honesty, dependability, pride in work, and the capacity to cooperate with others.

**9 An unabashed commitment to moral education is essential if we are to attract and keep good teachers.** Says a young woman preparing to enter the teaching profession: “I am not a teacher yet, but I need a sense of hope that teachers can help to turn around the community-shattering values of today’s society: materialism, me-first apathy, and disregard for truth and justice. Many of the teachers with whom I’ve spoken have been frustrated, some to the point of despair, with the deteriorating moral fiber of their students and the lack of effective methods in the schools to counter this trend. It is a hard message for me to hear as I stand on the threshold of a teaching career.”

**10 Character education is a doable job.** Given the enormous moral problems facing the country, their deep social roots, and the ever increasing responsibilities that schools already shoulder, the prospect of taking on moral education can seem overwhelming. The good

news, as we will see, is that values education can be done within the school day, is happening now in school systems all across the country, and is making a positive difference in the moral attitudes and behavior of students, with the result that it’s easier for teachers to teach and students to learn.

**To develop the character of our children in a complex and changing world is no small task. But it is time to take up the challenge.**

*From Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility.* Lickona, Thomas. New York: Bantam, 1991.



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# The Character Education Partnership's ELEVEN PRINCIPLES of Effective Character Education

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Thomas Lickona, Director, Center for the 4th and 5th R's, State University of New York at Cortland  
Eric Schaps and Catherine Lewis, The Center for Child Development

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There is no single script for effective character education, but there are some important basic principles. The following eleven principles serve as criteria that schools and other groups can use to plan a character-education effort and to evaluate available character programs, books, and curriculum resources.

## **1 Character education promotes core ethical values as the basics of good character.**

Character education holds, as a starting philosophical principle, that there are widely shared, pivotally important core ethical values—such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others—that form the basis of good character. A school committed to character education explicitly names and publicly stands for these values; promulgates them to any members of the school community; defines them in terms of behaviors that can be observed in the life of the school; models these values; studies and discusses them; uses them as the basis of human relations in the school; celebrates their manifestations in the school and community; and upholds them by making any school members accountable to standards of conduct consistent with the core values.

In a school committed to developing character, these core values are treated as a matter of obligation, as having a claim on the conscience of the individual and community. Character

education asserts that the validity of these values, and our obligation to uphold them, derive from the fact that such values affirm our human dignity; they promote the development and welfare of the individual person; they serve the common good; they meet the classical ethical tests of reversibility (Would you want to be treated this way?) and universalizability (Would you want all persons to act this way in a similar situation?); and they define our rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. The school makes clear that these basic human values transcend religious and cultural differences and express our common humanity.

## **2 “Character” must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.**

In an effective character-education program, character is broadly conceived to encompass the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of the moral life. Good character consists of understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values. The task of character education therefore is to help students and other members of the learning community know “the good,” value it, and act upon it. As people grow in their character, they will develop an increasingly refined understanding of the core values, a deeper commitment to living according to those values, and a stronger tendency to behave in accordance with those values.

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## The Character Education Partnership's ELEVEN PRINCIPLES of Effective Character Education (continued)

**3 Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.** Schools committed to character education look at themselves through a moral lens and see how virtually everything that goes on in school affects the values and character of students. An intentional and proactive approach plans deliberate ways to develop character, rather than simply waiting for opportunities to occur. A comprehensive approach uses all aspects of schooling—the teacher’s example, the discipline policy, the academic curriculum (including the drug, alcohol, and sex education curriculum), the instructional process, the assessment of learning, the management of the school environment, relationships with parents, and so on—as opportunities for character development. “Stand alone” character education programs can be useful first steps or helpful elements of an ongoing effort but must not be considered a substitute for a holistic approach that integrates character development into every aspect of school life.

**4 The school must be a caring community.** The school itself must embody good character. It must progress toward becoming a microcosm of the civil, caring and just society we seek to create as a nation. The school can do this by becoming a moral community that helps students form caring attachments to adults and to each other. These caring relationships will foster both the desire to learn and the desire to be a good person. All children and adolescents have a need to belong, and they are more likely to internalize the values and expectations of groups that meet this need. The daily life of classrooms, as well as all

other parts of the school environment (e.g., the corridors, cafeteria, playground, and school bus), must be imbued with core values such as concern and respect for others, responsibility, kindness, and fairness.

**5 To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.** In the ethical as in the intellectual domain, students are constructive learners; they learn best by doing. To develop good character, they need many and varied opportunities to apply values such as responsibility and fairness in everyday interactions and discussions. By grappling with real-life challenges—how to divide the labor in a cooperative learning group, how to reach consensus in a class meeting, how to carry out a service learning project, how to reduce fights on the playground—students develop practical understanding of the requirements of fairness, cooperation, and respect. Through repeated moral experiences, students can also develop and practice the moral skills and behavioral habits that make up the action side of character.

**6 Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.** Character education and academic learning must not be conceived as separate spheres; rather there must be a strong, mutually supportive relationship. In a caring classroom and school where students feel liked and respected by their teachers and fellow students, students are more likely to work hard and achieve. Reciprocally, when students are enabled to succeed at the work of school, they are more likely to feel valued and cared about as persons.

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Because students come to school with diverse skills, interests and needs, a curriculum that helps all students succeed will be one whose content and pedagogy are sophisticated enough to engage all learners. That means moving beyond a skill-and-drill, paper-and-pencil curriculum to one that is inherently interesting and meaningful for students. A character-education school makes effective use of active teaching and learning methods such as cooperative learning, problem-solving approaches, experience-based projects, and the like. One of the most authentic ways to respect children is to respect the way they learn.

**7 Character education should strive to develop student's intrinsic motivation.** As students develop good character, they develop a stronger inner commitment to doing what their moral judgment tells them is right. Schools, especially in their approach to discipline, should strive to develop this intrinsic commitment to core values. They should minimize reliance on extrinsic rewards and punishments that distract students' attention from the real reasons to behave responsibly: the rights and needs of self and others. Responses to rule-breaking should give students opportunities for restitution and foster the students' understanding of the rules and willingness to abide by them in the future.

Similarly, within the academic curriculum, intrinsic motivation should be fostered in every way possible. This can be done by helping students experience the challenge and interest of subject matter, the desire to work collaboratively with other students, and the fulfillment of making a positive difference in another person's life or in their school or community.

**8 The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share**

**responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.** Three things need attention here. First, all school staff—teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, secretaries, cafeteria workers, playground aides, bus drivers—must be involved in learning about, discussing, and taking ownership of the character education effort. All of these adults must model the core values in their own behavior and take advantage of the other opportunities they have to influence the character of the students with whom they come into contact.

Second, the same values and norms that govern the life of students must govern the collective life of the adult members of the school community. If students are to be treated as constructive learners, so must adults. They must have extended staff development and many opportunities to observe and then try out ways of integrating character-education practices into their work with students. If students are given opportunities to work collaboratively and participate in decision making that improves classrooms and school, so must adults. If a school's staff members do not experience mutual respect, fairness, and cooperation in their adult relationships, they are less likely to be committed to teaching those values to students.

Third, the school must find and protect time for staff reflection on moral matters. School staff, through faculty meetings and smaller support groups, should be regularly asking: what positive, character-building experiences is the school already *providing* for its students? What negative moral experiences (e.g., peer cruelty, student cheating, adult disrespect of students, littering of the grounds) is the school currently *failing to address*? And what important moral experiences

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## The Character Education Partnership's ELEVEN PRINCIPLES of Effective Character Education (continued)

(e.g., cooperative learning, school and community service, opportunities to learn about and interact with people from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds) is the school now *omitting*? What school practices are at odds with its professed core values and desire to develop a caring school community? *Reflection of this nature is an indispensable condition for developing the moral life of a school.*

**9 Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.** For character education to meet the criteria outlined thus far, there must be leaders (a principal, another administrator, a lead teacher) who champions the effort and, at least initially, a character education committee (or several such support groups, each focused on a particular aspect of the character effort) with responsibility for long-range planning and program implementation. Over time, the functions of this committee may be taken on by the school's regular governing bodies. Students should also be brought into roles of moral leadership through student government, peer conflict mediation programs, cross-age tutoring, and the like.

**10 The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.** A school's character education mission statement should state explicitly what is true: parents are the first and most important moral educators of their children. Next, the school should take pains at every stage to communicate with parents about the school's goals and activities regarding character development—and how families can help. To build trust between home and school, parents should be represented on the character leadership committee that does the planning, the school should

actively reach out to “disconnected” subgroups of parents, and all parents need to be informed about—and have a chance to react and consent to—the school's proposed core values and how the school proposes to try to teach them. Finally, schools and families will enhance the effectiveness of their partnership if they recruit the help of the wider community—businesses, religious institutions, youth organizations, the government, and the media—in promoting the core ethical values.

**11 Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.** Effective character education must include an effort to assess progress. Three broad kinds of outcomes merit attention:

(a) The character of the school: to what extent is the school becoming a more caring community? This can be assessed, for example, with surveys that ask students to indicate the extent to which they agree with statements such as, “Students in this school [classroom] respect and care about each other,” and “This school [classroom] is like a family.”

(b) The school staff's growth as character educators: to what extent have adult staffs-teaching faculty, administrators, and support personnel—developed understandings of what they can do to foster character development? Personal commitment to doing so? Skills to carry it out? Consistent habits of acting upon their developing capacities as character educators?

(c) Student character: to what extent do students manifest understanding of, commitment to, and

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action upon the core ethical values? Schools can, for example, gather data on various character related behaviors: Has student attendance gone up? Fights and suspensions gone down? Vandalism declined? Drug incidents diminished?

Schools can also assess the three domains of character (knowing, feeling, and behaving) through anonymous questionnaires that measure student moral judgment (for example, “Is cheating on a test wrong?”) moral commitment (Would you cheat if you were sure you wouldn’t get caught?”) and self-reported moral behavior (“How many times have you cheated on a test or major assignment in the past year?”). Such questionnaires can be administered at the beginning of a school’s character initiative to get a baseline and again at later points to assess progress.

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# What's Right and Wrong with Character Education Today

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## Why Three Advocates Are Worried About The Character Education Movement

Eric Schaps, President, Character Education Partnership, Founder and President of the Developmental Studies Center

Esther F. Schaeffer, Executive Director and CEO, Character Education Partnership

Sanford N. McDonnell, Character Education Partnership Founder and Chairman of the Board

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We are advocates for character education. We believe that character education (CE) is essential to students' future success and also to a healthy, humane society. And so we are heartened that CE is now getting its due after decades of being slighted.

But we are concerned about, and critical of, what many are doing in the name of character education. Well-intentioned as these efforts may be, we believe that they will make little difference for students, and thus may soon discredit the entire field. Moreover, they can easily distract us from what really matters in helping students to become caring, principled, and responsible.

Character development is not a simple matter. One's character develops over time and is formed in many ways. One way is through exposure to the actions and attitudes of others, particularly those whom we have come to care about and trust. Another is through engaging in moral action such as service to others. A third way is through open, considered dialogue about the complexities of moral situations and about alternative responses to those situations. On the other hand, there is little evidence that moralizing to children or giving them direct instruction in moral principles has much effect.

The essential challenge for educators is to help students *want* to grow as moral beings, and to equip them with the internal resources to act effectively on that desire. It's not enough to ask

students to become polite and law abiding.

Educators also need to help them develop a deep regard for themselves *and* for others. To develop an abiding commitment to the core values of justice and caring. And to commit to living by and speaking up for what they believe, but also to hearing, understanding, and accommodating the beliefs of others.

Unfortunately, too many programs that say they are developing character and call themselves "character education" are aimed mostly at promoting good manners and compliance with rules, not at developing students of strong, independent character. What are these problematic CE programs? They are generally of four varieties: "cheerleading," "praise-and-reward," "define and drill," and "forced formality." Often these approaches are used in combination with one another.

The praise-and-reward approach seeks to make virtue into habit in the same way that B. F. Skinner used food pellets to shape the behavior of rats and pigeons. "Positive reinforcement" is its mainstay, often in the form of "catching students being good" and praising them or giving them chits that can be exchanged for privileges or prizes.

Another hallmark is awards assemblies, during which a few selected students are publicly extolled for being, say, particularly helpful or courteous. In this approach, all too often, the real significance of the students' actions is lost as the reward or award becomes the primary focus.



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In the define-and-drill approach, students are called on to memorize a list of values and the definition of each. Teachers quiz students: “Class, what do we mean by honesty? Respect? Integrity?” in the same manner that they ask, “What’s eight time seven? Four times nine?” Here students’ simple memorization of definitions seems to be equated with their development of the far more complex capacity and disposition to do the good.

In the forced formality approach, a school focuses its CE efforts on strict, uniform compliance with specific rules of conduct. It may emphasize, for example, certain kinds of hall behavior (e.g., walking in lines, arms at one’s sides), or formal forms of address (e.g., “yes sir,” “no ma’am”), or other procedures deemed to promote order or respect (e.g., standing when any adult enters the room).

These four approaches may well produce certain limited benefits, such as calling attention to matters of character or bringing some order to a chaotic environment. But they will not yield deep and enduring effects on character. They aim for quick behavioral results rather than helping students to better understand and commit to the values that are core to our society, or helping them to develop the skills for putting those values into action in life’s complex situations.

So what does “work”? Most fundamentally, schools must engage and inspire students’ hearts as well as their minds, and this requires that schools get better at meeting students’ basic, legitimate needs—their needs for safety, belonging, competence, and autonomy. A solid body of research shows that human beings are disposed to affiliate with those who meet these basic needs,

and students will bond to a school in the same way, and for the same reasons, that infants bond to mothers who capably provide for them. In other words, students will care about a school’s goals and values when that school effectively cares for them. Moreover, when they feel connected to a school and the people in it, they learn better.

And so the best forms of character education are those that enlist students as active, influential participants in creating a caring and just environment in the classroom and in the school at large. The challenge is for the school to become a microcosm in which students practice age-appropriate versions of the roles—and face the related challenges—they must face in later life. The goal is a total school culture in which all people in the school, including teachers, administrators, and support staff as well as students, treat one another with kindness and respect.

The best forms of character education also involve students in honest, thoughtful discussion and reflection regarding the moral implications of what they see around them, what they are told, and what they personally do and experience. When guided by a trusted adult, these opportunities to talk and think about social and ethical matters enable every student to come to a clearer, stronger sense of “what really matters” and “who do I want to be.”

Finally, a school must work to see that the goals and values it professes are embodied in what it does—that its policies and procedures reflect the values it wants its students to embrace. Its discipline policies must be fair and humane. It must deploy its resources equitably. It must ensure that accomplishments of many kinds are honored, so that it is not just the most academically and athletically gifted students who are recognized.

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## What's Right and Wrong with Character Education Today (continued)

More specifically, we suggest several concrete approaches that have considerable potential for creating “caring communities of learners” in schools and classrooms, and thereby fostering all aspects of students’ growth:

- Class meetings in which students, with the teacher’s help, get opportunities to set class goals and ground rules, plan activities, assess their progress, and solve common problems.
- Ethics-rich academic classes in which students go beyond facts and skills to consider the moral and social implications of what they are learning, most obviously in social studies and literature but also in the sciences and the arts.
- Cooperative learning groups in which students collaborate on academic tasks and have regular opportunities to plan and reflect on the ways they work together.
- Buddies programs that regularly bring together whole classes of younger and older students to work one-on-one on academic, service, and recreational activities.
- Inclusive whole-school events involving students and their families at school in ways that capitalize on their diverse backgrounds and personal experiences, such as “family heritage week” or a “family hobbies fair”.
- Service learning opportunities inside and outside the school that enable students to contribute to the welfare of others and to reflect on their experiences doing so.

When implemented well, these community-building approaches to character education become an integral part of a school’s overall improvement efforts. They intentionally and seamlessly are woven into the school’s pedagogy and its daily

routines. They are not regarded as add-ons, as in, “Now it’s time for our character-education activity of the day.”

We urge the adoption of these and other community-building approaches. Done well, these approaches can yield a broad set of desirable outcomes, ranging from enhanced interpersonal competence to improved academic motivation and performance to reduced drug abuse and school violence. But we caution that, like any educational activity, these approaches can be done badly, even so badly as to be no more effective than the approaches we criticized earlier. In summary, the path to improved character education must be marked by more discerning choices regarding type of approach, coupled with an unrelenting focus on quality implementation.

Character education ought not to be seen as a threat to the nation’s current emphasis on academics. In fact, CE can help to achieve academic goals. Educators report that literature, social studies, and even science become more interesting to students when they can focus on social and ethical issues embedded in subject matter. And they report that focusing on such issues leads students to a deeper level of engagement and understanding of the curricular content we want them to master.

Citizens need academic knowledge to function and prosper in this society. But a society that prepares its citizenry by emphasizing academics at the expense of ethical, social, and emotional development will not be healthy for long. As the founding constitution of the Phillips Exeter Academy had it in 1781:

“...(T)hough goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous; both united for the noblest character, and lay the surest foundation of usefulness to mankind.”



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# 100 Ways to Bring Character Education to Life

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Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Boston University

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## BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF VIRTUE

**1** Develop a school code of ethics. Distribute it to every member of the school community. Refer to it often. Display it prominently. Make sure all school policy reflects it.

**2** Institute a student-to-student tutoring program.

**3** Promote schoolwide or intraclass service clubs to serve the school, class, or external community.

**4** Encourage students to identify a charity or in-school need, collect donations, and help administer the distribution of funds.

**5** Ensure that the school's recognition systems cover both character and academics.

**6** Recognize a variety of achievements, such as surpassing past personal achievements or meeting a predetermined goal.

**7** Consistently prohibit gossip and, when appropriate, discuss its damaging consequences.

**8** Enforce a zero-tolerance policy on swearing. Prohibit vulgar and obscene language in the classroom and on school property.

**9** Use morning announcements, school and classroom bulletin boards, and the school newsletter to highlight the various accomplishments—particularly character-oriented ones—of students and faculty members.

**10** When conflicts arise around the school or class, teach about discretion, tact, and privacy—and about discreetly informing appropriate adults of the conflict.

**11** Have students take turns caring for class pets and taking them home over weekends and holidays. Discuss and demonstrate the responsibility required to care for living creatures.

**12** Invite student volunteers to clean up their community. With parental support, encourage students to build a community playground, pick up litter, rake leaves, plant trees, paint a mural, remove graffiti, or clean up a local park or beach.

**13** Find out the significance behind your school's traditions and emphasize those that build school unity.

**14** Display the school flag. Learn the school song. If you don't have either, have a contest!

**15** Have ceremonies to mark the beginning and end of the school year and for teachers and staff members who are leaving.

**16** Examine school assemblies. Do a minority of students control the majority of assemblies? How could more students be involved? Are the chants at pep assemblies appropriate? Do they build school spirit without demeaning other schools?

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## 100 Ways to Bring Character Education to Life (continued)

**17** Ensure students behave responsibly and respectfully when watching athletic competitions.

**18** In physical education and sports programs, place a premium on good sportsmanship. Participation in sports should provide good habits for the life beyond sports.

**19** Hang pictures of heroes and heroines in classrooms and halls. Include appropriate explanatory text.

**20** Make the school a welcoming place. Can people walking through the school's halls get a good idea of what is happening in classrooms? Is the principal frequently visible to students? Are there clear welcome signs prominently placed near the school's main door?

**21** Start a school scrapbook with photos, news stories, and memorabilia reflecting the school's history and accomplishments. Involve school members in contributing to and maintaining the collection. Show it off to visitors and new families.

**22** Publicly recognize the work of the "unsung heroes" who keep the school running: the custodians, repairmen, secretaries, cafeteria workers, and volunteers.

**23** Develop a system of welcoming and orienting new students to the school.

**24** Prohibit the display of any gang symbols or paraphernalia on school property. Remove graffiti immediately—including in student bathrooms.

**25** Let students take some responsibility for the maintenance and beautification of the school. Classes could "adopt a hallway," shelve mis-

placed books, plant flowers, and so on. Post signs identifying caretakers.

### MINING THE CURRICULUM

**26** Have students do a major paper on a living public figure ("My Personal Hero"), focusing on the moral achievement and virtues of the individual. First, do the groundwork of helping them understand what constitutes a particularly noble life.

**27** In history and literature classes, regularly weave in a discussion of motivations, actions, and consequences.

**28** Insist that quality matters. Homework should be handed in on time, neat and complete. Details do count.

**29** Include the study of "local heroes" in social studies classes.

**30** Help students form friendships. When forming cooperative learning groups, keep in mind both the academic and emotional needs of the students. These groups can be an opportunity to group students who might not otherwise interact with one another.

**31** Ensure that students have a firm understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and of the school's firm policy against it. But more importantly, help them understand why it is wrong.

**32** Celebrate the birthdays of heroes and heroines with discussions of their accomplishments.

**33** Choose the finest children's and adult literature to read with your students—literature rich with meaning and imagery. Don't waste time with mediocre or unmemorable texts.

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**34** Don't underestimate the power of stories to build a child's moral imagination. Read aloud to students daily.

**35** Conduct literature discussions—even in the youngest grades. Ask questions that encourage reflection. Don't immediately jump to "the moral of the story" while ignoring the richness, beauty, or complexity of the text. General questions could include: what did this book make you think about or feel? Tell me about [a character's name]—what kind of person was he? Why do you think the author wrote this book—what did she want to say to the reader? Don't leave a story, however, without having students grapple with its moral message.

**36** Build empathy in literature and social studies classes by teaching children to put themselves in the shoes of the people they are reading about or studying.

**37** Read and discuss biographies from all subject areas. Help students identify the person's core or defining characteristics.

**38** While studying about great men and women, do not consistently avoid the subject of personal weakness—especially in the upper grades. A study of a person's "whole" character can provide a powerful lesson in discernment and compassion. Consider a thoughtful discussion of the following questions: can a person be "great" (and good) and still have some character flaws?

**39** Teach students to write thoughtful letters: thank-you notes, letters to public officials, letters to the editor and so on.

**40** Assign homework that stimulates and challenges students. Engaging and demanding assignments will give rise to self discipline and perseverance.

**41** Set up a buddy reading system between an older and younger class. Carefully teach the older students techniques that will help make their teaching experience successful. Impress upon them the responsibility and patience required when helping those who are both younger and less skilled in a subject than they are.

**42** Have students memorize poetry and important prose selections, such as the preamble to the Declaration of Independence or the Gettysburg Address. In the process, make sure they understand the ideas that make these worthy of committing to memory.

**43** In science, address with each unit (when appropriate) the ethical considerations of that field of study. Students need to see that morality and ethics are not confined to the humanities.

**44** In math classes, specifically address the habits—such as courage, perseverance, and hard work—required to be a successful math student. Class rules and homework policies should reflect and support these habits.

**45** In social studies, examine—and reexamine yearly, if the curriculum affords the chance—the responsibilities of the citizen. What can students do right now to build the habits of responsible citizenship?

#### **INVOLVING TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STAFF**

**46** Choose a personal motto or mission statement.

**47** Tell your students who your heroes are and why you chose them.

**48** Lead by example. Pick up the piece of paper in the hall. Leave the classroom clean for the next teacher. Say thank you.

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## 100 Ways to Bring Character Education to Life (continued)

**49** Employ the language of virtue in conversations with colleagues: responsibility, commitment, perseverance, courage, and so on.

**50** Make your classroom expectations clear and hold students accountable.

**51** Admit mistakes and seek to make amends. Expect and encourage students to do likewise.

**52** Follow through. Do what you say you will do. For example, administer tests when they are scheduled; don't cancel at the last minute after students have prepared.

**53** If you engage in community or church service, let your students know in an appropriate, low-key manner.

**54** Illustrate integrity; let students see that you yourself meet the expectations of hard work, responsibility, gratitude, and perseverance that you place upon them.

**55** Give students sufficient and timely feedback when you evaluate their work. This demonstrates to students that their work matters and that teachers take an interest in their improvement and success.

**56** Teach justice and compassion by helping students separate the doer from the deed.

**57** Stand up for the underdog or the student who is being treated poorly by classmates. But use discretion: sometimes use an immediate response; sometimes use a private small-group meeting—perhaps the person in question ought not be present.

**58** Use constructive criticism (individually and collectively), tempered by compassion. Use class discussions as opportunities to teach students to do the same when responding to one another.

**59** Include in faculty and staff meetings and workshops discussions of the school's moral climate. How can the ethos of the school be improved?

**60** Begin a bulletin board where teachers and administrators can share their own "One Hundred Ways."

### INVOLVING PARENTS

**61** Create a written code of behavior for the classroom and the school. Ask parents to read and sign the code, as a pledge of mutual support.

**62** Consider having a parent representative present while developing such school codes.

**63** Make the effort to notify parents of student misbehavior, via notes, phone calls, and personal visits.

**64** "Catch students being good" and write or call parents to report it.

**65** Communicate with parents about appropriate ways they can help students with their schoolwork.

**66** Send a letter home to parents before the school year starts, introducing yourself, your classroom, your enthusiasm, and your expectations, particularly your hope that they will help you help their child.

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**67** Involve as many parents as possible.

**68** Frequently share the school's vision and high ideals for its students with parents.

**69** Open a dialogue with parents. They can be a teacher's greatest ally in helping students succeed. They can provide pertinent, invaluable information about their children's academic and social background, interests, talents, difficulties, and so on.

**70** In the school newsletter, inform parents of upcoming events, units of study, and opportunities to participate in school and after-school activities.

**71** Develop a list of suggested readings and resources in character education and share it with parents.

**72** When appropriate, provide literacy classes or tutors for parents.

**73** Provide parents with access to the school library. Provide a suggested reading list of books with solid moral content that make good read-alouds.

**74** Structure opportunities for parents to meaningfully participate in classrooms, beyond providing refreshments and chaperoning field trips. For example: reading with students, presenting a lesson in an area of expertise, tutoring, sharing family heirlooms, helping organize class plays or projects.

**75** Send out monthly newsletters to parents that include details on your character-education efforts.

**76** Include anecdotes of commendable student performance in the school newsletter.

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## 100 Ways to Bring Character Education to Life (continued)

**77** Include a “parent’s corner” in the newsletter where parents can share parenting tips, book titles, homework helps, and so on.

**78** When your school welcomes a new student, welcome the student’s family as well.

**79** What can your school do to encourage greater attendance at parent-teacher conferences? Examine the times they are held and how they are advertised. What is being done to reach out to the parents who never come?

**80** During parent-teacher conferences, ask parents, “What are your questions or concerns?” Then listen carefully to their answers.

### INVOLVING STUDENTS

**81** Begin a service program in which students “adopt-an-elder” from the community. Arrange opportunities for students to visit, write letters to, read to, or run errands for their adoptee.

**82** Structure opportunities for students to perform community service.

**83** Prohibit students from being unkind or using others as scapegoats in the classroom.

**84** Make it clear to students that they have a moral responsibility to work hard in school.

**85** Impress upon students that being a good student means far more than academic success.

**86** After students have developed an understanding of honesty and academic integrity, consider instituting an honor system for test taking and homework assignments.

**87** Provide opportunities for students to both prepare for competition and engage in cooperation.

**88** Help students acquire the power of discernment, including the ability to judge the truth, worth, and biases of what is presented on TV, the radio, and the Internet.

**89** Invite graduates of the high school to return and talk about their experience in the next stage of life. Ask them to discuss what habits or virtues could make the transition to work or college successful and what bad habits or vices cause problems.

**90** Have students identify a substantive quote or anecdote from which they can begin to develop a personal motto.

**91** Overtly teach courtesy.

**92** Make every effort to instill a work ethic in students. Frequently explain their responsibility to try their best. Create minimum standards for the quality of work you will accept—then don’t accept work that falls short.

**93** During election years, encourage students to research candidates’ positions, listen to debates, participate in voter registration drives, and if eligible, vote.

**94** Use the language of virtue with students: responsibility, respect, integrity, diligence, and so on, and teach them to use this language.

**95** In large middle and high schools, assess what is being done to keep students from “falling through the cracks.” Every student needs at least one teacher or counselor to take specific interest in them.



## II. Developing a School Profile

Many schools that have developed successful character-education initiatives began by soliciting honest feedback early on about the culture of their school. This assessment

A school profile can help you determine which aspects of your school culture to preserve and celebrate and which ones to work on improving.

helped them identify strengths as well as areas needing attention and prevented them from investing precious energy in ways that did not address the real needs of the school. For instance, some schools have been surprised to find that fewer students than they thought felt connected to the school, or that more bullying took place than they had previously believed. On the other hand, some schools have been pleased to find out that faculty trust was exceedingly high or that the students' sense of ownership in the school was greater than expected.

Results from this data collection can inform the goals of your character education initiative as well as help shape your school touchstone. We encourage you to use the tools to gather such data that are best suited for your school. We have included several survey instruments in this section, but other approaches, such as student interviews, are often also effective.

- ✓ Lead a discussion with faculty around the following question: “what is working in this school and what values are embedded in the practices that are working?” This analysis can help a school build on its strengths.
- ✓ Have students and faculty fill out one of the surveys in your homeroom or student advisory period.
- ✓ Send a survey home to parents, tabulate the results, and present the key findings to the faculty and community.
- ✓ Create five questions about school climate and have a group of older students use them to interview younger students.
- ✓ Analyze the “DPS School Satisfaction Survey” (available from the DPS Web site) to assess your school culture. Probe deeper into key areas with interviews.

### Contents of this Section

School as Caring Community Profile II

Student Climate Survey

Sample Student Interview Questions

Sample DPS School Satisfaction Survey Results

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# School as a Caring Community Profile (SCCP-II)

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A good community will have a high degree of congruence in its perception of itself.

-Douglas Heath, Knowledge Without Goodness is Dangerous

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In the “Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education,” by the Character Education Partnership, Principle four states:

The school must be a caring community. The school itself must embody good character. It must progress toward becoming a microcosm of the civil, caring, and just society we seek to create as a nation.<sup>1</sup>

The School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) is an instrument developed by the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility)<sup>2</sup> to help schools assess themselves as caring communities. The SCCP may be administered at any point (ideally at the beginning) of a character-education initiative and then at later points to assess progress. Its validity as a measure of caring community is enhanced if it is given to varied constituencies that make up the school:

- Students
- Professional Support Staff
- School Board Members
- Teachers
- Other Staff
- Administrators
- Parents

The School as a Caring Community Profile—II (SCCP-II) is a 43-question survey. The first 26 items relate to perceptions of students; the final 17 items relate to perceptions of adults. (For most items, a high rating is positive; for a few items, the reverse is true.) The SCCP identifies

areas of strength and areas for improvement. Areas of relatively low ratings, and areas where there are significant discrepancies between ratings by different groups, can then become the focus of efforts to strengthen the experience of the school as a caring community.

Note: The items in this survey seek to gather the perceptions of all members of the school community. In order to validly assess the strength of community in a school, it is important to assess how both students and adults are perceived. Data analysis, however, should protect confidentiality in the case of both students and adults. An individual teacher may wish to look at the data for his/her classroom, but those data should be recoded and/or entered into a school-wide data pool that does not link classroom data to particular faculty.

There is no fee to administer the instrument. The Center for the 4th and 5th Rs does offer for-fee data analysis and presentation services.

<sup>1</sup>Character Education Partnership, Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education (CEP, 1025 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1011, Washington, DC 20036; 800-988-8081).

<sup>2</sup>The SCCP-II was developed by T. Lickona and M. Davidson at the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, SUNY Cortland, P.O. Box 2000, Cortland, NY 13045; 607-753-2455. It may be duplicated without permission of the authors (last revised June, 2001).



# School as a Caring Community Profile (SCCP-II)<sup>1</sup>

## A Survey of Students, Staff, and Parents

Directions: Respond to each item below by shading the appropriate number on the computer scan sheet indicating the response that describes how frequently you observe the following behaviors in your school. Additional space is provided below each item if you wish to explain your response (you may use the back of the sheet if you need more room). However, you *do not* need to provide a reason if you don't want to.

Circle one:

- |                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| (1) Administrator              | (2) Teacher     |
| (3) Professional Support Staff | (4) Other Staff |
| (5) Student                    | (6) Parent      |
| (7) Other _____                |                 |

	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	AS OFTEN AS NOT	FREQUENTLY	ALMOST ALWAYS
1. Students treat classmates with respect. Explain (if you wish to):	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students exclude other students because they are different. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Students respect the personal property of others. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize or they do something nice). Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
7. Students show respect for school property (such as, desks, walls, bathrooms, buses, buildings, and grounds). Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
8. Older students are unkind to younger students. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
9. Students try to get other students to follow school rules. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5

## School as a Caring Community Profile (SCCP-II) (continued)

	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	AS OFTEN AS NOT	FREQUENTLY	ALMOST ALWAYS
10. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, aides, and bus drivers). Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
11. Students work well together. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
12. Students help to improve the school. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
13. Students are disrespectful toward their teachers. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
14. Students help new students feel accepted. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
15. Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
16. Students pick on other students. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
17. Students are willing to forgive each other. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
18. Students show poor sportsmanship. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
19. Students are patient with each other. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
20. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
21. Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5

	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	AS OFTEN AS NOT	FREQUENTLY	ALMOST ALWAYS
22. Students listen to each other in class discussions. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
23. When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
24. Students refrain from put-downs (negative, hurtful comments). Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
25. Students share what they have with others. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
26. Students are involved in helping to solve school problems. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
27. Students can talk to their teachers about problems that are bothering them. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
28. Parents show that they care about their child's education and school behavior. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
29. In their interactions with students, all school staff (the principal, other administrators, counselors, coaches, secretaries, aides, custodians, bus drivers, etc.) act in ways that demonstrate the character qualities the school is trying to teach. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
30. Students are disrespectful toward their parents in the school environment. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
31. Teachers go out of their way to help students who need extra help. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
32. Teachers treat parents with respect. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5

## School as a Caring Community Profile (SCCP-II) (continued)

	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	AS OFTEN AS NOT	FREQUENTLY	ALMOST ALWAYS
33. In this school you can count on adults to try to make sure that students are safe. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
34. This school treats parents in a way that makes them feel respected (welcomed, valued, cared about). Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
35. Faculty and staff treat each other with respect (are caring, supportive, etc.). Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
36. In their interactions with students, teachers act in ways that demonstrate the character qualities the school is trying to teach. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
37. Teachers are unfair in their treatment of students. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
38. This school cares about the thoughts and feelings of parents. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
39. Faculty and staff are involved in helping to make school decisions. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
40. In this school, parents treat other parents with respect. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
41. Parents show respect for teachers. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
42. In their interactions with children, parents display the character qualities the school is trying to teach. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5
43. This school shows appreciation for the efforts of faculty and staff. Explain:	1	2	3	4	5

<sup>1</sup> The SCCP-II was developed by T. Lickona and M. Davidson at the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, SUNY Cortland, P.O. Box 2000, Cortland, NY 13045; 607-753-2455. It may be duplicated without permission of the authors (last revised June, 2001).

# Student Climate Survey

RESPOND 1 AS NO OR NEVER, 2 AS MAYBE OR USUALLY, AND 3 AS YES OR ALWAYS

	1	2	3
1. I feel part of this school.			
2. Students in this school know right from wrong.			
3. Adults care about me here at school.			
4. I am afraid in this school.			
5. I am glad that I go to this school.			
6. I have participated in extracurricular activities.			
7. Students respect each other here.			
8. Adults listen when students have a problem.			
9. I am proud of myself and my accomplishments.			
10. My friends believe that personal integrity is important.			
11. I like my school.			
12. Kids at my school know how to act.			
13. Adults here feel I am important.			
14. I can talk to at least one adult about my problems.			
15. Being honest is important.			
16. Persons with disabilities are teased at my school.			
17. There are consequences for doing the wrong thing here.			
18. I am satisfied with the way adults treat me.			
19. I am encouraged to be kind to others in this school.			
20. Students are encouraged to excel in this school.			
21. I can count on teachers to listen to my concerns.			
22. I feel like no one cares about me here.			
23. I have volunteered in the community to help others.			
24. Students in this school respect each other.			
25. I would know where to get help if I needed it.			
26. There is something for everyone at my school.			
27. Athletes get preferential treatment.			
28. Adults go out of their way for students.			
29. I've talked about my goals with an adult.			
30. This school is just too big.			
31. I know people who no one cares about here at school.			
32. Some people are ostracized because of who they are.			
33. I learn life skills as well as academics at my school.			
34. People care about me here at school.			

2002 National Schools of Character, Eleanor Roosevelt High School. This document may be reproduced without penalty.

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# Sample Student Interview Questions

1. Tell me what it's like to be a student at \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What are the best things about this school?
3. If you could wave a magic wand and change something about this school, what would it be?
4. How do you feel when you walk through the school doors each morning?
5. How many adults can you name who you think care about you?
  - a. What kinds of things make you think that a teacher cares about you?
  - b. What kinds of things make you think that a teacher does not care about you?

# Denver Public Schools

## 2001-2002 Satisfaction Survey

### Middle School - Grade 6-8 Students

SA = Strongly Agree  
A = Agree  
? = Uncertain

D = Disagree  
SD = Strongly Disagree

All numbers in percentages (percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding).

All Respondents	SA	A	?	D	SD	No Resp	Total N
1. I feel safe at school	16	46	17	13	4	4	452
2. My school is neat, clean, and well-maintained.	15	38	10	25	10	3	452
3. The rules of the school are clear.	29	45	7	12	4	4	452
4. I like being in my school.	21	37	6	18	13	4	452
5. Teachers are doing a good job teaching me.	30	42	8	8	8	3	452
6. My parent(s) know what I am learning at school	27	45	10	11	4	4	452
7. The school promotes understanding among students from different backgrounds.	17	42	17	13	7	4	452
8. I know how to complete my homework assignments.	27	44	13	10	3	4	452
9. My teachers encourage me to do my best.	27	42	8	12	8	4	452
10. There are enough opportunities to get into the courses I want.	12	33	12	21	17	5	452
11. Rules for student discipline are enforced consistently.	22	38	14	15	6	5	452
12. I have regular access to school computers as a resource for my classes.	17	35	10	21	11	6	452
13. My principal is doing a good job running the school.	28	33	12	13	10	5	452
14. I have an opportunity to be involved in school decisions that affect me.	11	31	14	20	18	5	452
15. The atmosphere of the school encourages respect among students and the adults in the building.	13	38	11	17	14	6	452
16. My classes are challenging.	25	43	6	15	6	5	452
17. I am taught about violence prevention and the dangers of drug use.	30	34	7	15	10	5	452
18. My classes are preparing me for my future.	33	40	9	9	6	4	452
19. Classroom learning in our school prepares students to do well on the Colorado state test.	31	39	12	7	6	5	452

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In his book, *Greater Expectations*, William Damon states that four early building blocks of character are empathy, fairness, self-control and self-awareness. He continues, "For these early moral capacities to become fully formed character, empathy must grow into sustained concern for the well-being of others; fairness must grow into a real commitment to justice; self-control must grow into a strong sense of personal responsibility; and self-awareness must grow into a determination to be a good and honorable person."

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"To anyone who takes a close look at what goes on in classrooms it becomes quickly evident that our schools do much more than pass along requisite knowledge to the students attending them (or fail to do so, as the case may be). They also influence the way those students look upon themselves and others. They affect the way learning is valued and sought after and lay the foundations of lifelong habits of thought and action. They shape opinion and develop taste, helping to form liking and aversions. They contribute to the growth of character and, in some instances, they may even be a factor in its corruption. Schools in the aggregate do all this and more to and for the students they serve. Moreover, and here is the important point, they do much of it without the full awareness and thoughtful engagement of those in charge."

-W. Jackson, Robert E. Boostrom, and David T. Hansen  
*The Moral Life of Schools*

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# III. Creating a School-wide Touchstone

Some schools that have created deep, sustained character-education initiatives have done so with the aid of a school-wide touchstone that incorporates a shared set of universal values and aspirations for all members of the school community. This

A touchstone that incorporates shared values is important for any successful organization, especially for a school.

touchstone can guide the daily decision making of students and staff and can also inform decisions about many aspects of school life, including parental involvement, after-school programs, and the hiring of staff. The importance of having a touchstone has been borne out in numerous studies from the business and non-profit world. A creed, or “way” can be the glue that holds successful organizations together and keeps them focused, even during turbulent times.

Furthermore, a creed or touchstone can be a powerful tool for building community in an organization; members tend to feel more connected to each other when joined by common values.

Having a touchstone is particularly important for schools because they are part of a long tradition in which loose connections between classroom teachers has been the norm. Teachers have often “done their own thing” in their individual classrooms, which has led to mixed results. At its best, allowing teachers to make independent

Students want to know their school’s *beliefs* and boundaries because they want to understand the implications of their choices and decisions.

decisions regarding how to meet district academic goals has both preserved teacher autonomy—an important aspect of teacher professionalism—and opened up opportunities for creatively reaching students. On the other hand, every teacher acting as an island unto himself, with little connection to the larger school, has sometimes led to widely uneven academic and behavioral expectations within a single school, leading students to feel confused about what is expected of them. Schools that delicately balance the benefits of teacher auton-

omy with the benefits of tight coupling between classrooms can powerfully transmit and reinforce a culture of high academic and character expectations. Students tend to thrive in such environments.

A school creed or touchstone should not be used as a set of commandments. A living touchstone is meant to inspire and develop critical thinking and ethical judgment. For example, the Slavens School Code begins with the line, “At Slavens we take the high road.” This statement provides powerful opportunities for students to wrestle with what it means to take the high road in various situations, recognizing that it might look different in varying circumstances. Similarly, the “Skyhawk Creed” from Hill Middle School promotes, “taking responsibility for our own behavior and learning.” Skilled teachers can help students understand and reflect on what this might

mean in a wide range of unique situations. We have included in this section a diagram illustrating the power that the touchstone can have in helping students understand a given situation, skillfully act in the situation, and reflect upon those actions, all in light of the values contained in the touchstone. Ideally, the touchstone becomes a guide for thinking and acting for students *and* adults in the school community.

The touchstone guides one through a developmental process that begins with thinking about and understanding universal ethical values and leads to ethical behavior, healthy habits, and eventually to sound character. Nineteenth century British writer, William Thackeray, communicated in the following lines both the importance of paying attention to one's thoughts and how thinking shapes character:

Sow a thought, reap an act;  
Sow an act, reap a habit;  
Sow a habit, reap a character;  
Sow a character and reap a destiny.

In most elementary faculty lounges teachers talk about the specific actions of students, such as, "Sally did a nice job on her report this morning," or, "Tim hit Billy on the playground." By middle school, teachers tend to discuss habits of students: "John has great study habits," or, "Susie has poor social interaction habits." If one listens closely to conversations in high school faculty lounges, students are often referenced in terms of their character: "Manuel has strong character." A well-crafted and thoughtfully used touchstone can help shape the thoughts, actions, habits, and eventually, the character of our students.

"Above all, it is expected that the teacher's attention to the disposition of the minds and morals of the youth, under his charge, will exceed every other care; well considering that, though goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble; yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous; and that both united form the noblest character, and lay the foundation of usefulness to mankind."

-Samuel Phillips, 1778

A few things are important to keep in mind when developing a touchstone. First, the values contained in the touchstone must reflect universal ethical qualities such as respect, responsibility and caring. Second, buy-in and sense of ownership is crucial. Teachers and parents should be included on the committee, because parents should be powerful partners in reinforcing the shared values of the school community. A sense of ownership comes from people having a real opportunity to have their voices heard, which can take time. So it is unwise, for instance, to try to hammer out a touchstone in one short meeting. On the other hand, do not let the process go on for too long. Consensus on the actual wording of a touchstone should be defined as what everyone can live with.

Schools that have already crafted a mission statement might find it useful to adapt their mission statement to form a creed. This works best, of course, if the process of creating the mission statement involved multiple stakeholders and was aimed at truly distilling the shared values of the school. In addition, some schools benefit from cre-

ating a motto from the creed. For instance, at Slavens school, “take the high road” became the motto, as well as a shorthand for the code of conduct. It might be useful to keep this in mind when crafting your school touchstone – is there a line or phrase that might serve as a motto?

### **Below are several suggestions for developing a touchstone**

The touchstone helps guide the daily decision making of students and staff. It can also inform decisions about many aspects of school life, including parental involvement, after-school programs, and the hiring of staff.

A living creed or touchstone can be a powerful tool for building community in an organization; members tend to feel more connected to each other when joined by common values.

- ✓ Pair up and brainstorm a list of traits or values that reflect the school or the aspirations of the school. Cluster related values.
- ✓ Put butcher paper outside classrooms with two columns labeled, “Things to preserve and celebrate,” and “Things to improve,” and have students and teachers write in their suggestions. Collect the sheets and look for patterns.
- ✓ Have each member on the character-education committee write down up to four prominent school values (such as respect, caring) and up to four phrases or sentences that might fit into the creed (“We stand up for each other”) and then break the committee into four groups. Have each group agree on four values and four phrases. Then pair up the groups and have each pair distill the eight values and eight phrases into four of each. Repeat the process until one set of four values and four phrases remains. Finally, select a member of the group (or someone from the Office of Educating for Character) to craft one or two drafts of the creed based on the final list. (See sample procedure in this section for a visual representation.)
- ✓ Circulate a draft of the creed to parents, students, and community members for feedback.
- ✓ Once the creed is finalized, post it widely. Consider printing it on every school newsletter, on refrigerator magnets, on school T shirts, on the back of school ID cards, and on posters throughout the school. Consider hiring painters to paint it on the school walls.

### **Contents of this Section**

Case examples

Sample Procedure for Distilling School-wide Input In Shaping a School Touchstone

How a School Touchstone Can Guide Thinking and Acting

## Case Examples

A living creed or touchstone can be a powerful tool for building community in an organization; members tend to feel more connected to each other when joined by common values.

### SLAVENS SCHOOL

At Slavens, a K-8 school in Denver, a committee of parents, teachers, and the principal met for nearly a year to read various books and articles about character and character education. After soliciting input from teachers, students, and parents, they crafted the following:

#### Slavens Code of Conduct

**At Slavens we take the high road.**

**We genuinely care about ourselves, each other, and our school.**

**We show and receive respect by: using kind words and actions, listening thoughtfully, standing up for ourselves and others, and taking responsibility for our own behavior and learning.**

**This is who we are even when no one is watching!**

### CORY ELEMENTARY

Initially, Cory formed a character-education committee consisting of parents, teachers, and the principal. After gaining background knowledge on character education and sending a climate survey out to the community, the committee began working on a touchstone. They put a large piece of butcher paper outside each classroom with two headings: “Things we should preserve and celebrate at Cory,” and “Things we can improve at Cory.” Similar feedback was solicited at parent and community meetings. Based on this input, the committee created the Cory Creed.

#### The Cory Creed

**At Cory we love learning and laughter.**

**We grow by trying new things and learning from our mistakes.**

**We embrace challenges with the courage to do our best.**

**We persevere.**

**We show respect for our community through caring, responsible actions.**

**We celebrate each other’s differences and accomplishments.**

**At Cory we love learning and laughter.**

## HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hill convened a character-education committee composed of the principal, and several teachers and parents. After a few meetings, they produced a list of shared values and eventually crafted a creed based on those values.

### The Skyhawk Creed

**At Hill, we are connected by common goals:**

- **Achieving academic excellence through hard work**
- **Respecting each other by using kind words and actions**
- **Taking responsibility for our own learning and behavior**

**We know that it takes courage to live this creed, especially when no one is watching!**

## GOVE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Many schools choose to establish a character-education committee involving ten or twelve people who later report to the entire faculty. Gove instead chose to dedicate numerous faculty meetings to character education and therefore the character-education committee effectively became the entire faculty. Below is a touchstone that they crafted:

### Gove: The Way We Do It

**At Gove we stand by each other to create a safe and caring place for powerful learning.**

**We show respect for ourselves, each other and for our school.**

**We take responsibility for our actions and our learning.**

**This is who we are, especially when no one is watching!**

## PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL

### The Place Way

**At Place Middle School, we pursue excellence in *scholarship* and *character*.**

**We celebrate and honor each other by being respectful, honest, kind and fair.**

**We show our cultural appreciation for each other in all we do.**

**We give our best in and out of the classroom and take responsibility for our actions.**

**This is who we are even when no one is watching.**

# Sample Procedure for Distilling School-wide Input in Shaping a School Touchstone

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Divide members into four groups. Have each person identify up to four prominent values in the school and up to four phrases or sentences that might fit into the creed. Have each group agree on four shared values and four phrases or sentences. Pair up Groups A and B as well as C and D and do the same. Keep synthesizing until you agree on a master set of values and phrases. Construct the creed based on this master list.

## Group A - Step 1

- |                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| 1. Respect        | 3. Trust   |
| 2. Responsibility | 4. Courage |
- 
- 1) Treat others the way you would want to be treated
  - 2) Equality of opportunity
  - 3) Take responsibility for my actions
  - 4) Together we can strengthen our school's community

## Group B - Step 1

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Honesty    | 3. Caring    |
| 2. Discipline | 4. Tolerance |
- 
- 1) Taking the high road
  - 2) We embrace the diversity of life
  - 3) Give my best in and out of the classroom and on the playing field
  - 4) Taking responsibility for our own behavior and learning

## Groups A and B - Step 2

- |                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| 1. Respect        | 3. Caring  |
| 2. Responsibility | 4. Courage |
- 
- 1) Take the high road in the way we treat ourselves, each other, and the school
  - 2) Take responsibility for our own behavior and learning
  - 3) Give my best in and out of the classroom
  - 4) Together we can embrace and strengthen our school

## Groups A, B, C, D - Step 3

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Respect        | 3. Kindness |
| 2. Responsibility | 4. Caring   |
- 
- 1) Take the high road
  - 2) Take responsibility for our own behavior and learning
  - 3) This is who we are even when no one is watching
  - 4) We stand up for ourselves and others

## Groups C & D - Step 2

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Respect        | 3. Integrity |
| 2. Responsibility | 4. Kindness  |
- 
- 1) Pursuing excellence in scholarship and character
  - 2) We stand up for ourselves and others
  - 3) This is who we are even when no one is watching
  - 4) We are good listeners by listening with our open hearts and minds

## Group C - Step 1

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Respect    | 3. Diligence |
| 2. Compassion | 4. Integrity |
- 
- 1) Pursuing excellence in scholarship and character
  - 2) This is who we are even when no one is watching
  - 3) Maintain a sense of humor
  - 4) Always use appropriate words and actions

## Group D - Step 1

- |                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Responsibility | 3. Kindness |
| 2. Citizenship    | 4. Fairness |
- 
- 1) We have open hearts and open minds
  - 2) We stand up for ourselves and others
  - 3) We are good listeners
  - 4) We care about others

## SLAVENS CODE OF CONDUCT

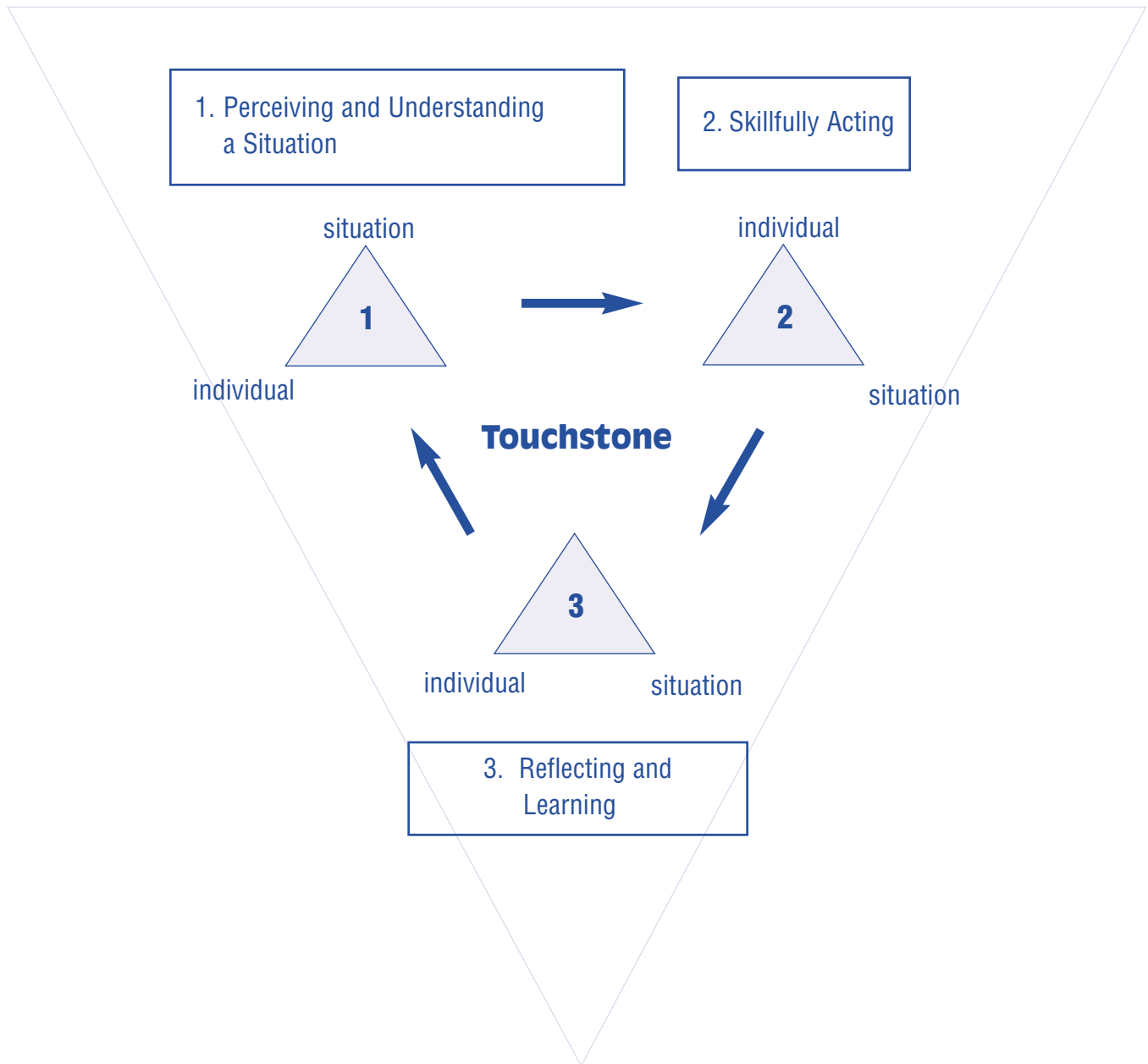
At Slavens we take the high road.

We genuinely care about ourselves, each other and our school.

We show and receive respect by using kind words and actions, listening thoughtfully, standing up for ourselves and others, and taking responsibility for our own behavior and learning.

This is who we are even when no one is watching.

# How a School Touchstone Can Guide Thinking and Acting



As this diagram indicates, an individual is constantly in relationship with the touchstone and a concrete situation. Ideally, the touchstone serves as a reference point for all three phases of ethical action:





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## How a School Touchstone Can Guide Thinking and Acting (continued)

For example, let's look at how the touchstone might guide the thinking and acting of a student at Hill Middle School. Recall, Hill's touchstone is the following:

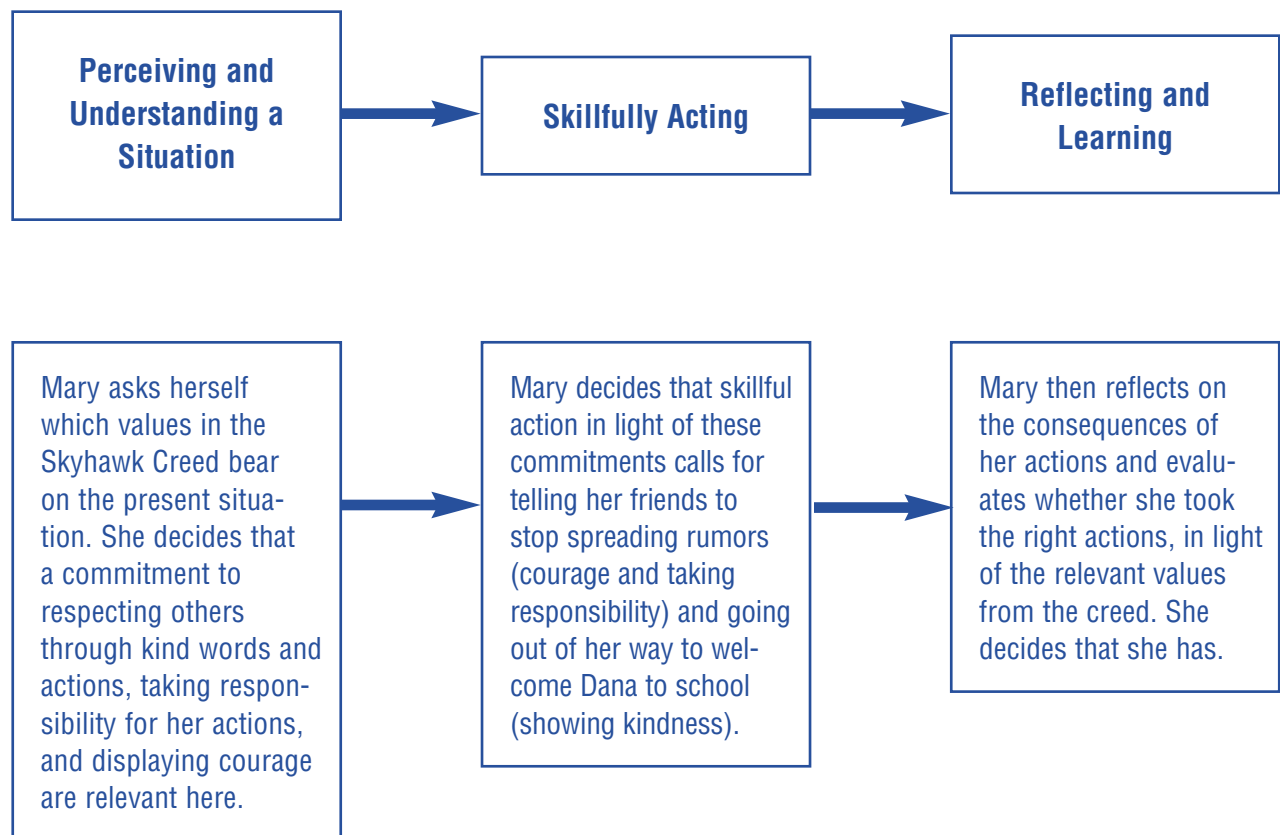
### The Skyhawk Creed

At Hill, we are connected by common goals:

- Achieving academic excellence through hard work
- Respecting each other by using kind words and actions
- Taking responsibility for our own learning and behavior

We know that it takes courage to live this creed, especially when no one is watching!

Situation: Imagine that Mary, a 7th grader, hears rumors during lunchtime about Dana, a new girl at school, and Mary knows that these rumors might damage Dana's reputation. Below is a diagram of how the Skyhawk Creed might serve as a useful guide for Mary in this situation.



# IV. Establishing an Intentional Learning Community

Once a school community has deepened its knowledge of character education, taken stock of its existing school culture, and created a touchstone that reflects its shared values, the school is ready to infuse educating for character into the daily life of the

The guiding question for the school community ought to be, *“How can we help our students understand, care about, and act upon the values in our touchstone?”*

school. This can happen in an almost endless number of ways and faculty should be encouraged to think as creatively as possible in this regard. The guiding question for the school community ought to be, *“How can we help our students understand, care about, and act upon the values in our touchstone?”*

In addressing this very large question, consider each of the following strands which together constitute a comprehensive approach to educating for character. The more areas your school can address, the more comprehensive and long-lasting your initiative will be. To help reach this goal, consider partnering with as many groups in the school community as possible. For instance, the PTA could communicate with parents about how to reinforce character education at home. The student council can help insure that the student body feels that they have a voice in the character-education initiative. Maybe a local business group can work in the community to reinforce character development. In other words, the principal and the character-education committee do not need to do all the work, and in fact, the more groups that share ownership in the success of the initiative, the more sustainable it will be. Consider the following strands:

Good literature informs who we are, inspires a vision of who we could be, and promotes the dynamic conversation between the two.

- *The role of the teacher.* In what ways do the actions and attitudes of each teacher support or detract from the values in the touchstone? A teacher who welcomes students into the classroom and who asks them about their school day reinforces the values of care and kindness. A teacher who admits to mistakes reinforces the values of integrity and of taking responsibility for one’s actions. On the other hand, a teacher who is never prepared for class or subtly humiliates students in the classroom sends very different messages. As Carol Ann Tomlinson noted in *Educational Leadership* (September 2002), “Students care deeply about learning when their teachers meet their needs for affirmation, contribution, purpose, power and challenge.” All school personnel play an important role in upholding the values in the touchstone.

- *School curriculum and classroom instruction.* How can teachers draw on existing curricula to support educating for character? How can we approach literature and history in ways that bring out their ethical dimensions? What about bioethics in the sciences? How can we leverage extra-curricular activities, including sports, to build character? Do students have meaningful opportunities for cooperative learning where they can develop a sense of positive interdependence? Are they asked open-ended and probing questions? Do they feel comfortable taking intellectual risks? Effective teaching would include identifying the ethical aspects embedded in assignments, connecting students' thinking to their own experiences, and referencing the touchstone for insight.

"One student I heard about said she could not describe her good teachers because they differed so greatly, one from another. But she could describe her bad teachers because they were all the same: 'their words float somewhere in front of their faces, like the balloon speech in cartoons.'

With one remarkable image she said it all. Bad teachers distance themselves from the subject they are teaching—and in the process from their students. Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life."

-Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

- *School rituals, markers, and traditions.* In what way does your school mark significant passages in students' lives? What are your traditions and rituals? Are they aligned with your values? At one middle school, students identified the most powerful school tradition as eighth graders getting to intimidate the sixth and seventh graders. Clearly, this tradition needs transformation. On the other hand, at another school, each eighth grader makes a speech to the whole school on something he or she cares deeply about.

- *Opportunities for ethical action.* As we mentioned in the introduction, educating for character is helping students understand, care about and act upon core ethical values. What opportunities do your students have to act upon their growing capacity for empathy, care, and responsibility? Many schools provide service learning opportunities in which students identify, research, and tackle problems in the community. Some schools train peer mediators to help with conflicts and others have after-school service clubs or support student government as an important part of the school.

- *Critical thinking and conflict resolution skills.* In what ways is your school helping students think critically about ethical situations, approach problems with a flexible mind, and take the perspective of others? Are they gaining skills towards self mastery including the ability to resolve conflicts?

- *The role of parents and the community.* How is the school communicating with parents about how to reinforce character education at home? Some schools send home printed magnets of the school creed and provide parents with specific suggestions about how best to reference the creed at home. Other schools hold parent education workshops to discuss parenting techniques that reinforce the values of the school. Would a local supermarket pay for a billboard stating, "King

## Soopers Honors The Gove Way: Building Excellence in Academics and Character?"

- *Leadership and a culture of collaboration that supports building a school of character.* Are the principal, character education site coordinator, PTA, and CDM working together to ensure that adults have time and resources to develop a school of character? Is character education a regular agenda item for faculty meetings? Has the school planned for and included character education in the school calendar? Are measures being taken to ensure the sustainability of the initiative? The highly regarded publication, *Turning Points: Transforming Middle School*, notes that in healthy, collaborative school cultures, adults “create a culture of discourse in which the most important educational matters facing the school are openly and honestly discussed. Members respect each other, value their differences, and are open to each other’s ideas.” Character-education initiatives are more likely to thrive in those environments.

If the adults don’t lead in shaping the school culture then the students will.

- *Addressing Specific School Needs.* There exist well-designed programs or approaches that address particular school issues, which often surface during Phase II when developing a school profile. For example, if bullying is a major problem, the school might want to review and adopt or adapt a specific bullying-proofing program. There are sound approaches to addressing such issues as staff morale, academic integrity, parental involvement, sportsmanship, conflict resolution, and emotional literacy. The OEC can help you select a program or approach that best suits your needs.
- *School and Classroom Governance.* What values are reflected in the governance of classrooms and of your school? Are they consistent with the values in your touchstone? For instance, if your school aims to nurture engaged citizens who “stand up for what is right,” do the students have meaningful opportunities to provide input and become engaged in decisions within the school and within individual classrooms? It is unlikely that a school dominated exclusively by adult voice would ever nurture engaged citizens; democratic citizens develop best in democratic environments. It is also worth examining your school discipline practices. Are teachers and administrators unduly punitive in dealing with offenders or are they too lax? Do offenders have an opportunity to restore the harm they have caused to the school community or do they become more disconnected from the school and become outcasts?

“Man ultimately decides for himself! And in the end, education must be education toward the ability to decide.”

-Victor Frankel

- *Developing a cycle of self-evaluation.* In what ways will you continuously assess the impact of your initiative? How will you know which components are successful and which are ineffective? How is the staff feeling about the initiative?

You might administer your climate surveys annually to look for change from the previous year and solicit feedback every few months during a faculty meeting to see if you are on track.

## Contents of This Section

“The Teacher as a Person,” by James H. Stronge in *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (Alexandria: ASCD) 2002.

“Infusing/Integrating Character-Related Content and Processes Into Academic Instruction”

“America is great because she is good; but if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville

“Techniques for Using Stories (Told or Read) to Build Character”

“What Should You Do? Approaching Ethics Through Literature”

Coach’s Checklist

“Markers, Rituals and Rites of Passage,” by Charles Elbot

“Service Learning and Character Education: a Four-Way Fit,” and “Character Education in Action: Two Case Studies,” from *Their Best Selves*

“Teaching Creative Conflict Resolution,” from *Don’t Laugh At Me Curriculum*. Operation Respect and Educators for Social Responsibility, 2000.

“A teacher affects eternity; he never knows where his influence stops.”

-Henry Adams

“20 Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character,” adapted from *Parents, Kids and Character* by Dr. Helen LeGette.

Under the Umbrella: “Fostering Shared Leadership,” by Kathy Beland, M.Ed

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# The Teacher as a Person

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James H. Stronge, *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (Alexandria, VA, 2002)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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I just wanted to write you a little thank you note for everything that you have done for me over the past two years. I have learned a lot and had a whole lotta fun doing it. I loved the labs, and basically everything we did in your class because you made it fun. You made it so we learned without even realizing we were learning anything, but when it came time to show that we knew it, we were like, “Whoa! I guess I really did learn something!” Not only did you teach us about science, you put us in real case scenarios and helped prepare us for high school and even college. But even further than that, you were like a friend to me. That might scare you a little, but you really remind me of myself, and I hope I grow up to be at least a little like you. I feel like you genuinely care about your students and sincerely enjoy your job...Thank you for being such a great teacher and friend. You have sincerely contributed to the “awesomeness” of these years. Thanks 1,000 times!

Student Letter to a Middle School Science Teacher  
with Four Years of Teaching Experience

Much of the recent research on teacher effectiveness focuses on relating teacher behaviors to student achievement. Quite a bit of the research, however, has delved into stakeholders’ perceptions of good teaching—what students, administrators, and teachers themselves think makes an effective teacher. Studies suggest that instructional and management processes are key to effectiveness, but many interview and survey responses about effective teaching emphasize the teacher’s affective characteristics, or social and emotional behaviors, more than pedagogical practice. Moreover, the teacher’s psychological influence on students has been linked to student achievement in various effectiveness studies. Here we explore what we know about teachers’ affective characteristics as they relate to effectiveness and to perceptions of effectiveness.

## ROLE OF CARING

Effective teachers care about their students and demonstrate that they care in such a way that their students are aware of it, as we see in the classroom example at the beginning of this

chapter. Several studies exploring what makes a good teacher show the importance of caring in the eyes of teachers and students. Also, supervisors who rate teachers place priority on how teachers show students that they are caring and supportive.

Caring is a broad term, maybe as broad as effectiveness itself. One study defines caring as an act of bringing out the best in students through affirmation and encouragement. Obviously, the characteristics of caring go well beyond knowing the students to include qualities such as patience, trust, honesty, and courage. Specific teacher attributes that show caring include listening, gentleness, understanding, knowledge of students as individuals, warmth and encouragement, and an overall love for children.

## LISTENING

Effective teachers practice focused and sympathetic listening to show students they care not only about what happens in the classroom, but about students’ lives in general. These teachers



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## The Teacher as a Person (continued)

initiate two-way communication that exudes trust, tact, honesty, humility, and care. In the act of listening, these teachers actually pay attention to and understand what the students say. They are dedicated to bettering student lives and demonstrate their understanding through tenderness, patience, and gentleness. Moreover, research indicates that children want to be nurtured, and they value teachers who are kind, gentle, and encouraging. Particularly for elementary students, gentleness in a teacher is a sign of caring and an important element in perceived effectiveness.

### UNDERSTANDING

Students highly value teachers' understanding of their concerns and questions. Interviews with students consistently reveal that students want teachers who listen to their arguments and assist them in working out their problems. They want teachers who hold them in mutual respect and who are willing to talk about their own personal lives and experiences. Through appropriate self-disclosure, teachers become human in the eyes of students. Being available to students, and the depth of the teacher's understanding of students, legitimizes the teacher as a person when demonstrating genuine concern and empathy toward students.

### KNOWING STUDENTS

Effective, caring teachers know students both formally and informally. They use every opportunity at school and in the community to keep the lines of communication open. Many educational stakeholders emphasize that effective teachers know their students individually, not only understanding each student's learning style and needs, but also understanding the student's personality, likes and dislikes, and personal situations that may affect behavior and performance in school. Effective teachers care for the student first as a person, and second as a student. They

respect each student as an individual.

Research on caring teachers yields the following important points:

- Caring teachers who know their students create relationships that enhance the learning process.
- Effective teachers consistently emphasize their love for children as one key element of their success.
- Teachers who create a supportive and warm classroom climate tend to be more effective with all students.
- Caring teachers are intentionally aware of student cultures outside the school.
- Caring teachers truly believe that each student has a right to a caring and competent teacher.
- Caring teachers appropriately respect confidentiality issues when dealing with students.
- Caring teachers regard the ethics of care and learning as important in educating students to their full potential.

Key references: Bain & Jacobs, 1990; Brophy & Good, 1986; Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999; Cotton, 1999; Cotton, 2000; Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980; Good & Brophy, 1997; Johnson, 1997; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1997; Peart & Campbell, 1999; Thomas & Montgomery, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993a; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993b; Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgings, 1997.

### ROLE OF FAIRNESS AND RESPECT

Beyond a demonstration of caring, an effective teacher establishes rapport and credibility with students by emphasizing, modeling, and practicing fairness and respect. Respect and equity are identified as the prerequisites of effective teaching in the eyes of students. In fact, students interviewed for their views on effective teachers consistently note the importance of fairness and respect at all levels of schooling—from elementary through high school.



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The elements of fairness and respect are highlighted in many studies. Students stated that effective teachers respond to misbehavior at an individual level rather than holding a whole class responsible for the actions of one student or a small group of students. They know and understand the facts before responding to any disciplinary situation, and then tell students specifically what they did wrong. Moreover, they tell students what they need to do right. Furthermore, students expect teachers to treat them equitably—when they behave as well as misbehave—and to avoid demonstrations of favoritism.

Effective teachers continually demonstrate respect and understanding, along with fairness regarding race, cultural background, and gender. Students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness emphasize racial impartiality with equitable treatment of all students. The students expect teachers not to allow ethnicity to affect their treatment or expectations of students.

Interviews and surveys of perceptions of fairness in the classroom indicate the following key points:

- Students associate respect with fairness and expect teachers to treat them as people.
- Students perceive effective teachers as those who avoid using ridicule and who prevent situations in which students lose respect in front of their peers.
- Effective teachers practice gender, racial, and ethnic fairness.
- Students associate fairness and respect with a teacher being consistent and providing opportunities for students to have input into the classroom.
- Effective teachers offer all students opportunities to participate and to succeed.

Key references: Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999; Cotton, 1999; Cotton, 2000; Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980; Good & Brophy, 1997; McBer, 2000; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1997; Peart & Campbell, 1999; Thomas & Montgomery, 1998; Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997.

## **SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS**

Teachers and students spend much of their day interacting academically. However, social interactions and those that give the teacher opportunities to demonstrate caring, fairness, and respect have been shown to be an important element of teacher effectiveness. A teacher's ability to relate to students and to make positive, caring connections with them plays a significant role in cultivating a positive learning environment and promoting student achievement.

Effective teachers use a wide variety of strategies to interact with students. However, the basis for these interactions goes beyond the four walls of the classroom. In fact, students revealed that effective teachers demonstrate interest in students' lives beyond the classroom. Teachers who attend sporting events, concerts, and other special programs in which their students participate are valued by their students. Additionally, researchers contend that constructive social interactions between teachers and students not only contribute to student learning and achievement, but also increase student self-esteem by fostering feelings of belonging to the classroom and the school.

Teachers who are aware of their own style of interacting with their students are able to provide a more favorable learning environment for all students. Through social interactions with students, effective teachers are able to individually, realistically, and successfully challenge each and every student to succeed.

Aspects of effective teaching related to social interaction involve the following:

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## The Teacher as a Person (continued)

- Effective teachers consistently behave in a friendly and personal manner while maintaining appropriate teacher-student role structure.
- Effective teachers work with students as opposed to doing things to or for them.
- Productive interactions involve giving students responsibility and respect; also treating secondary students as adults when appropriate.
- Teachers who are considered effective allow students to participate in decision making.
- Effective teachers pay attention to what students have to say.
- Students indicate that effective teachers spend more time interacting and working directly with them than ineffective teachers.
- When interacting with students, effective teachers demonstrate a sense of fun and a willingness to play or participate.
- Effective teachers have a good sense of humor and are willing to share jokes.

Key references: Bain & Jacobs, 1990; Bloom, 1984; Brookhart & Loadman, 1992; Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999; Cotton, 1999; Cotton, 2000; Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Education USA Special Report, no date; Good & Brophy, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Kohn, 1996; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1997; Peart & Campbell, 1999; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Thomas & Montgomery, 1998; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993a; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993b; Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997.

### PROMOTION OF ENTHUSIASM AND MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

The teacher's enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and for the subject matter has been shown to be an important part of effective teaching, both in supporting positive relationships with students and in encouraging student achievement. Based on student interviews, teachers can effectively motivate most students by encouraging them to be responsible for their own learning, maintaining

an organized classroom environment, setting high standards, assigning appropriate challenges, and providing reinforcement and encouragement during tasks. These students see effective teachers as motivational leaders.

Research indicates that effective teachers have residual positive effects on their students' willingness to work to their potential and beyond. Consequently, less-effective teachers may actually extinguish students' interest in the subject. Good teachers realize and deal with the fact that some students prefer to sit quietly on the side-line; however, they do not stop involving them.

By finding a way to motivate a student to learn, a teacher contributes to a student's evolving attitude toward a particular subject or activity. In other words, the teacher can bring out the best in that student. An effective teacher recognizes that students vary in their motivation levels. An effective teacher knows how to support intrinsically motivated students and seeks ways to provide extrinsic motivation to students who need it. Motivating students consists of making students receptive to and excited about learning, as well as making them aware of the importance and value of learning itself. By establishing positive attitudes and perceptions about learning, the effective teacher makes the learner feel comfortable in the classroom. As a particular example of establishing positive attitudes, teachers who provide mastery learning techniques for their students improve the attitudes of their students. They also increase academic self-concept, interest in the subject area, and the desire to learn more about the subject. Emphasizing higher mental processes along with mastery learning strategies tends to create a learning environment that is exciting and constantly new and playful.

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Researchers have investigated the influence of teacher enthusiasm on student motivation and learning, with the following results and conclusions:

- High levels of motivation in teachers relate to high levels of achievement in students.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for learning and for the subject matter under study has been shown to be an important factor in student motivation, which is closely linked to student achievement.
- A teacher's involvement in graduate studies, which indicates enthusiasm for learning, may be a source of motivation and may translate into higher achievement among students.
- Some studies indicate that the enthusiasm factor is more significant with older students than younger ones, but effective primary teachers also have demonstrated enthusiasm for their work as part of their overall effectiveness.

Key references: Bain & Jacobs, 1990; Bloom, 1984; Brophy & Good, 1986; Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999; Covino & Iwanicki, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Johnson, 1997; Marzano, Pickering, & McTighe, 1993; Monk & King, 1994; Palmer, 1990; Peart & Campbell, 1999; Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993a; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993b.

## **ATTITUDE TOWARD THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

An important facet of professionalism and of effectiveness in the classroom is a teacher's dedication to students and to the job of teaching. Through examination of several sources of evidence, a dual commitment to student learning and to personal learning has been found repeatedly in effective teachers. A common belief among effective teachers, which reveals their dual commitment, is that it is up to them to provide a multitude of tactics to reach students. In essence, effective teachers view themselves as responsible for the success of their students.

The effective teacher truly believes that all students can learn—it is not just a slogan. These teachers also believe that they must know their students, their subject, and themselves, while continuing to account for the fact that students learn differently. Through differentiation of instruction, effective teachers reach their students and together they enjoy their successes.

Effective teachers also work collaboratively with other staff members. They are willing to share their ideas and assist other teachers with difficulties. Collaborative environments create positive working relationships and help retain teachers. Additionally, effective teachers volunteer to lead work teams and to be mentors to new teachers. Effective teachers are informal leaders on the cutting edge of reform and are not afraid to take risks to improve education for all students. These informal leaders are the ones administrators typically call on for opinions and help in effecting change.

Effective teachers invest in their own education. They model to their students that education and learning are valuable by taking classes and participating in professional development, conferences, and inservice training. Additionally, they discuss their participation in these activities with students in a positive manner. Effective teachers learn and grow as they expect their students to learn and grow. They serve as powerful examples of lifelong learners as they find ways to develop professionally.

The relationship between teachers' attitudes and effectiveness can be summarized:

- Effective teachers exude positive attitudes about life and teaching.
- Extra hours spent preparing and reflecting upon instruction are well worth the student outcomes—specifically achievement.

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## The Teacher as a Person (continued)

- Promoting and participating in a collegial, collaborative work environment results in more positive attitudes in teachers.
- Effective teachers do not make excuses for student outcomes; they hold their students responsible while also accepting responsibility themselves.

Key references: Bain & Jacobs, 1990; Blair, 2000; Brookhart & Loadman, 1992; Cawelti, 1999b; Covino & Iwanicki, 1996; McBer, 2000; Mitchell, 1998; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, no date; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997; Thomas & Montgomery, 1998; Virshup, 1997; Wong & Wong, 1998.

### ROLE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Another element of professionalism often cited as part of effective teaching is a teacher's reflective practice, or careful review of and thoughtfulness about one's own teaching process. The role of reflection has been described repeatedly in studies of teacher effectiveness. Those studies include interviews and surveys of teachers judged effective according to their students' achievement rates, studies of teachers certified under the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, and case studies of effective schools. Effective teachers continuously practice self-evaluation and self-critique as learning tools. Reflective teachers portray themselves as students of learning. They are curious about the art and science of teaching and about themselves as effective teachers. They constantly improve lessons, think about how to reach particular children, and seek and try out new approaches in the classroom to better meet the needs of their learners.

Some researchers define reflective teachers as introspective. They seek a greater understanding of teaching through scholarly study and professional reading. Through reflective practice, effective teachers monitor their teaching because

they want to be better teachers and to make a difference in the lives of students.

Effective teachers are not afraid of feedback; in fact, they elicit information and criticism from others. Additionally, in the interest of improving their ability to have a positive impact on student learning, these teachers readily accept constructive criticism and reflect upon it. Reflective practice can initially result in confusion for the teacher; the process requires open-mindedness, honesty, and sufficient time to change teaching behaviors.

Thoughtful questions generated by research can guide teachers in reflecting on practice. Effective teachers realize that reflective practices are more than simply preservice or inservice exercises. Indeed, reflective practices are crucial to lifelong learning and a professional necessity.

Thoughtful reflection translates into enhanced teacher efficacy. And a teacher's sense of efficacy has an impact on how she approaches instructional content and students. While efficacy does change for teachers as they encounter new experiences, such as materials and grade levels, they are more likely to have additional positive experiences as they reflect on these new experiences. Educators' confidence in their ability to facilitate the learning and understanding of material by students is observable by others. In particular, when teachers are confident, they communicate the belief of their own efficacy to students.

Additional findings on the value of reflective practices include the following:

- Effective teachers may reflect on their work formally or informally; for example, they may review a day's work mentally, keep a journal or portfolio, meet regularly with a

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mentor or with colleagues, or assess a video-taped recording of their teaching. Regardless of the mode, the key is reflection.

- Teachers whose students have high achievement rates continually mention reflection on their work as an important part of improving their teaching.
- Belief in one's efficacy and maintaining high expectations for students are common among teachers who reflect.

James H. Stronge, *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (Alexandria, VA, 2002). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. © Copyright 2002 ASCD. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

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# Infusing/Integration Character-Related Content and Processes into Academic Instruction

- 1 Ask yourself “essential questions” about your academic content using a character-development perspective or values/virtues/community-membership filter. What are the most important things to be learned in a particular lesson, unit, chapter, subject, or grade given the ultimate goal of developing students who understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values?
- 2 Identify the values that undergird each subject, topic, or lesson you teach. Ask yourself how these values might relate to, or connect with, core ethical values and those in the school touchstone.
- 3 Identify, or have your students identify, the virtues or character traits that must be acquired in order to experience real-world success in areas related to the academic subject or topic under study.
- 4 Ask yourself during lesson planning, and ask your students during instruction, about the virtues or character qualities displayed by story characters, persons from history, persons from the news, and recognized experts from various fields that you include as part of your instructional content.
- 5 Ask yourself what virtues students need to use or will have the opportunity to practice during an assignment or activity, and prep them in advance through direct teaching, discussion, and encouragement.
- 6 As you prepare each lesson or unit of instruction, ask yourself what types of active student participation might promote character growth and academic learning (e.g. cooperative learning, intercultural exchange, or service learning).

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In *The Moral Life of Schools*, Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen write about two implicit but powerful assumptions that undergird healthy teaching and learning: the assumption of *truthfulness* and the assumption of *worthwhileness*.

The assumption of truthfulness is the belief that “There are truths that can be told, that knowledge is different from ignorance. Everyone present is expected to be scrupulously truthful in these encounters about what they know or don’t know, or more broadly, what they understand or do not understand.”

The assumption of worthwhileness is the belief that both teachers and students are actively engaged in a thoroughly worthwhileness enterprise: “what makes the assumption of worthwhileness moral is the even more deeply embedded assumption on which it rests, which is that schools and classrooms are places where one goes to receive help, to be made more knowledgeable, and more skillful. Schools and classrooms are designed to be beneficial settings. This implies that the people in charge care about the welfare of those they serve.



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# Techniques for Using Stories (Told or Read) to Build Character

**A** Catalog library books according to the moral principles, virtues, and social skills taught using Literature Based Moral Education, the DSC literature catalog, and other sources to simplify the task.

**B** Ask “authentic questions” in addition to the usual fact and comprehension questions: What did you learn? How did the story make you feel? Did the story cause you to think about something in your own life?

**C** Use strategies that will help students consider the moral issues in stories:

- 1** Use a story web as a way of helping students relate the story to their own lives;
- 2** Pause during the story to brainstorm possible choices the characters might make;
- 3** Discuss as a group or have students write about how they might feel and behave in similar situations in their own lives;
- 4** Discuss as a group or have students write about the decisions or choices made by story characters;
- 5** Discuss as a group or have students write about similar experiences in their lives;
- 6** Role play or have students recreate using sociodrama parts of the story that involve conflicts, consideration of alternative choices, and choices made;
- 7** Graph or chart how students think the various characters feel at various points in the story (a feeling time line);
- 8** Have students draw pictures as a way of clarifying what is important to them or the most important moral to the story.



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# What Should You Do

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Laurie Miller Hornik, "Approaching Ethics through Literature," Booklinks (February/March 2001, Vol. 10, No. 4).

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More and more, schools today are being called upon to help children learn to think ethically. In some schools, such as ours, the curriculum of ethics is both a formal and an informal one. Starting in second grade, children in our school attend ethics class, much the same way they attend music or physical education class.

With recent tragic events (such as school shootings) dominating the news, we realize more and more that it is an important subject to teach. Educators are looking for ways to include discussions of ethics in what they do every day in their classrooms.

What exactly is ethics? It is the process of making a decision whose outcome has moral consequences. Imagine this scenario: your friend steals a pack of gum from a store. What would you do? And just as important, what do you think you should do, based on your own values? Can you articulate the beliefs that lead to your decision? When children form values based on careful thought, those values are quite deeply held. Far more meaningful than simply telling children what to think is helping them create their own value system through careful reasoning.

Books can be a natural starting place for teaching ethics. There is a growing subset of novels that are excellent for use in ethical discussions. These are novels in which the protagonist makes a difficult moral choice. But just because moral decisions are being made doesn't necessarily mean a book is appropriate for the teaching of ethics. Many books take a preachy, didactic tone, making it clear all along what the narrative voice

thinks should be done. The characters make quick decisions, and reasonable consequences are quickly doled out, with good being rewarded and evil being punished. In such books, not much consideration is required of the reader.

How do you tell if a book's dilemma is worthy of ethical discussion? It helps if there is not one "right answer" as far as you, the adult, is concerned. More open-ended questions lead to better opportunities for children to improve their skills of reasoning, articulation, and listening to others.

What subject matter is best in books about ethics? Often the decision the protagonist faces is a realistic one. Then children might think, "That could happen to me," and their own lives will provide the context. But there is also a place for the extraordinary, as in Eve Bunting's *Blackwater* or the supernatural, as in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*. Such extreme scenarios are exciting and can stretch children's thinking.

For younger children, fairy tales and the ever-popular fractured fairy tales are another excellent vehicle for helping children think about ethical issues. Familiar stories work beautifully for discussion since children already understand the stories so deeply. Fractured fairy tales, in which the point of view is switched, can also provide good fodder for ethical discussions.

Also, for younger children, books about feelings and moods can be a good entrée into ethical discussion. It is important, however, to help children understand the difference between feelings and ethics. One can be sad or happy for many

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reasons, but only some of these feelings are connected to ethics. If you scrape your knee, your sadness at being hurt is not ethical in nature. If your friend pushes you or says something hurtful, then the sadness or anger you feel may have an ethical basis. While ethics is not synonymous with emotions, understanding feelings is an important part of what goes into making ethical decisions. Young children may not be faced with complex ethical decisions, but learning basic communication skills, such as how to treat others with respect and kindness, provides the foundation for moral reasoning later in life.

### PICTURE BOOKS

Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry-Really, Really Angry*. 1998. 40p. Scholastic, \$15.95 (0-590-18979-4).

Preschool-Gr. 3. In this Caldecott Honor Book, Sophie's anger, presented with wonderful imagery, can be a springboard for discussion of what makes children angry, and how they can appropriately express and control their anger.

Brown, Laurene Krasny, and Marc Brown. *How to Be a Friend: A Guide to Making Friends and Keeping Them*. 1998. 32p. Little, Brown, \$14.95 (0-316-10913-4).

Preschool-Gr. 3. This how-to book explores both how to be and how not to be a friend, as brightly colored dinosaurs interact as people would. Topics addressed include shyness, how to approach others, and mending damaged relationships.

Coles, Robert. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. Illus. By George Ford. 1995. 32p. Scholastic, \$13.95 (0-590-43967-7).

K-Gr. 4. In 1960 in New Orleans, Ruby Bridges was the first black six-year-old to attend an all-white school. This book lends itself to discussions of fairness and equality, as well as how to handle other people's anger (as Ruby had to

handle the anger of the white parents at the school).

Fearnley, Jan. *Mr. Wolf's Pancakes*. 2000. 32p. Little Tiger, \$14.95 (1-888444-76-2).

Preschool-Gr. 3. In this fractured fairy tale, the mild-mannered wolf just wants to make pancakes, but is treated less than nicely by some other classic fairy tale characters. The general behavior of the characters and the surprise ending lend themselves to ethical discussion.

Freyman, Saxton, and Joost Elffers. *How Are You Peeling?: Foods with Moods*. 1999. 48p. Scholastic, \$15.95 (0-439-10431-9).

Preschool-Gr. 2. While the best part is certainly the photographs of sculpted foods, the photos, along with the accompanying rhyming text, are a good springboard for discussion of moods and the real-life events that cause them.

# Coach's Checklist

## SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Directions: The following checklist is designed to provide information on coaches' approaches to character development. The information WILL NOT be used to evaluate coaches. It simply provides important information that will guide future discussions surrounding character development in the sports context. The checklist begins with several open-ended questions (items 1-3); please provide as much information as possible. Following the open-ended questions, there are some additional items (items 4-15); respond to each item by circling the appropriate number indicating the response that describes how frequently you engage in the activity. Use additional paper to explain your response or provide more specific examples.

If you feel comfortable, please provide the following information (it is very helpful to see how perspectives differ based on coaching level and sport). It is not required, if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sport \_\_\_\_\_  
Coaching Role \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

1. As a coach, I think character development involves...
2. As a coach, I try to develop positive character in my players by...
3. As a coach, the most frequent character related problems I experience are...

1 = Never    2 = Rarely    3 = Sometimes    4 = Usually    5 = Always

- |                                                                                                                                                       |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. I explicitly discuss the core values that guide our team. Explain:                                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I meet to talk with each member of my team about performance and character-related issues. Explain:                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Players on my team are given regular opportunities to set personal goals related to improving their character and their game performance. Explain: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. If problems occur on our team, we discuss them together as a team. Explain:                                                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I clearly communicate expectations for players' behavior outside of the team. Explain:                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. My players are encouraged to communicate openly and honestly with other players. Explain:                                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I communicate with the parents of my players regarding our team values and their role in supporting these values. Explain:                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I spend time developing leadership skills in my players. Explain:                                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I utilize a warm-up and cool-down session every time my team gets together. Explain:                                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I monitor the character development of my players and work with the players to make a plan for improvement. Explain:                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I meet with my team outside of practices and games. Explain:                                                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I communicate the importance of good character in other areas of my players' lives. Explain:                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Created by Dr. Matthew Davidson of the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, Suny Cortland.  
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# Markers, Rituals, and Rites of Passage

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Charles Elbot, Director, Denver Public Schools' Office of Educating for Character, December 2002

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About ten years ago I conducted an informal survey inquiring into the most meaningful events in the lives of recent high school graduates focusing on their thirteen, Kindergarten through twelfth grade, age five to eighteen, years of life. I asked these young people what are the moments, events or experiences that resonated important learning and meaning. I asked them to reflect on any transforming times or discovery of values that altered the course of their lives. After thinking about this inquiry, most young people agreed on one single, life-altering event – getting their driver's license. When I probed further, seeking other important life markers, I was surprised by the lack of powerful school-based experiences that resonated with these recent graduates. To be sure, some students acknowledged that such special experiences as having the lead role in a school play or winning a state athletic championship meant a great deal to them. However, in the majority of discussions I was struck by the paucity of significant markers.

Why are markers important? For one, a marker can bring a greater consciousness of learning to an underlying process of development. For example, when most children enter Kindergarten they are on a specific journey of going from identifying primarily with “me” to also identifying with “we.” Such rituals as raising one's hand and waiting to be called upon, standing in line, and taking turns at the swings are, indeed, part and parcel of the early elementary years. Since this is of such foundational importance, one

Denver Public School marks this learning by having each year's second grade take an overnight trip to Glenwood Springs, a three-hour bus trip into the mountains. Throughout the second grade year students and parents raise funds so all of the fifty-some students can participate without paying any fees. In the course of two days, students and staff accomplish a challenging hike to Hanging Lake, play together in the hot springs, sleep on the floor of a local church, learn history and science, set up meals, eat, clean-up, support a friend who is homesick or scared, and laugh together. This newly acquired sense of community is powerful, indeed! In this same school, fourth graders take on an Earth Force project, thereby experiencing how their learning and knowledge can be applied to make a difference in the world.

Markers also serve to awaken students to a change in situation. Everyone who has been to high school knows that these years are less forgiving than the preceding K-8 school years. Whereas the past academic grades and behavior issues of the early school years are long forgiven and forgotten, ninth grade truly does begin to create a permanent record. How many ninth graders are fully aware of the ramifications of their daily choices until it is too late to avoid suffering the consequences? One middle school marked this change in accountability by having each eighth grader share with the whole middle school, faculty and students, something that they care deeply about. Every Friday afternoon these

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## Markers, Rituals and Rites of Passage (continued)

speeches would be the main focus of the middle school assembly. As sixth graders sat and listened they wondered what it was about life that they cared deeply about. Then the next year, as seventh graders, the reflection intensified as the realization dawned on each student that their turn to share was no longer in the distant future. Students also understood that the more genuine their sharing, the greater the kudos. Yet the question was always present – do I have the courage? At this same middle school all eighth graders were honored by a citation written and delivered by a teacher that captured the essence qualities of each student. This long four-hour citation presentation and dinner at the end of the school year created indelible memories for students, teachers and parents. Another example is an elementary school that had the departing fifth graders lead a knighting ceremony for the incoming leaders of the school, the rising fifth graders. Each fourth grader created a shield that represented their best qualities. Students painted various symbols on their shields that exemplified friendship, perseverance, poise, teamwork and excellence followed by a knighting ceremony. I have met adults who underwent this several-day ceremony more than thirty years ago. They remember it as if it were yesterday and they still have their shields. For some it is the only physical object from their K-12 years still in their possession.

When the adult world does not provide meaningful markers, young people tend to create their own. In many schools the most powerful ritual, tradition or marker is that of the oldest students (typically 5th, 8th, and 12th graders) intimidating/harassing the younger students. Some other current youth-created markers include joining a gang, doing drugs, binge drinking, dropping out of school, teenage

pregnancy, breaking the law and spending time in jail. The writer Michael Meade noted, “If the fires that innately burn inside youths are not intentionally and lovingly added to the hearth of community, they will burn down the structures of culture, just to feel the warmth.”

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# Service Learning and Character Education: A Four-way Fit and Character Education in Action: Two Case Studies

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Bruce O. Boston, *Their Best Selves, Building Character Education and Service Learning Together in the Lives of Young People*

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Service learning fits well with character education for four important reasons. First, service learning renders concrete the abstractions of moral teaching. Engaging in service confronts a young person with immediate and real needs in the real world. Seeing needs “up close and personal” in itself places a moral claim on a younger person, eliciting important moral questions about our society’s solutions to problems, questions like, “Do you care about this?” For example, working in a soup kitchen brings a teenager face to face with not only poverty and homelessness as structural issues in a bountiful economy, but with the plight and pain of persons whose difference from themselves is often only circumstantial. Similarly, helping a visually impaired senior in a nursing home write letters to friends and family on a regular basis, more than just helpfulness, can bring a young person into contact with a world of which they have no experience. This is a first step toward identifying and valuing the world as both worthwhile for its own sake and instructive for the lessons and insights it contains. What is more, developing the listening skills and empathic abilities required to perform such a service teaches moral lessons or respect and tolerance, the intrinsic value of other persons, and respect for the dignity of age.

*Second*, the emotional satisfaction students gain from being involved in service to others, and

from a job well done, imparts feelings of self-worth that reverberate beyond individual lives. When students learn valuable skills in the process of service learning projects, those skills can translate into career-forming and life-changing experiences. The annals of service learning are rich with anecdotes of students who acquired the “ethic of service” as a lifelong habit as a result of some school involvement in helping others.

*Third*, the structure of service learning activities fosters the development of such values as self-discipline and fidelity to a commitment—both to the task itself and to those who are also involved in it; collaboration and team-building; respect for the quality of work done; even punctuality. Young people who clean up a vacant lot and build a “pocket park” for young mothers and their children quickly internalize a much different view of vandalism and respect for property when they see their own work destroyed or defaced. Similarly, when the success of an environmental project demands accuracy in collecting biological data, students learn quickly to make the connection between the real world success of the project and the rigor and honesty needed to collect, report, and analyze the data, and to translate what they have learned into action steps.

*Fourth*, and perhaps most importantly, the experience of many service learning teachers and



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## **Service Learning and Character Education: A Four-way Fit and Character Education in Action: Two Case Studies (continued)**

programs is that providing young people with opportunities to serve changes them and moves them in a positive direction; quite simply, it builds character. John Ruggeberg, who teaches at Winona (Minnesota) High School speaks for many teachers when he says that “giving kids a chance to put something back through service often leads to a sometimes surprising but always gratifying result. They come to me at the end of the year and say, ‘You know, what I got from this program was that it brought me back to what I was taught as a child.’”

Or, to put it somewhat differently, Ruggeberg believes that there is a tendency built into service learning that prompts young people to “live by their own highest values. Our students learn they need to be good role models for the elementary school kids they work with, if they are to serve effectively,” he says, “and so they work to become their best selves. When they serve, they acquire a kind of moral ownership in what they are doing.” Here lies service learning’s most vital link to character education.

The effect can be lasting. When Ruggeberg and his team of six teachers at Winona High School compare notes, they find their experiences are similar. “Compared to other areas and modes of instruction, when those courses are over, they’re over,” he says. “But the students in service learning go off the chart in exhibiting the kind of behavior you hoped they would. The kids in service learning always want to do more.”

That experience at Winona High School reflects evaluation results reported in 1997 to the Corporation for National Service. It turns out that service learning increases both the number of students who serve in later contexts

and the amount of time they spend at it. Service learning participants also grow in such character-rich areas as tolerance, respect for others, and in the feeling that they make a difference.

In an overall sense, then, these powerful connections between service learning and character education are deeply embedded in the inevitable linkages students make between the integrity of the educational process they are involved in and their personal integrity—that each is, in fact, inseparable from the other. From this sense that life is all of a piece comes one of life’s most valuable lessons, as ancient as Heraclitus: “character is destiny.”

### **CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ACTION: TWO CASE STUDIES**

Over the past decade or so, a number of schools and school districts have installed character education programs, partly in response to what has been called “a national crisis in character,” and partly to bring about school improvement. When character education has been well implemented, it has made a difference.

Two brief case studies are offered here in evidence, not because they have solved all the problems associated with the need for character education, but because they demonstrate that character education can pay enormous dividends in both education and in young people’s lives. The key factor making for success was total involvement, whether of a whole school, including faculty, staff, administration, and parents, as in the case of Allen Elementary, or of the entire community, as was the case in Burlington, North Carolina.



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(1) Allen Elementary School, Dayton. Allen Elementary is a school of more than 500 students, with a staff of 28 teachers and 8 certified professionals; it draws students from all over Dayton. In 1989, 78% of the children were from homes receiving AFDC, and 59.5% came from single-parent homes.

On taking over as principal at Allen in 1989, Rodolfo Bernardo found his plate filled with discipline problems; he determined, with his faculty, to turn the school around by basing a “transformative process” on the teaching of positive character traits. After adopting a program for the entire school that involved such key elements as building trust, consensus decision making, team building, teacher empowerment, “seeing the good in others,” and generating a commitment to change the school’s culture, Bernardo and his teachers focused on a process of instilling the desired character traits in their children. Their approach:

- Teachers developed a course of study for each grade level (K-6) and character trait, as well as for the building-wide attitudes they wished to foster;
- All school procedures were changed to conform to the traits being taught;
- A weekly process was followed for each trait: (a) a “Word of the Week” was presented to the whole school on Mondays by the principal. It was defined and examples were given of how to practice it; (b) during home room on Tuesday through Thursday, teachers spent 5 minutes each day discussing the trait with students; (c) on Friday, the Word was again highlighted in a 10 minute assembly, with responsibility for presenting

the Word of the Week given to each home room in rotation;

- Only after the program was solidly in place was a program of parent contacts initiated. Contracts for students, teachers, and parents were drawn up regarding the features of the program; and
- Faculty also devised service projects, such as school clean-up and beautification, student mentoring in a school for disabled children, nursing home visits, and recycling efforts. Students used the projects as a practice ground for the traits.

Combining school initiatives aimed at improving student academic achievement with character education and service had positive results. After only two years, Allen witnessed a 49% improvement in students’ test scores, rising from 28th place to 5th among 33 elementary schools in Dayton. Suspensions were reduced by 93%. There was a 30-fold increase in parent PTA involvement; teacher attendance also improved.

(2) Burlington City Schools, Burlington, NC. Burlington provides an example of not just a single school, but of an entire community turning to character education. According to assistant school superintendent Helen LeGette, a growing awareness that such programs as drug abuse and pregnancy prevention were addressing symptoms and not causes led to the formation of a community-wide Character Education Committee. The Committee sought agreement on which principles of character they thought desirable for all students and reached a quick consensus on the six held out by the Character Counts Coalition: trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

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## Service Learning and Character Education: A Four-way Fit and Character Education in Action: Two Case Studies (continued)

To introduce the project to the schools and community, a series of community-wide meetings, public lectures, and workshops were held. These were given by invited experts and consultants in the field, beginning in the summer of 1994 and lasting into 1995. The schools adopted a set of system-wide activities, including:

- special assemblies focusing on patriotism and good citizenship;
- the adoption of different “incentive programs” in different schools, e.g., special recognition of students being “caught good” and treating good school citizens to a restaurant dinner; and
- bimonthly puppet shows at one elementary school, each focusing on a different character trait.

A core feature of the program is that every school participates in service projects, which help integrate caring into the school environment. Students from one school decorated a homeless shelter for Christmas, and a middle school conducted a school-wide walk-a-thon to buy shoes for needy children.

Character education events and programs are also used to teach Burlington students about other cultures. Curriculum materials such as “Around the World in 80 Days” are used, as was the sewing of a “freedom quilt” project, coordinated by an art teacher. Training in cultural diversity, peer mediation, and conflict resolution are also open to students. A full program of motivational speakers for students and training programs for parents rounds out the offerings.

A 1995 evaluation of the Burlington program showed that 70% of the teachers and 64% of the principals had noted a positive change in the schools’ climate as a result of the program. Teachers noted, for example, that students were more courteous and administrators commented that “character education had created a unity of purpose in the schools.” Asked if they had noticed positive changes in student attitudes and behavior, 77% of teachers replied that they had, especially citing “fewer disciplinary problems” and “kids taking more responsibility for their actions.”

Both the Allen Elementary and Burlington experiences—and they are only two of many—demonstrate that character education can make a difference, whether at the building or community level. But it is important to bear in mind that character education is not a canned program that can be dropped into a school and create change. It is first of all a process requiring commitment. But it is also an approach that must be tailored to specific communities and needs. The basics of good character may partake of philosophical universals, but their emergence in young people’s lives must be worked out as one-at-a-time particulars.

*From Their Best Selves, Building Character Education and Service Learning Together in the Lives of Young People, by Bruce O. Boston, 1997, Council of Chief State School Officers.*

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# Teaching Creative Conflict Resolution

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*Don't Laugh at Me* curriculum, Operation Respect, Inc. and Educators for Social Responsibility, 2000

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**Posters:** Have children create posters to reinforce key ideas in the curriculum and post in your classroom.

**Practice, practice, practice:** Allow some time for role-playing or games when children aren't involved in a problem and can focus on how the techniques work. Be explicit with children that learning these skills takes time and practice. And be forgiving and gentle when students slip into old behaviors. Correct the mistaken behavior and then give students an opportunity to try it the right way.

**Turn the problem over:** Whenever possible, turn the problem over to the group. When a child needs help, you can have him ask another child, or have one small group consult with another group. You can have a rule: "ask three before you ask me," meaning that children should ask three others for help before coming to an adult. Or hold a class meeting and ask the class to brainstorm solutions to the problem.

**Give starters:** Try giving starters to help children talk about conflicts as they arise. Be neutral and non-blaming. For example, "I saw that you were fighting on the playground with (insert name) over the ball."

**Paraphrase:** Help focus the conversation toward resolution. For example, "So you were trying to tell Justin to stop hitting and he wouldn't stop. That must have been hard. What happened next?"

**Validate feelings:** Children need some validation of their feelings before they can solve a problem in a safe and structured way. You may need to help by providing possible descriptions and words: "so you were feeling angry and frightened..."

**Give time to cool off:** Don't try to solve problems with children when emotions are still running high. Give them a chance to cool off in the Peace Place.

**Promote creative solutions:** Help the children find creative solutions. Ask questions like, "What could you do if this happens again?" or, "What could you do now to make this situation better?"

**Bring the conflict to closure:** Many conflicts are over before an adult has the chance to intervene. Children may still need to learn from the experience, however. To bring a conflict to closure, bring the participants together and ask the following questions: What happened? How do you feel? What could you do if this happens again? What could you do now to make things better?

**Evaluation solutions:** During problem solving, have children decide whether all the parties in a conflict would give a particular solution a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down sign. Also, after a predetermined interval, check in on how the solution is working and suggest adjustments if needed.

## CREATING AN ANTI-BIAS CLASSROOM

Foster inclusion: many children will need help developing the skills to make friends and join others' play. To help foster a sense of inclusion, take time to celebrate each child as an important member of the group. By discussing ways that friends may be alike or different, you can create an atmosphere of tolerance rather than conformity.

**Provide appropriate materials:** Post pictures around the room that depict children from diverse backgrounds interacting. Some sources for these kinds of images include: UNICEF, the

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## Teaching Creative Conflict Resolution (continued)

Children's Defense Fund, the National Black Child Development Institute; magazines such as *Indian Artist*, *Ebony*, and *Latino Today*. Images of people doing everyday things make diversity more meaningful to children than photos featuring traditional costumes or exotic settings, which may reinforce stereotypes ("All Japanese girls wear kimonos"). It's also helpful to display pictures showing people with a variety of body types or different physical abilities. Also, provide children with art supplies to represent a wide variety of skin colors.

**Address accessibility:** Many classrooms and play spaces are not accessible to children with special needs. To ensure that a program can meet these children's requirements, it may be necessary to modify equipment or reorganize the room so that all children have access to materials.

**Create diverse groups:** Make a conscious effort to set up small groups that integrate children across racial, ethnic, and gender lines. Research shows that working in a small, cooperative group is a powerful way for children to overcome any fears or stereotypes they have already formed.

**Acknowledge differences:** Neutral observation helps children see differences in a nonjudgmental light. For example, if children are playing with one another's hair, a teacher might give them words to describe the texture of each: "Julia, your hair is curly, isn't it? Anna, your hair is straight." The more children see that you are comfortable with differences and that you talk about them with ease and respect, the more they will be able to accept differences. Also point out similarities.

**Intervene to prevent exclusion:** Be prepared to intervene when you hear children making comments that exclude a child on the basis of gender, race, or physical ability. Instead of changing the subject or tackling it head-on, try asking why

a child made that comment. For example: "I wonder why you think girls can't be firefighters?" Help children see that the source of their thinking is misinformation and support them in finding a new way to look at their assumptions.

**Take a stand against bias:** Children who use offensive language or gestures should not be reprimanded for their behavior. Instead, help them to see why such acts are hurtful. For example, model the skills learned in the Resolving Conflict Creatively unit. Use "I" messages: "I feel bad when you call him that name because I know it hurts him." Invite perspective-taking: "If someone said something like that about you, how would you feel? What nice thing could you say to him instead?"

**Extend thinking:** Help children become aware of their prejudices and see that stereotypical thinking is based on misinformation.

**Empower children:** Help the offended child stand up for herself. Support her hurt feelings and give her suggestions of words to say. For example: "I'm proud that I'm a girl, and I can play where I want to."

**Meet with parents:** If a child in your room consistently uses words or behaviors that are hurtful to others, it may be helpful to meet with his parents. Explain to the parents why you think this is an important issue and discuss how you are dealing with it in the classroom. Ask them for suggestions for managing their child's behavior and encourage them to reinforce anti-bias messages and practices at home. If parents support their child's biased words and actions, make it clear that in your class you will not allow children to act out of prejudice and that you hope they can support you in that effort.

**Avoid activities that exclude:** Be sure not to hold activities that might exclude some children, such as a Mother's Tea or making Father's Day cards.

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# 20 Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character

The following 20 suggestions are excerpted from Dr. Helen LeGette's book, *Parents, Kids, & Character: Twenty-one Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character*. She brings to the reader knowledge and experiences from her highly successful 33-year career as a leader in education—as a teacher, counselor and administrator. She knows that children who have limits in the home and parental expectations of good character have a much greater chance at success in school and in a career. Her book offers ideas that can be implemented in any family home.

**1 Model good character in the home.** As William Bennett observes in *The Book of Virtues*, “There is nothing more influential, more determinant in a child’s life than the moral power of a quiet example.” It is critically important that those who are attempting to influence children’s character in positive ways “walk the talk.”

**2 Be clear about your values.** Tell your children where you stand on important issues. Good character is both taught and caught. If we want children to internalize the virtues that we value, we need to teach them what we believe and why. In the daily living of our lives, there are countless opportunities to engage children in moral conversation.

**3 Show respect for your spouse, your children, and other family members.** Parents who honor each other, who share family responsibilities,

and who resolve their differences in peaceful ways communicate a powerful message about respect. If children experience respect firsthand within the family, they are more likely to be respectful of others. Simply stated, respect begets respect.

**4 Model and teach your children good manners.** Insist that all family members use good manners in the home. Good manners are really the Golden Rule in action. Whether the issue is courtesy or other simple social graces, it is in the home that true thoughtfulness for others has its roots.

**5 Have family meals together without television as often as possible.** Mealtime is an excellent time for parents to talk with and listen to their children and to strengthen family ties. Whether the meal is a home-cooked feast or fast-food from the drive-through, the most important ingredient is the sharing time—the time set aside to reinforce a sense of belonging to and being cared about by the family.

**6 Plan as many family activities as possible. Involve your children in the planning.** Family activities that seem quite ordinary at the moment are often viewed in retrospect as very special and memorable bits of family history. A dad’s “date” with a teenage daughter, a family picnic in the park, or a Sunday excursion for ice cream can provide a meaningful time for being together and sharing as a family.



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## 20 Strategies to Help Your Children Develop Good Character (continued)

**7 Don't provide your children access to alcohol or drugs.** Model appropriate behavior regarding alcohol and drugs. Despite peer pressure, the anxieties of adolescence, a youthful desire for sophistication, and media messages that glamorize the use of drugs and alcohol, the family is the most powerful influence on whether a young person will become a substance abuser. Nowhere is the parents' personal example more critical than in the area of alcohol and drug abuse.

**8 Plan family service projects or civic activities.** At the heart of good character is a sense of caring and concern for others. Numerous opportunities for family service projects exist in every community, and even young children can participate. Simple acts like taking food to a sick neighbor, mowing an elderly person's yard, or collecting outgrown clothes and toys for charity help youth learn the joys of assisting others and develop lifelong habits of service.

**9 Read to your children and keep good literature in the home.** Great teachers have always used stories to teach, motivate, and inspire, and reading together is an important part of passing the moral legacy of our culture from one generation to another. Children's questions and comments about the stories offer parents important insights into their children's thoughts, beliefs, and concerns.

**10 Limit your children's spending money.** Help them develop an appreciation for non-material rewards. In today's consumerist culture, youth could easily come to believe that image—wearing the “right” clothes, driving the “right” car, etc.—represents the path to success and happiness. Parents can make strong statements about what they value by the ways in

which they allocate their own resources and how they allow their children to spend the funds entrusted to them.

**11 Discuss the holidays and their meanings.** Have family celebrations and establish family traditions. Abraham Lincoln observed that participating in national celebrations causes Americans to feel “more attached the one to the other, and more firmly bound to the country we inhabit.” Observing holidays and celebrating family traditions not only develop these feelings of attachment to and kinship with others, but they also serve as a special kind of glue that binds us together as human beings, as family members, and as citizens.

**12 Capitalize on the “teachable moment.”** Use situations to spark family discussions on important issues. Some of the most effective character education can occur in the ongoing, everyday life of the family. As parents and children interact with one another and with others outside the home, there are countless situations that can be used to teach valuable lessons about responsibility, empathy, kindness, and compassion.

**13 Assign home responsibilities to all family members.** Even though it is often easier to clear the table, take out the trash, or load the dishwasher ourselves than to wait for a child to do it, we have an obligation to help children learn to balance their own needs and wishes against those of other family members—and ultimately, other members of society.

**14 Set clear expectations for your children and hold them accountable for their actions.** Defining reasonable limits and enforcing them appropriately establish the parents as the moral leaders in the home and provides a

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sense of security to children and youth. It also lets them know that you care enough about them to want them to be—or to become—people of good character.

**15 Keep your children busy in positive activities.** Children and youth have remarkable energy levels, and the challenge is to channel that energy into positive activities such as sports, hobbies, music or other forms of the arts, or church or youth groups like the Scouts. Such activities promote altruism, caring, and cooperation and also give children a sense of accomplishment.

**16 Learn to say no and mean it.** It is natural for children—especially teenagers—to test the limits and challenge their parents’ authority. Despite the child’s protests, a parent’s most loving act is often to stand firm and prohibit the child’s participation in a potentially hurtful activity.

**17 Know where your children are, what they are doing, and with whom.** Adults need to communicate in countless ways that we care about children and that we expect the best from them, but also that we take seriously our responsibility to establish standards and to monitor, chaperone, and supervise. At the risk of being perceived as “old fashioned,” insist on meeting your children’s friends and their parents.

**18 Refuse to cover for your children or make excuses for their inappropriate behavior.** Shielding children and youth from the logical consequences of their actions fails to teach them personal responsibility. It also undermines social customs and laws by giving them the impression that they are somehow exempt from the regulations that govern others’ behavior.

**19** Know what television shows, videos, and movies your children are watching. While there are some very fine materials available, a proliferation of pornographic and hate-filled information is easily accessible to our youth. By word and example, teach your children responsible viewing habits. If you learn that your child has viewed something objectionable, candidly share your feelings and discuss why the material offends your family’s values.

**20 Remember that you are the adult!** Children don’t need another buddy, but they desperately need a parent who cares enough to set and enforce appropriate limits for their behavior. Sometimes being able to say, “My dad won’t let me,” provides a convenient escape for a youth who really didn’t want to participate in a questionable activity.

Dr. Helen LeGette, former Associate Superintendent,  
Burlington City Schools, Burlington, NC  
Adapted from *Parent, Kids, & Character*, by Helen LeGette.  
Chapel Hill: Character Development Publishing, 1999.



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# Under the Umbrella: “Fostering Shared Leadership”

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Kathy Beland, M.Ed.

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Leadership comes in many forms. Take for instance Sheldon Berman, superintendent of Hudson Public Schools (Hudson, MA) and a man of quiet intensity and determination. When elementary school principals brought up with him their increasing problems with student discipline, they first sought to have him tighten the district discipline code. “What does it mean,” he asked, “to prevent these problems, rather than react to them?” From here the conversation moved to the behaviors the principals wanted to see in their students, and this naturally led to identifying how teachers could develop these skills in children and then to enthusiasm for piloting a new social skills curriculum within the district. “Engage rather than oppose,” is Berman’s mantra. “By posing significant questions you open up a broader dialogue. All along I had a picture of where it would go, but if I had stated it in the beginning they would have been appalled.”

While Berman has held many leadership mantles over his 30-year career in education, Barbara Luther, a teacher of the deaf at Eleanor Roosevelt High School (Greenbelt, MD), had held none (in her mind) when her principal tapped her to coordinate the school’s fledgling character education initiative in 1997. She was “truly surprised” by the request, but quickly set to work doing what had always given her the greatest satisfaction in teaching—helping people to communicate and securing the resources they

needed. Success, Luther realized, often depends on the details, so she developed a picture of herself as the person “who keeps the ball rolling, keeps up the momentum.”

Whereas both Berman and Luther became low-key, behind-the-scenes facilitators, Phil Catania, principal at Mount Rainier Elementary School (Mount Rainier, MD), developed more of a “front and center” style to draw attention to the values and corresponding behaviors his staff and students had agreed to uphold. With 75 percent of the student body on free and reduced lunch and a faculty that was often overwhelmed by the magnitude of problems their students brought to school, Catania first asked teachers “to work from the inside out,” that is, to focus on being what they wanted their students to become. “We all work together, but I have to drive it—by that I mean acknowledge and encourage what we want to see.”

Berman, Luther, and Catania highlight some of the common roles and responsibilities of character-education leaders—facilitating problem solving, building consensus, providing support, and modeling behaviors—and exemplify key leadership traits—persistence, enthusiasm, and integrity. As individuals, they vary markedly in degree and style, yet all three share a common attribute. They are all good at fostering shared leadership for character education in their schools.

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The traditional picture of a strong leader is someone who is by nature personally dynamic, clear about what she or he wants to see happen, persuasive in getting others to buy into this vision, able to direct others toward this end, formidable in dealing with opposition, and decisive in action. In any change effort, a portion of these talents and qualities is needed. Yet, to be truly effective in creating and sustaining an educational initiative, leadership needs to not be a one-person game. Instead, it requires a shared endeavor that utilizes additional and complementary traits and skills and encourages leadership in others.

In “The Change Leader” (2002), Michael Fullan notes that research in the business world bears this out. Successful companies were found to cultivate many leaders at many levels. “The good news for most of us is that charismatic leaders are actually a liability for sustained improvement... To a certain extent, a school leader’s effectiveness in creating a culture of sustained change will be determined by the leaders he or she leaves behind.”

Others who study educational leadership echo this sentiment. Linda Lambert (2002) writes, “The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped. Improvements achieved under this model are not easily sustainable; when the principal leaves, promising programs often lose momentum and fade away.” It is easy to see this happen in character-education initiatives that are dependent on an individual leader to carry the torch.

Within the shared leadership model, the principal’s or superintendent’s role does not become obsolete, but it does change in nature. Leaders who follow this path tend to adhere to the following set of principles or guiding beliefs:

**1. Leadership is based on shared beliefs and goals.** Leaders and constituents work together because they have common aims and values. Leadership does not simply involve the leader getting others to do what she or he thinks is right; instead, it emanates from a common sense of purpose. In character education, this involves the school community coming to consensus on the character-related vision to which it aspires. Without a shared agreement to work collectively in support of mutually agreed upon values and beliefs, schools and their character-education initiatives can be weakened by resistance and apathy. When potentially divisive issues arise, the staff can turn to these shared agreements to guide them.

**2. Leadership is not coercive.** Leadership does not involve force; rather, it involves real choice on the part of group members. Leaders may seek to influence—using a combination of reason, persuasive language, and personal appeal—but they support and honor shared agreements. Like Berman, they involve staff members in problem-solving and decision-making and entrust them with the authority and responsibility to implement the solutions and decisions they have chosen.

**3. Leadership is a relationship.** Leadership is not just about leaders; often too much attention is given to individual leaders and their characteristics, out of the context in which they lead. Leadership is about the interactions between leaders and their constituencies, and is very specific to the particular situation—someone who is a good leader in one setting may not be effective in another. For example, Luther fills the role of the “servant leader” by providing the resources and support teachers and students need in order to take on additional challenges and responsibilities. Catania, on the other hand, focuses on modeling behaviors, empowering others to live up to

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## Under the Umbrella: “Fostering shared Leadership” (continued)

their ideals. They are different in their approach, but both are effective at what they do.

**4. Leadership is aimed at change.** Leadership relationships involve action and movement; leadership involves helping people move somewhere new and different. Shared leadership recognizes that this happens only when the individuals involved have a voice and choice in the change effort.

Everyone benefits from a leadership structure that taps the potential of all members of the school community. Administrators are not overburdened, faculty feel more valued and invested in their work, and students gain the skills and esteem that prepares them for their roles as student, worker, citizen and family member. Perhaps best of all, shared leadership puts values into action, providing repeated opportunities for individuals to grow in their character.

### REFERENCES

Collins, J., *Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap...and others don't* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001).

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This article was originally published in the *Character Educator* (Character Education Partnership: Spring 2003), adapted from the *Eleven Principles Sourcebook* (forthcoming: Character Education Partnership, October 2003).

# Appendix: Developing Your Character Education Tool Kit

We have included in this section examples of several tools that other teachers and administrators have used to help develop a school of character. You might choose to adapt some of these items to meet the needs of your school.

These are but a handful of such examples and should mark just the beginning of your tool kit. We encourage you to continually add to your collection of tools as well as share with others who are engaged in similar work.

## Contents of this Section

Performance Assessment Rubrics

What is a “Restorative” Referral Form?

Sample Character Slips (an alternative to discipline referral forms)

Sample Letter from Principal Outlining Responsibilities of School Community Members

School Climate Survey

# Performance Assessment Rubric

Objective: All students will understand and demonstrate integrity in the choices they make.

Traits	Beginning to Develop	Developing	Developed (Benchmark)	Well Developed
<b>Definition of Integrity</b>	Choices are inconsistent with Life Skills for Building Character.	Choices are generally consistent with Life Skills for Building Character.	Makes choices that are consistent with Life Skills for Building Character.	Makes choices that are consistent with Life Skills for Building Character; encourages others to do so.
<b>Respect Caring</b>	Has difficulty respecting the rights of others.	With guidance, recognizes/ acknowledges the rights of others.	Respects the rights of others.	Protects and defends the rights of others.
<b>Responsibility Perseverance</b>	Has difficulty following through on tasks and accepting responsibility for own behavior.	Assumes some responsibility for completing assigned tasks; generally accepts responsibility for own behavior.	Completes assigned tasks; accepts responsibility for own behavior.	Perseveres to achieve beyond what is expected, accepts responsibility for own behavior and assumes roles that contribute to individual and group improvement.
<b>Honesty Trustworthiness Courage</b>	Truthful when there are no personal consequences.	Chooses to tell the truth when asked.	Is truthful regardless of the consequences.	Acts truthfully and encourages others to do the same.
<b>Teamwork Fairness</b>	Has difficulty working in a group.	Participates in a group cooperatively.	Participates cooperatively and contributes to achieving group goals.	Works collaboratively with others; encourages participation of other group members.
<b>Initiative</b>	Has difficulty setting goals without step-by-step assistance; generally does not complete tasks.	Sets goals, plans inconsistently; needs assistance to complete tasks.	Sets goals; develops plans to achieve them; completes tasks; seeks assistance when needed.	Sets goals; develops plans to achieve them; perseveres until tasks are accomplished; brings additional resources when needed.

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# What is a “Restorative” Referral Form?

A restorative referral form replaces the triplicate “pink slip,” “in-school referral,” or any other form that is used to document misconduct for office, student, parent, and teacher. It might contain the following:

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## **Information filled out by adult:**

- Student Name
- Teacher
- Date
- Category of behavior (outline 6 or 7 categories; one or more can be checked; this can help you select categories of behavior to target for reduction each year)

## **Information filled out by student with “coaching” by adult:**

- This is what happened and what I did
- This is who I think was affected
- This is the harm
- Here’s my plan to repair the harm
- Here’s my plan for changing things so it doesn’t happen again
- This is how my classmates/teacher have offered to support me

## **Signature of reporting adult, student, parent**

## **Follow-up**

## **Instruction statement to parent regarding their review, signature, and return of form**

# Sample Character Slips

## I MADE A GOOD CHOICE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Begins work promptly
- ☐ Completes work on time
- ☐ Works cooperatively
- ☐ Follows directions
- ☐ Listens attentively
- ☐ Does neat, careful work
- ☐ Has good classroom behavior
- ☐ Has good playground behavior
- ☐ Respects rights of others
- ☐ Practices self-discipline

I made a really good choice today in class.  
Making good choices is making me a good student and a better person.

## MAKING BETTER CHOICES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I didn't make a good choice today.  
(See the checked rule below.)

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Begins work promptly
- ☐ Completes work on time
- ☐ Works cooperatively
- ☐ Follows directions
- ☐ Listens attentively
- ☐ Does neat, careful work
- ☐ Has good classroom behavior
- ☐ Has good playground behavior
- ☐ Respects rights of others
- ☐ Practices self-discipline

\_\_\_\_ Student comments on back

\_\_\_\_ Teacher comments on back

## STUDENT NOTICE

Date of Notice: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Issuing Notice: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One: ☐ Classroom  
☐ Before school  
☐ AM recess  
☐ PM recess  
☐ After school

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choice Made: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Student agrees to make better choices in following the expected behaviors checked below:

- ☐ Use appropriate language
- ☐ Display mutual respect
- ☐ Be respectful
- ☐ Keep hands, feet, and objects to self
- ☐ Follow directions
- ☐ Line up after the bell
- ☐ Display attentive listening
- ☐ Use equipment properly
- ☐ Treat others fairly
- ☐ Praise others
- ☐ Other (please explain)

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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# Sample Letter From Principal Outlining Responsibilities of School Community Members

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

I have been quite impressed by how well parents, students and staff work together to promote an excellent education for our young people at Slavens. For children to mature, they require guidance from their parents and teachers, as well as assuming some responsibility themselves. In order to maintain this effective student, parent, and staff collaboration, clear guidelines for communication may be useful.

Perhaps the following guidelines for communication may help in interpreting the complex expectations and responsibilities associated with our school.

### SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Establish and maintain communication with students and parents.
- Communicate clear expectations to students. Monitor the student's understanding of the expectations.
- Encourage, model, and praise appropriate behavior.
- Be consistent in enforcing guidelines and expectations.

#### If a problem arises...

- Respond immediately to inappropriate behavior.
- Be direct and clear when talking with the student.
- Hold students accountable in appropriate ways.
- Communicate with the classroom teacher and, if necessary, the principal and parent.

### STUDENT(S) RESPONSIBILITIES

- Establish and maintain communication with your parents and teachers.
- Know and follow the school's expectations and guidelines.
- Accept responsibility for your own actions.

#### If a problem arises...

- Be accountable and learn from the situation.
- Take steps to change your behavior to meet community guidelines.

### PARENT(S) RESPONSIBILITIES

- Establish and maintain communication with your child and the school.
- Know and support the school's expectations and guidelines and communicate them to your child.
- Share information with the school about changes at home that may influence your child's behavior.
- Acknowledge and praise appropriate behavior.

#### If a problem arises...

- Communicate with the appropriate school personnel.
- Be open to suggestions from the school concerning your child.
- Support the school's decisions.

Sincerely,



Charles Elbot

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# Two Suggested Annual Student Writings on Character

1. In the fall: write about how the school code connects with how you think you should live your life.
2. In the spring: write about how you've changed. Example: I used to be...but now I am....  
(e.g., I used to have a hard time with my anger, but now I feel more under control)

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# School Climate Survey

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Adapted from the CFK, Ltd., School Climate Profile

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## Purpose

The “School Climate Survey” can serve as a useful tool to discern where your school is at right now and where you would like it to be in the future. An exercise that could lend helpful insight is to arrange faculty and/or students into groups of three, with each group striving for consensus on, “What Is,” and on, “What Should Be,” for each item. For example, groups could be composed of two students and a teacher. The challenge to reach consensus should elicit thoughtful explorations of each topic area. The group outcomes then could be plotted on a graph thus reflecting back the experiences of your school’s students and teachers.

## Directions

Please read each item thoughtfully and circle a rating under both the, “What Is,” column and the, “What Should Be,” column. Use the following scale to indicate your rating for each item in both columns.

## Part I – General Climate Factors

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never    2 = Occasionally    3 = Frequently    4 = Almost Always

**Please total your score in the boxes marked “Total” at the bottom of each of the sections.**

### RESPECT:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. In this school all students, regardless of academic achievement, are respected.								
2. Teachers treat students as persons.								
3. Parents are considered by this school as important collaborators.								
4. Teachers from one subject area or grade level respect those from other subject areas.								
5. Teachers in this school are proud to be teachers.								

**Please calculate your total score for this section**

**Total**

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## School Climate Survey (continued)

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never    2 = Occasionally    3 = Frequently    4 = Almost Always

### TRUST:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Students feel that teachers are “on their side.”	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. While we don’t always agree, we can share our concerns with each other openly.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Our principal is a good spokesperson for our interests and needs before the school head and the board.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Students can count on teachers to listen to their side of the story and to be fair.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers trust students to use good judgment.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**                      **Total**

### HIGH MORALE:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. This school makes students enthusiastic about learning.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers feel pride in this school and in its students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Attendance is good; students stay away only for urgent and good reasons.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Parents, teachers and students support the school’s program enthusiastically.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers like working in this school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**                      **Total**

### OPPORTUNITY FOR INPUT:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. I feel that my ideas are listened to and used in this school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. When important decisions are made about the programs in this school, I, personally, have heard about the plan beforehand and have been involved in some of the decisions.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Important decisions are made in this school by a governing council with representation from students, faculty and administration.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. While I obviously can’t have a vote on every decision that is made in this school that affects me, I do feel that I can have some important input into that decision.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. When all is said and done, I feel that I count in this school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**                      **Total**

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never    2 = Occasionally    3 = Frequently    4 = Almost Always

### CONTINUOUS ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. The teachers are “alive;” they are interested in life around them; they are doing interesting things outside of school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers in the school are “out in front,” seeking better ways of teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Students feel that the school program is meaningful and relevant to their present and future needs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. The principal is growing and learning, too. He or she is seeking new ideas.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. The school supports parent growth. Regular opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in learning activities and in examining new ideas.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section** **Total**

### COHESIVENESS:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Students would rather attend this school than transfer to another.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. There is a “we” spirit in this school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Administration and teachers collaborate together to make the school run effectively; there is little administrator-teacher tension.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Differences between individuals and groups (both faculty and students) are considered to contribute to the richness of the school, not as divisive influences.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. New students and faculty members are made to feel welcome and part of the group.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section** **Total**

### SCHOOL RENEWAL:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Identifying and addressing problems is seen as healthy, not as “rocking the boat.”	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative in their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. When a student comes along who has special problems, this school works out a plan that helps that student.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Students are encouraged to be creative.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section** **Total**

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## School Climate Survey (continued)

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never    2 = Occasionally    3 = Frequently    4 = Almost Always

### CARING:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. There is someone in this school who I can always count on.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. The principal really cares about students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. I think people in this school care about me as a person and are concerned about more than just how well I perform my role at school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. I feel wanted and needed in this school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Most people at this school are kind.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

## Part II – Program Determinants

### ACTIVE LEARNING:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Required textbooks and curriculum guides support rather than limit creative teaching and learning in our school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Opportunities are provided to apply what is learned.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers are actively learning too.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. This school's program stimulates creative thought and expression.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

### INDIVIDUALIZED PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Each student's special abilities (intellectual, artistic, social, or manual) are challenged.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers use a wide range of teaching materials and media.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers know students as individuals.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

### VARIED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Many opportunities are provided for learning in individual and small group settings, as well as in total classroom groups.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers use a wide range of teaching materials and media.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The school program extends to settings beyond the school building for most students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Teachers and administrators have planned individualized in-service education programs to support their own growth.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Almost Always

**FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:**

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. The school's program is appropriate for ethnic and minority groups.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers experiment with innovative programs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers are known to modify their lesson plans on the basis of student suggestions.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Extracurricular activities appeal to each of the various subgroups of students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Students are given alternative ways of meeting curriculum requirements.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**

**Total**

**SUPPORT & STRUCTURE APPROPRIATE TO LEARNER'S MATURITY:**

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. The school's program encourages students to develop self-discipline and initiative.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. The needs of a few students for close supervision and high structure are met without making those students feel "put down."	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The administration is supportive of students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. The administration is supportive of teachers.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Faculty and staff want to help every student learn.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**

**Total**

**RULES COOPERATIVELY DETERMINED:**

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Rules are few and simple.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers and their students together work out rules governing behavior in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Discipline (punishment when given) is fair and related to violations of rules.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Most students and staff members obey the school's rules.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**

**Total**



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## School Climate Survey (continued)

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never   2 = Occasionally   3 = Frequently   4 = Almost Always

### **VARIED REWARD SYSTEMS:**

	<b>What Is:</b>				<b>What Should Be:</b>			
1. Students know the criteria used to evaluate their progress.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers are rewarded for exceptionally good teaching.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The principal is aware of and lets staff and students know when they have done something particularly well.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Most students get positive feedback from faculty and staff.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**                      **Total**

## **Part III– Process Determinants**

### **PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY:**

	<b>What Is:</b>				<b>What Should Be:</b>			
1. Problems in this school are recognized and worked on openly and are not allowed to slide.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. If I have a school-related problem, I feel there are channels open to me to get the problem worked on.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. People in this school do a good job of examining a lot of alternative solutions first, before deciding to try one.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Ideas from various ethnic and minority groups are sought in problem-solving efforts.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. People in this school solve problems; they don't just talk about them.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**                      **Total**

### **IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL GOALS:**

	<b>What Is:</b>				<b>What Should Be:</b>			
1. This school has set some school-wide goals for this year and I know about them.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. I have set some personal goals for this year related to school, and I have shared these goals with someone else.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Community involvement is sought in developing the school's goals.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. The goals of this school are used to provide direction for programs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. The goals of this school are reviewed and updated.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section**                      **Total**



## School Climate Survey (continued)

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Almost Always

### IDENTIFYING AND WORKING WITH CONFLICTS:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. In this school people with ideas or values different from the commonly accepted ones get a chance to be heard.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. There are procedures open to me for going to a higher authority if a decision has been made that seems unfair.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. This school believes there may be several alternative solutions to most problems.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. In this school the principal tries to deal with conflict constructively, not just "keep the lid on."	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. When we have conflicts in this school, their resolution is constructive, not destructive.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Teachers feel free to communicate with the principal.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. I feel the teachers are friendly and easy to talk to.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The principal talks with us frankly and openly.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Teachers are available to students who want help.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. There is communication in our school between different groups-older teachers and younger ones, well-to-do students and poorer ones, black parents and white parents etc.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

### INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Teachers help in selection of new staff members.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Parents help to decide about new school programs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Decisions that affect this school are made only after opportunity has been provided for discussion and input from faculty and if appropriate, students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. I have influence on the decisions within school that directly affect me.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. The student government makes important decisions.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section

Total

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Almost Always

#### **AUTONOMY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY:**

	<b>What Is:</b>				<b>What Should Be:</b>			
1. Teachers, students and parents help to evaluate this school's program.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Teacher evaluation is used in improving teacher performance.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The principal encourages experimentation in teaching.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Teachers are held accountable in this school for providing learning opportunities for each of their students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section** **Total**

#### **EFFECTIVE TEACHING—LEARNING STRATEGIES:**

	<b>What Is:</b>				<b>What Should Be:</b>			
1. The teachers in this school know how to teach as well as what to teach.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. When one teaching strategy does not seem to be working for a particular student, the teacher tries another and does not blame the student for the initial failure.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. This school community supports new and innovative teaching techniques.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. In-service education programs available to teachers in this school help them to keep up-to-date on the best teaching strategies.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. The school systematically encourages students to help other students with their learning activities.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section** **Total**

#### **ABILITY TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE:**

	<b>What Is:</b>				<b>What Should Be:</b>			
1. In this school we keep "looking ahead;" we don't spend all our time "putting out fires."	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. Our principal is an "idea" person.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Parents have opportunities or channels through which to work with school officials on things they would like to see happening in the school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Some of the programs in our school could be termed experimental.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Our school is ahead of the times.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**Please calculate your total score for this section** **Total**

## School Climate Survey (continued)

Rating Scale: 1 = Almost Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Almost Always

### Part IV– Material Determinants

#### ADEQUATE RESOURCES:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. There is sufficient staff in this school to meet the needs of its students.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. The instructional materials are adequate for our school program.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Curriculum materials in this school give appropriate emphasis and accurate facts regarding ethnic and minority groups and sex roles.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Resources are provided so that students can take advantage of learning opportunities in the community through field trips, work-study arrangements, etc.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Current teacher salaries in this school give fair recognition of the level of professional service rendered by the teachers to the school.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section **Total**

#### SUPPORTIVE AND EFFICIENT LOGISTICAL SYSTEM:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. Teachers and students are able to get the instructional materials they need at the time they are needed.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. This school provides opportunities for teachers to recommend and make judgments about priorities for resources needed in their program at budget time.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. The support system of this school fosters creative and effective teaching/learning opportunities rather than hinders them.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. Necessary materials and supplies for learning experiences are readily available as needed.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. Efficient procedures exist for the acquisition and use of resources.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section **Total**

#### SUITABILITY OF SCHOOL PLANT:

	What Is:				What Should Be:			
1. It is pleasant to be in this building; it is kept clean and in good repair.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
2. This school building has the space and physical arrangements needed to conduct the kinds of programs we have.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
3. Students and staff are proud of their school plant and help to keep it attractive.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
4. The grounds are attractive and provide adequate space for physical and recreational activities.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
5. School plant has appropriate facilities to carry out the curriculum goals.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Please calculate your total score for this section **Total**

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# Notes



