

The Fourth and Fifth Rs

Respect and Responsibility

Volume 3, Issue 2

Fall 1997

Educating the Head, the Heart, and the Hand

Lynn Lisy-Macan, Principal

Character education has brought about a visible difference in the behavior of our students. I spend much less time on discipline than I used to. Respect is evident in both words and actions. I think it's really working.

—a Brookside Teacher

Brookside Elementary School is in its third year of implementing K-6 character education. Our slogan is, "Good character is what you feel in your heart, what you think in your head, and what you do with your hands." These are some of the features of our character initiative:

❖ A focus on a *monthly character attribute*. We found it was important to start in September with responsibility; after that come respect, thankfulness, kindness, courtesy, self-control, tolerance, perseverance, citizenship, honesty, and cooperation.

❖ *The integration of character education* into every classroom in the form of class meetings, character journals, student council, cooperative learning, buddy classes, and use of children's literature in the language arts and social studies curriculum. (Contact us for the literature list developed by our librarian, Marge Day.)

❖ *Staff development*—sending different faculty each year to Cortland's Summer Institute in Character Education. (I accompany each team.)

❖ *Release time* for faculty. Every staff member has had 1/2 day in the fall and spring to meet with colleagues to develop character education curricula. (See p. 5 for potential funding to support such activity.)

❖ *A visual culture* (e.g., a lobby display, outdoor marquis, and cafeteria reminders) that communicates and reinforces our character expectations.

❖ *A Caring Calendar*, written by our students and

sent home to parents, offering daily suggestions for how to demonstrate the month's virtue.

❖ *The Character Corner*, a column written by our parents' committee and published monthly in our local newspaper, with ideas (e.g., bedtime reading, videos) that families can use to foster that month's character trait.

❖ *Monthly assemblies* in which students share what they have learned regarding the word of the month.

❖ *The Character Minute*, developed by staff and students and aired each Monday night on our ABC-TV affiliate's 6:00 p.m. newscast.

❖ *Bus buddies* and *trimester bus meetings* of students who ride together, their bus driver, and two teachers. Questions discussed: "What does a safe and respectful bus ride look like?" "What does it sound like?"

❖ *Community service* which pairs each class with a local charity of their choice.

❖ *PTA collaboration* with our Fine Arts design team to provide artists and cultural programs that relate to our character themes.

❖ *A character education steering group* to design or select surveys to determine the extent to which our students understand and act upon our character attributes.

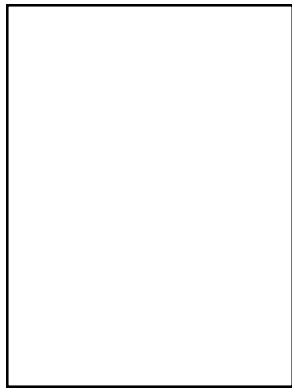
❖ *Going "on the road"* to share our story with other schools and help them get started.

Character education has given our school a common goal. It's not just a program—it's who we are. ■

Brookside Elementary School, 3849 Saddlemire Rd., Binghamton, NY 13903; Tel. (607) 669-4105. Mrs. Macan and the authors of other newsletter articles are available to speak on character education.

Children Always Respecting Everyone: Forestville's C.A.R.E. Program

Dave Kulp, Principal



Character education at Forestville Elementary in Great Falls, Virginia, is called Project C.A.R.E.,

which stands for Children Always Respecting Everyone. It is a comprehensive program built around six pillars of character: *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, kindness and citizenship*. These pillars were identified by parents, students, and staff in a school/community survey.

Good Morning, Good-bye, Please, and Thank You

We began our program by forming a school Character Education Committee which included staff and parents. We connected it to our existing Student Council Association and Outreach Committee and their projects. Our first step was to make everyone in the building aware of our character objective. We began simply by encouraging all students to make *eye contact* and say *good morning, good-bye, please, and thank you*. Teachers at all grade levels began holding class meetings. Glad Notes were handed out by all staff members when students were seen doing something good. Students in each class designed permanent felt banners on the six pillars of character and hung them in our cafeteria.

We infuse our six pillars of character into all curriculum areas. Students are involved in a multicultural literature-based program which helps them understand universally accepted traits of good character, personalize the traits, and apply them consistently. The program stresses that character traits need to be *practiced* and suggests opportunities for this practice around the school, at home, and in the community.

Helping the Needy: Outreach to the School, Community, and World

Each grade level has chosen a specific outreach

project for the year. Our kindergartners make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the community homeless shelter. Parents donate supplies and deliver the sandwiches. Our first- and second-graders inspect our school grounds and keep them clean and safe for other students. Our third-graders, through the Red Cross, write to troops overseas, and our fourth-graders, through the Shriners, help burn-victims by collecting aluminum can tops. Our fifth-graders keep our garden areas weeded, plant flowers, and maintain a bird feeder. Our sixth-graders have adopted residents of a local nursing home and provide artwork for the residents' rooms and dining area.

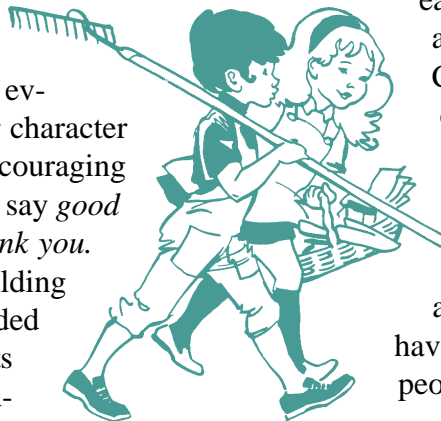
Our School Council Association and Outreach Committee have sponsored collections of school supplies, clothing, food, and stuffed animals for earthquake, hurricane, and flood victims. We also adopted another school in Fairfax County where we send school supplies and clothing. Students in kindergarten through sixth-grade, with parents' support, earned money at home for doing extra jobs. With the money, gifts were bought for students at our adopted school. We have also collected food for area families and have flown food to Liberia to help feed the people there.

In addition, each class at Forestville has a "Buddy Class." An older class is teamed with a younger class to help with various projects. In the process, the younger children learn from their older buddies, the older children learn from the younger ones, and all children learn to respect each other. Our buddy classes do reading, math, and technology together. They have also made Character Bulletin Board displays and have written and published books about good character.

And the Beat Goes On

Currently, our Character Education Committee is preparing a parents' booklet of home activities designed to foster our six pillars of good character. ■

Forestville Elementary, 1085 Utterback Store Road, Great Falls, VA 22066; Tel. (703) 430-4350.



What's Working at Wellwood Middle School

David Wheeler, Principal

Five years ago we began our character initiative at Wellwood Middle School with "The 3 Rs": **RESPECT—RESPONSIBILITY—RIGHTS**. We placed posters around school with the acronym **R.E.S.P.E.C.T.: Respect Every Single Person Especially Classmates & Teachers**. Student-written morning announcements were read over the PA describing student acts of respect and responsibility. Classroom activities, however, were left up to individual teachers without accountability to a building-wide group.

This approach lasted for two years but was not as successful as we had hoped. Most of the teachers were not taking the opportunities to utilize their subject matter to highlight examples of respect and responsibility, because it meant adding planning time to their already busy schedules. There was also no set of curricula-related materials to draw from in establishing a consistent building-wide focus.

Then three years ago, our district decided to make character education a primary focus. Each building was allowed to decide how to implement its own program. Wellwood and other buildings began sending teachers, parents, and administrators to the Summer Institute in Character Education at SUNY Cortland.

In trying to broaden our staff involvement, the biggest complaint from teachers was, "I don't have any resources for doing this." So at the end of the 1995-96 school year, I bought each staff member a copy of William Bennett's *Book of Virtues for Young People*. The following fall we implemented a virtue-a-month program based on Bennett's virtues (friendship, responsibility, honesty, etc.), using the stories in his book. All staff—aides, administration, counselors, teachers, and our nurse—were involved in teaching the lessons.

Halfway through the year, I had staff discuss in groups of 4-5: (1) *What's working?* (2) *What should we change?* We decided to move from a book focus to a curriculum focus. When a social studies teacher taught a unit on the early women's rights movement, for example, she took the opportunity to talk about perseverance. We also began to develop folders of newspaper and magazine clippings that faculty could use to discuss each of the monthly virtues.

We now have a core of 10-12 teachers on our CE steering committee, representing each of the four

grade levels and special area teachers. They meet monthly to write lessons for the faculty. This year instead of a virtue a month, we have taken a more global approach with the theme of "**Kids Helping Kids**," linked to UNICEF's 50th anniversary.

No approach is perfect, and the design of a program must reflect the culture of the school and the community. See the box below for our recommendations. ■
Wellwood Middle School, 700 South Manlius Street, Fayetteville, NY 13066; Tel. (315) 682-1300.

Wellwood's Top 10 Suggestions

1. **Model—by your language and actions—the behaviors espoused in your character education program. (Students notice when you don't.)**
2. **Staff involvement and commitment are important—start small and gradually expand your leadership base with interested and influential staff members.**
3. **Have monthly meetings of your steering committee to critique what you have accomplished and to plan for the next month.**
4. **Ask for staff feedback but not at a faculty meeting—the nay-sayers can dominate in a large group.**
5. **Send your CE committee members to an established character education training program.**
6. **Make your initiative user-friendly, not disruptive.**
7. **Involve all staff members in the program; do not leave out your support staff.**
8. **If you have all staff teach a scheduled lesson, keep it between 20 and 30 minutes.**
9. **Have a focus, but change your approach to delivering your program about every two years.**
10. **Have a vision of what character education is and a financial commitment from the district to support the training of staff, the necessary materials, and the time to implement the program.**

1998 K-12 Summer Institute: June 29-July 2
One-Day K-12 Conference: Wednesday, July 1
Two-Day High School Conference: June 30-July 1
Q's? 607/753-2455 or e-mail: c4n5rs@cortland.edu

Character Education at Wasatch High: An Eight-Point Plan

John Moss, English Teacher

The roots of hard work, integrity, and honor run deep in our Utah culture—and in that sense teaching values comes naturally. How-

ever, a few years ago something magical began to happen at Wasatch High (1100 students) which has had a deep impact on the overall character of our school.

Our principal, Harvey Horner, served on a committee that wrote a grant proposal to make us part of a national experiment to increase the focus on character education. Wasatch School District and three urban districts from Utah (Granite, Salt Lake, and Alpine) were selected.

Mr. Horner then invited Ron Tree (our former football, wrestling, and track coach) to be the new building facilitator and to help shape the character effort. Mr. Tree set up a Steering Committee of teachers, parents, and business leaders to formulate an overall strategy. On that group's recommendation, eight committees, each with its own focus, have been created:

1. Curriculum Infusion Committee—which encourages staff to model good behavior to students, to directly instruct students in what moral behavior looks like in day-to-day actions, and to integrate discussion of character qualities into academic lessons.

2. Building Enhancement Committee—which places signs and posters around the school reminding students, teachers, and visitors that character values are to be respected at Wasatch High School.

3. Student Enhancement Committee—which notifies parents of acts of character demonstrated by students. (Teachers and students are both asked to report acts of character to the committee when they see students acting in exemplary ways.)

4. Community Service Projects Committee—which provides all students with opportunities for service.

5. Community Outreach Committee—which publicly honors those members of our community who, by their service, have made our valley a better place to live.

6. Student Council—which models character values to the rest of the student body and speaks of these values to their peers. (Students thereby understand that it is not just adults who value good character.)

7. Student Forum—which assigns each of the grade levels a variety of character-building activities. (For example, seniors are given training in civic responsibility through mentoring activities. Other classes are given off-campus, adventure-based experiences to learn about trust, caring, and courage.)

8. Extracurricular Committee—through which teachers, coaches, and advisors stress the importance of character values through the extracurricular activities they lead.

In developing our schoolwide effort, we started slowly with just those faculty who wanted to participate. Little by little, other faculty started to come to us. Our message to teachers is that character education will make your life better. We believe that all good teachers teach character—we're just helping people do it in a more focused way.

We are finding that having the *intention* to promote character makes opportunities for character education happen more consistently. As an 11th-grade English teacher, I'm having the best experience I've had in more than 20 years of teaching. The respect I'm showing my students is coming back to me.

There are detractors, as in any education effort, who would like to see this fail. It may be a teacher who is carrying a difficult burden that makes character education seem impractical. Whatever the challenge, it is the *principal*, the real leader of the school, who determines the success or failure of a program. Success in a character education endeavor such as ours can be realized only if the head of the organization is firmly committed to the effort required to maintain momentum. Teachers may implement the program, but it is the administrator who validates the program and keeps the school focused on character education. ■ *Wasatch High School, 64 East 600 South, Heber City, UT 84032; Tel. (801) 654-0640. (Ask about the video on our school's program.)*

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THE 11 COMMANDMENTS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

1. Be a *builder and promoter* of the vision of character education.
2. Be a *communicator* to students, parents, and staff about your program—through newsletters, handbooks, parent nights, and assemblies.
3. Be a *member or supporter* of committees that are working on your character initiative.
4. Be a *recruiter of parents* to work on developing your character program.
5. Be a *reader* and share articles and books about character development with staff, parents, and students.
6. Be a *resource provider*—of funds for conferences, inservices, books, magazines, and videos.
7. Be a *provider of time*—e.g., faculty meetings, Superintendent's Conference Days, team meetings, summer training—for learning, for discussion, and for program assessment.
8. Be a *problem-solver*. For example, implementing morning meetings or class meetings may require some minor schedule changes.
9. Be an *encourager* to all—being aware of what people are doing and taking time to recognize that with a spoken or written comment.
10. Be a *model* of what your program is trying to accomplish—consistently demonstrating qualities like respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, and caring in your interactions with others.
11. Be a *believer* in the importance of character development. During my sabbatical study, I found that schools having the biggest impact really *believed* that they could make a difference for their schools if they pursued character growth along with cognitive learning.

*Richard Parisi, Principal
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Potential Source\$ of Funding for Character Education

- ✓ Federal Safe & Drug Free Schools funds
 - ✓ Violence prevention funds—state & federal
 - ✓ School to Careers funds—state & federal
 - ✓ Teacher Center grant funds for staff development and program development
 - ✓ State Title II funds
 - ✓ Community service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions
 - ✓ Corporate sponsors—Saturn, McDonalds, Burger King, Target, Sam's Club, and local businesses
 - ✓ Local PTAs
 - ✓ Model Schools grants
- Lynn Lisy-Macan

CHECK OUT THESE WEB SITES

Center for the 4th and 5th Rs:
www.cortland.edu/www/c4n5rs/

The Center for Learning:
www.centerforlearning.org/

Character Counts Coalition:
www.charactercounts.org

Character Education Institute: (California U. of PA)
www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/char_ed/

Character Education Partnership: www.character.org

Character Education Resources:
www.charactereducationinfo.org

Dr. Craig Cunningham, Northeastern IL University
(many links): www.neiu.edu/~ccunning/chared.html

Dr. Ed Wynne, College of Education, University of IL at Chicago: www.uic.edu:80/~edaw

Dr. Larry Nucci, Studies in Moral Development and Education: www.uic.edu/~Inucci/MoralEd/

High School Prep: www.moww.org/HSPrep/

Jefferson Center for Character Education:
www.jeffersoncenter.org

National Professional Resources:
www.nprinc.com/

The Giraffe Project
www.giraffe.org/giraffe/

Character Education in the Classroom

Jeremy Davis, Teacher

I am a third grade teacher in my fourth year of teaching. I teach my students basic values that are conducive to becoming good citizens.

Moral Discussions

On Friday afternoons I have a 20-minute discussion which poses a moral question. For example: ***Billy is a popular student. He is captain of his soccer team and plays the only set of drums in the school band. He did his homework last night but left it home. He doesn't want to have a note sent home for not having his homework, so he asks Janet if he can quickly copy hers. What should Janet do?*** Most of the time I get a mixed response. It is remarkable how many of my students believe that behaviors such as lying, cheating and stealing should be permitted for certain individuals in certain situations. I let the class discuss the problem while I guide them to the morally correct answer.

The Class Meeting

The class meeting is our main vehicle for decision-making and problem-solving. I allow any student to request a meeting. Issues resolved through class meetings include "snack sharing," seating charts, class jobs, homework policy, missing pencils, and computer use.

A case in point: In my classroom we have 20 students but only two computers. I thought I had a great plan: 4 students would have the computers for the day—2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon—so each student would have one turn a week. Well, my students were not happy with this, and Caitlin asked to call a class meeting. They proposed that everyone have 20 minutes on the computer every day. It was a unanimous decision, so I went along with them. Now, at every moment of the day, two students are on the computer. I don't even tell them when to get on or off; they have it all worked out on their own. I applaud them for developing their own system of using the computer.

Combatting Social Cliques

I learned quickly during my first year of teaching that allowing students to sit wherever they want is not effective. Groups would ostracize some students. This year I move desks around almost weekly. I love the fact that my students are now constantly interacting with each other.

Affirming Each Other

At the end of each week we have circle appreciation time. All students will say one appreciative comment to the person on their left, the person on their right, and to whomever else they wish. We also show appreciation through written notes. Over the summer, our main office was redone, and I was able to get the teachers' old mailboxes for my students. Our class mailpersons use the mailboxes to send notes home from school. Students write notes to me and to each other. Their comments are always positive. Students do not go to their mailboxes until the end of the day to get their notes. The mailboxes have been a very positive experience for us in building a caring community.

Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative groups in my classroom have 5 members. Each student has a specific task: recorder, reporter, leader, timekeeper, or lawyer. The lawyer is the one I think I might have invented. Whenever I had a reporter speak to the class, others would question her findings. I encourage the questioning as long as it is done in a kind manner. The lawyer's job is to defend the findings of the group and help convince others that the group has accomplished its task. Everyone loves to be the lawyer, and most of the time the lawyers do an outstanding job. By being a lawyer, many of my students have gained confidence. Most importantly, they learn an appreciation of the work done by their "groupmates."

Reaching the Difficult Child

Last year I had a student I'll call Michael. His second-grade teacher told me to be patient with him because he swore often. His profanity was also a problem at home. When I met Michael, I shook his hand and told him that I heard he was an excellent writer and speaker with great creativity and a very broad vocabulary. He immediately smiled. I make a positive connection with Michael every week. I've had no trouble with him and have never heard him use bad language.

Character education has enabled me to achieve my goals as a teacher: to help my students understand respect and responsibility, be proud of themselves, and care for each other. ■

Big Cross Street School, 15 Big Cross Street, Glens Falls, NY 12801; Tel. (518) 792-2619.