

Value of the Month

Carl Campbell is principal at Dry Creek Elementary School in Clovis, California. He explains that the school's mission is to help students develop their potential in five areas:

1. academics
2. athletics
3. performing arts
4. citizenship in the school
5. citizenship in the community

And that commitment, he says, goes for every student:

"Our philosophy is that we do everything we can do while we've got a kid. When he walks through that door, we're responsible for the quality of his experience. We may not be able to control his environment elsewhere, but we can control the environment here."

Dry Creek has a **Value of the Month** program: For an entire month, the whole school every teacher at every grade level focuses on the same value (e.g., honesty, cooperation, self-control, ambition).

Teachers talk to their students about the value of the month making connections, for example, with classroom incidents that arise. They work it into the writing assignments. They do special projects and displays related to the value. Students also bring in books or articles that tell about a person or incident that exemplifies the value.

Teachers take heart from the fact that they are all working together on a common value, something that is becoming part of the shared moral vocabulary that defines the common moral culture of their school.

Principal Campbell spoke about the impact this Value of the Month program had in a previous district where he worked:

Before coming to Clovis, I was principal in a school where stealing was an everyday occurrence when I first arrived. The attitude among students was that it was okay to steal as long as you didn't get caught. There was also a problem of kids being intimidated for their lunch money. I said to the faculty, "How can we change this?" We selected basic values to teach, one each month. We started with honesty. As time went

on, kids started turning in money they found on the playground. Intimidation became less and less of a problem. By the end of our second year with the program, stealing was a very rare event at this school.

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