

The Fourth and Fifth Rs

Respect and Responsibility

Volume 1, Issue 2

Fall 1995

First Summer Institute Gives Participants New Hope

“For the last few years I have been appalled at the lack of respect and irresponsible behavior of my students. This Institute has made me aware that others are concerned and starting to deal with these issues not only locally but nationally. It has given me new resolve to remain committed, despite frustration, to teaching children to be good.”

So spoke one of the 133 participants at the end of the First Annual Summer Institute in Character Education sponsored by the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs during the week of July 10-14. “I feel as if I’m part of a movement,” said another teacher.

The K-8 Institute featured more than 20 speakers who described the components of a comprehensive approach to character education and the growing national effort to promote character education as the best hope of addressing societal moral breakdown and academic and behavioral problems in the schools.

Institute participants came from elementary and middle schools, mostly from Central New York. School or district teams—typically consisting of faculty, a principal, and a parent leader—had the responsibility of devising an action plan for character education in their home school or district.

Participating New York State school districts included Binghamton, Buffalo, Deposit, DeRuyter, Fairport, Fayetteville, Hamilton, Homer, Ithaca, Kingston, Lansing, Liverpool, Manlius, New York City, North Syracuse, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica. Teams also came from Pennsylvania, Illinois, Washington, DC,

Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, Wisconsin, California, and Alberta, Canada.

On Wednesday, July 10, more than 300 persons attended a one-day Conference on Character Education featuring a high-school track and various K-8 workshops on topics such as conflict resolution, teaching ethics through literature, building classroom community, and integrating values into the curriculum.

The one-day Conference was keynoted by Boston College psychologist William Kilpatrick, author of *Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong*. Kilpatrick urged his audience to set aside the non-directive “talk show” format of values discussion in favor of using inspiring examples from literature and history to teach virtues such as honesty, self-discipline, and courage.

High school participants heard Mike Long, a national trainer for the programs *Facing Reality* and *Choosing the Best*, demonstrate how to use humor and common sense to lead teenagers to conclude for themselves that abstinence is the right decision.

During the Institute, participants heard success stories of schools that have turned around negative situations through a comprehensive character education effort.

“I feel 're-invented' as a teacher as a result of the presentations and readings. I am determined to incorporate service learning, team-building, and deliberate values vocabulary into my classroom.”

—A Summer Institute Participant

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs ♦ Education Department ♦ State University College at Cortland
P.O. Box 2000 ♦ Cortland, New York ♦ 13045 ♦ Telephone (607) 753-2455 ♦ FAX (607) 753-5980

The Center is supported by a grant from the Surdna Foundation and a grant from a private trust.

From the Director . . .

Dear Fellow Educator:

The character education movement continues to grow.

→ *On May 19-20, the Second Annual White House Conference on Character-Building for a Democratic, Civil Society drew more than 250 educational leaders.*

→ *A June character education conference sponsored by The Network of St. Louis attracted 450 participants from 30-plus states.*

→ *The U.S. Dept. of Education has funded four states—California, Iowa, New Mexico, and Utah — to develop model programs for character education. (For further information, contact Stephen O'Brien, 202/219-2141 at the U.S. Dept. of Education.)*

→ *From October 15-21, schools and communities across the United States conducted activities to emphasize the importance of developing good character in celebration of National Character Counts Week, spearheaded by the growing Character Counts Coalition (For information, call 310/306-1868.)*

→ *The national Character Education Partnership, whose membership now includes both the AFT and the NEA, is planning its Third Annual Character Education Forum for February 1-3, 1996. (For information, call 1-800-988-8081.)*

→ *The September, 1995 issue of School Administrator was devoted to character education.*

If you are doing character education in your classroom or school, please send us a description of an activity that has worked for you. We hope to publish these in future issues of our newsletter. Many thanks.

Tom Lickona
Director, Center for the 4th and 5th Rs

SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE: A FACULTY SELF-INVENTORY

(To be done quarterly, for "your eyes only.")

1. *Do I come to class on time?*
2. *Am I well-prepared for class?*
3. *Do I return students' work promptly?*
4. *Do I give individual comments that help students improve?*
5. *Do I treat students impartially and not show any kind of favoritism?*
6. *Do I maintain civility and graciousness with students even when under stress?*
7. *Do I model patience?*
8. *Do I refrain from speaking negatively about students in the faculty room and elsewhere? In speaking about students, do I exhibit the same respect I would want other teachers to show my own child?*
9. *Do I refrain from talking negatively to, or about, colleagues?*
10. *Do I hold out high expectations that challenge all my students to do their personal best?*

2nd Annual Summer Institute Set for June 24-28, 1996

The Center's Second Annual Summer Institute in Character Education (K-8) is scheduled for Monday, June 24 to noon Friday, June 28 at Corey Union of the State University of New York at Cortland.

Participating schools or districts will again be asked to sponsor teams, including an administrator (typically the building principal), 3-4 teaching faculty, and a parent leader. The Institute is also open to teacher educators, staff developers, and other interested individuals.

The week-long Institute will again include a one-day Conference on Character Education (on Tuesday,

June 25) open to all interested persons. This one-day option will include a High School track and a K-8 track.

Institute Cost: \$175 per person (includes lunch and 4 books).

One-Day Conference Cost: \$70 per person (includes lunch and 2 books).

To Register: Send names, addresses, phone number, and payment (*payable to Research Foundation of SUNY*) to: Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, SUNY Cortland, P.O. Box 2000, Cortland, NY 13045. **Registration deadline:** May 1, 1996.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GOOD MANNERS?

by Hal Urban

Hal Urban is an author and American History teacher at Woodside High School, Redwood City, California. Last year he was named Teacher of the Year. He speaks on character education and can be reached at (415) 366-2882.

Below is my beginning-of-the-year handout on manners. I preface handing it out by saying that I think most students are polite when in the right environment and when they know it is expected of them. I want them to know what my expectations are, in the interest of a positive classroom atmosphere. They write a one-paragraph reaction paper in response to my observations about how student behavior has changed and to a number of questions I pose about this. Then we discuss the whole issue of manners. It works wonders. They complain that other teachers don't emphasize manners more. I have a student from Germany this year who recently said he enjoyed my class for two reasons: 1) He is learning a lot of U.S. History; 2) The atmosphere is conducive to learning because all the students are so polite — more so than in any of his other classes.

Some other student reactions:

"I like the way you combine your class policies with good manners. It seems like you make things clear at the beginning and then rarely have any behavior problems after that. That's one of the reasons I like coming to this class."

"That manners page you handed out really made me think. Sometimes we do rude things and aren't even aware that we're being rude. I think your handout and the discussion really helped us."

Manners are of more importance than laws.

Edmund Burke, British statesman, 1700s

Without good manners human society becomes intolerable and impossible.

George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright, 1800s

How things were different not too many years ago:

- ◆ Students rarely came late to class. When they did, they apologized. Today many often come late. Only rarely does one apologize.
- ◆ Students didn't get up, walk across the room, throw something in the wastebasket, then walk back across the room while the teacher was talking. Today it is done often, and nothing is thought about it.
- ◆ Students didn't litter in the classroom or write on desks. Today many students do both.
- ◆ Students didn't talk back to teachers in a defiant manner. Today it is done often.
- ◆ Students didn't swear in classrooms or the hallways. Today some students can't talk without swearing.
- ◆ Students used to say "please" and "thank you." Today, only a few students use those words.
- ◆ Students used to listen when the teacher was talking. Today, many students feel they have the right to ignore the teacher and have a private conversation with their friends.
- ◆ Students used to listen when other students were asking a question, answering a question, or expressing an opinion. Today, many students don't want to listen to their classmates.
- ◆ Students, in general, were more considerate of other people's feelings. Today, many students could care less about other people's feelings.
- ◆ When students needed something from the teacher, they would say, "May I please have...," usually in a pleasant tone. Today, students say, "I need...," often in a demanding tone.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Why is this happening?

Is a society better when people treat each other with respect?

Is a classroom better when both students and teacher show mutual respect?

Why does Henry Rogers say, "Good manners are one of the most important keys to success in life"?

What is the "Golden Rule"? If it's so simple, why do more people today have difficulty practicing it?

Do students practice the manners in the classroom that they were taught by their parents?

Which impresses people the most—being "cool" or being courteous?

Standing Tall: The Heroes' Path to Character

by Ann Medlock, Founder and President of the Giraffe Project

In every cultural tradition, people have taken ethical guidance from stories. Everyone loves stories. Stories get past kids' anti-"message" radar. They stick in our minds, even when we might brush off any principles embedded in them if they came at us as rules and admonitions.

Since 1983 the Giraffe Project has been finding and publicizing contemporary, real-life heroes, people who have stuck their necks out for the common good and thus earned Project commendations as "Giraffes." We've gotten their stories into local and national media. We feed heroes' tales into that system to nourish the body politic, believing that no society is healthy without hope, without a vision of what can be achieved by the human spirit.

Over the years, teachers who've come upon our work have asked us for materials directed at kids. We knew we had to get into kids' lives when we read studies in which they named people like Madonna and Donald Trump as their heroes. So we developed our K-12 *Standing Tall* Curriculum.

Stories get past kids' anti-"message" radar.

Hear the story

Our curriculum taps our Giraffe storybank, which now holds the tales of over 800 real heroes, people whose courage and compassion touch the heart and sometimes reach into the soul. People like—

- ✓ Julie Leirich, a 21-year-old Los Angeles supermarket clerk, who saw that the market threw away a lot of good food every day and began taking some of it to the homeless people she saw on the streets. When her boss found out, he gave her more food. Today, Julie and fellow volunteers distribute six tons of food a month to the hungry and homeless in Los Angeles.
- ✓ Frank Melton, a businessman in Jackson, Mississippi, who responded to gang killings in his city by setting up a summer camp where he teaches gang rivals to

respect each other and work together.

- ✓ Petrina Mastenbrook, a 15-year-old student who, despite ridicule from schoolmates, began a drug abuse prevention program in her school that has high school students going into younger grades to teach kids how to handle peer pressure and say no to destructive activities.

Tell the story

After the kids have "met" people like these, both in print and in the public television video that's part of our curriculum, they're ready to find their own heroes and to tell their stories. They search for them in their studies; in the news; in books, movies or shows; and in their own communities and families.

Be the story

Then it's time to stand tall themselves, putting what they've learned about heroes' courage, compassion, and responsibility into action. The kids look around them, decide what they want to change for the better, then design and carry out a project to make it happen. Making their own observations and creating a response—rather than just signing up as troops in an existing service program—is critical to their sense of taking personal responsibility for something beyond their own lives.

When they hear stories, tell stories, and become the story, the elements of character emerge in their thoughts, feelings and actions—out of their own experience. We see kids starting out with great trepidation and ending up with a sense of responsibility and self-respect that spills out all over their lives. And it's happened without the intellectualizing involved in lectures, rules, or debates; it's happened by using stories to reach straight into the heart.

We're seeing this take place in classrooms and clubs all over the country. We commend to you the heroes' path as character education that transcends controversy and works in all settings.

For more information contact The Giraffe Project, 197 Second St., Langley, Washington 98260; (360) 221-7989 or giraffe @whidbey.com. Website: www.giraffe.org/giraffe/.