

Integrating Excellence and Ethics in Character Education

by Matthew Davidson and Thomas Lickona

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What is the power of “character,” and how can that power, used wisely by schools to create a culture of character, help us develop diligent students and responsible citizens? In *An Ethic of Excellence: Crafting a Culture of Craftsmanship With Students*, teacher Ron Berger (2003) argues that “an ethic of excellence” must be at the very center of the educational enterprise. Across the country, Berger points out, there are schools where students are remarkably good at something. For example, he cites tiny Cuba City High School in Wisconsin, with a graduating class of 75, as having a record in athletics that’s hard to believe: In the past 30 years, it has won 14 state championships in a wide range of boys’ and girls’ sports.

In our recently completed study, *Smart & Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work, and Beyond* (Lickona and Davidson, 2005), we encountered the same phenomenon: a forensics team that worked feverishly to hone their research and speaking skills and year after year won national championships; choirs whose diligent pursuit of excellence led to consistent top honors at state and national competitions; an academic program serving urban youth, whose reading and writing requirements would be daunting to most college students, and so on. What is the secret of success for these schools?

Berger’s answer: “Excellence is born from a culture.” The way to develop excellence and ethics in the character of individual students is to create a school culture that embodies those qualities.

The character of a school’s culture, the norms that define how everyone is expected to work and behave, has a huge impact. All students, especially teenagers, want to “fit in,” and when they enter a culture that demands and supports excellence, they do their best work to fit into it. Individual students may have different potential, but in general, as Berger argues, their attitudes and achievements are determined by the culture around them. Schools, therefore, must do everything possible to create a school culture “where

the peer culture celebrates investment in school,” where it’s cool to care about excellence. Then schools must reach out to families and the community to ask them for help in supporting this norm” (Berger, 2003: 35).

Character’s Two Essential Parts

To unlock the power of character is to define it to include the quest for excellence as well as the quest for ethics. This concept of character has the potential to transform the culture of a school in a way that improves both learning and behavior. Character defined to include both excellence and ethics has two parts: (1) performance character and (2) moral character.

Performance character is a mastery orientation. It consists of those qualities—such as diligence, perseverance, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, ingenuity, and self-discipline—needed to realize one’s potential for excellence in academics, extracurricular activities, the workplace, or any other area of endeavor.

Performance character is not the same as performance. Performance is the outcome (the grade, the honor or award, the achievement), whereas performance character consists of the character strengths, such as best effort, that enable us to pursue our personal best—whether the outcome is realized or not. We can display performance character and still fail, just as we can succeed without displaying performance character (as, for example, when a gifted student gets As without challenging himself or herself to work to potential; or when a team plays below par in an easy victory over inferior competition). In the long run, performance character does maximize performance because it brings to bear the strengths and strategies by which we challenge ourselves to get the most from our natural talent.

Moreover, performance character has what research on achievement motivation calls a task orientation (Molden & Dweck, 2000), in which I seek to surpass my own past performance (leading, the research shows, to greater satisfaction and fidelity to character values) rather than an ego orientation, in

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which I must surpass someone else (leading to greater performance anxiety and a greater tendency to cheat).

Moral character is a relational orientation. It consists of all those qualities, such as integrity, justice, caring, respect, and cooperation-needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior. We note that respect for persons includes self-respect; we have obligations to ourselves as well as to others. Moral character moderates our performance goals to honor the interests of others, to ensure that we do not violate moral values such as fairness, honesty, and caring in the pursuit of high performance. Moral character ensures that we use ethical means to achieve our performance goals.

Here are five important points about performance character and moral character:

1. It is possible to have performance character without moral character, and vice versa. All of us know high achievers who accomplish what they do through diligence, self-discipline, and other aspects of performance character-but who lack honesty, kindness, civility, or some other important aspect of moral character. Likewise, it's possible to be strong in the moral virtues but less well-developed in performance virtues such as initiative, hard work, organization, and so on.

2. A person of character embodies both performance character and moral character. Both carry obligation. In this sense performance character has an ethical dimension; it is a moral failure, for example, when we do shoddy work. All of us have a responsibility to develop our talents, realize our potential for excellence, and give our best effort as we perform the tasks of life (performance character). We have this obligation for two reasons: (1) Respect for ourselves requires us not to waste our talents but to use them to develop as persons and to perform to the best of our ability in whatever we undertake; and (2) Caring about others requires us to do our work well, since the quality of our work, especially in the world beyond the classroom, affects other people's lives. When we do our work well, someone typically benefits; when we do it poorly, someone suffers.

In a similar way, we have a responsibility to be our best ethical self (moral character)-both out of self-respect and because our ethical conduct affects the lives of those around us. If we treat others with respect and care, we contribute to their welfare and happiness; if we do the opposite, we demean them and subtract from the quality of their lives.

3. Whereas moral virtues are intrinsically good, performances virtues can be used for bad ends. A terrorist might use performance virtues such as ingenuity and commitment to carry out the bombing of innocents; a CEO might exhibit similar qualities in the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of employees, stockholders, and customers. By contrast, moral virtues such as justice, honesty, and caring are intrinsically good-good in and of themselves. They can't be pressed into the service of evil ends.

4. Both performance character and moral character have three psychological components: awareness, attitude, and action. The field of character education has long recognized three psychological dimensions of character: cognitive ("the head"), emotional ("the heart"), and behavioral ("the hand"). In a similar way, performance character and moral character can be viewed as each having three psychological components, which we refer to as the 3 A's: awareness, attitude, and action. To possess performance character is to understand what excellence requires (awareness), to care about excellence (attitude), and to actively strive for excellence (action). Similarly, to possess moral character is to understand what ethical behavior requires, to care about ethical behavior, and to strive to act in ethical ways.



5. In a person of character, performance character and moral character support each other in an integrated, interdependent way. The role of moral character in regulating performance character is crucial. Without strong moral character, performance character, even in a good cause, can easily run amuck. Reflecting the integrated functioning of performance character and moral character, the figure above depicts the two sides of character not as separate spheres but as a three-dimensional ball whose center represents the essential

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interplay of the moral and performance virtues. Excellence and ethics harmonize to make possible an act, or a life, of character.

Performance Character and Moral Character

Support for our overall two-part concept of character, as involving performance character and moral character, comes from four sources: (1) research on motivation and talent development; (2) lives of character; (3) the practices of great character educators; (4) the voices of teachers and students.

1. *Research on motivation and talent development.* Studies of talent development show that performance character, including self-discipline and good work habits, is needed to develop innate ability. Teens who more strongly persist in developing their talent have a stronger “achievement and endurance orientation” and are more likely to develop habits conducive to talent development such as focusing on goals.

2. *Lives of character.* If we examine lives of character, we invariably find both strong performance character and strong moral character at work. In their book, *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment* (1997), psychologists Anne Colby and William Damon profile 23 men and women of exemplary character, including religious leaders of different faiths, businessmen, physicians, teachers, heads of nonprofit organizations, and leaders of social movements. Their contributions spanned civil rights, the fight against poverty, medical care, education, philanthropy, the environment, peace, and religious freedom. Reading these portraits of character, one sees, again and again, the interplay of moral character and performance character: high ethical goals combined with diligence and determination in the pursuit of those goals.

3. *The practices of great character educators.* If we examine how great teachers or great coaches go about their craft, we find that they foster in their students both performance character and moral character, a commitment to both excellence and ethics. As a case in point, consider the legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden. In the twelve seasons from 1964 to 1975, Wooden’s men’s UCLA basketball teams won ten NCAA Division I championships, including seven national championships in a row. And yet Wooden never talked to his players about winning; he talked about character. Wooden (1997) wrote: “The goal in life is the same as in basketball: make the effort to do the best you are capable of doing—in marriage, at your

job, in the community, for your country. Make the effort to contribute in whatever way you can. You may do it materially or with time, ideas, or work. Making the effort to contribute is what counts. The effort is what counts in everything.” He advised “Don’t measure yourself by what you’ve accomplished, but rather by what you should have accomplished with your abilities.” That is the essence of performance character.

4. *The voices of teachers and students.* In our research, we found that many high school practitioners do not self-identify as “character educators,” at least not initially. They tended to equate “character education” with “discussing ethics.” For example, one science teacher said, “I teach chemistry; I don’t teach character. Occasionally, I might touch on an ethical issue, but I really don’t have a lot of time for that.” However, when these same teachers began to speak about what students need to succeed in their classroom, they described character outcomes, specifically, performance character outcomes. They want students who will be able to demonstrate:

- diligence-commitment to doing a job or assignment well
- perseverance in the face of difficulty
- dependability, including the ability to do their part on a project
- responsibility for having the required supplies or materials
- orderliness in their work
- the ability to set goals and monitor progress toward the realization of those goals.

Good teachers, as they develop performance character, also pay attention to moral character: how students treat the teacher, treat each other, care for classroom materials and equipment, honor expectations of honesty on tests and other work, and so on. “I run a classroom based on respect,” the above-quoted chemistry teacher said. But our point here is that defining character so as to give a prominent place to performance character as well as moral character profoundly alters how secondary-level educators see character education. Character development as the pursuit of excellence in learning, not just as the fostering of ethical behavior, is, for high school teachers, a “fit.”

In our study of high schools, we also found that students readily used the language of performance

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character and moral character to describe their school's impact on their character development. Asked how his school affected students' performance character, one boy in an inner-city public school said: "My teachers and peers have pushed me to do the best that I can. They have instilled in me the value of accomplishment and a great work ethic in all areas of my life. My teachers don't let me give up when a question is hard, they teach me different ways to figure out a problem. My 'discovery group' has helped my performance character by giving me a chance to take a deep look into myself and see the things that are holding me back. I think all high schools should push students to push each other to be their best."

A girl in a Catholic high school, speaking of her school's impact on students' moral character, said: "Everything about my school, from the peer counseling program to the religious studies courses, tremendously influences the moral character of its students. We are taught from the very beginning that plagiarism and all forms of cheating are wrong, that any kind of cruelty toward other students is not to be tolerated, and that taking initiative and responsibility in all situations is required. We often have assemblies that discuss how to promote peace in society and issues that prevent such peace from being achieved. Graduation requirements include 100 hours of community service, but our school encourages us to do more. There is an unspoken expectation throughout the campus to do what is right and stand up for what is just."

Promoting Character Development

We believe there are four key strategies that, taken together, constitute a "curriculum for character," both performance character and moral character:

1. *A community of excellence that challenges and supports.* Develop a learning community whose members not only pursue the realization of their own potential for excellence and ethics but also help to bring out the best in every other person. Optimal development occurs when community members support and challenge one another.
2. *Self-study.* Monitor yourself, to better understand both strengths and areas for growth in performance character and moral character, and set goals to chart a course for improvement. Without self study there is no self-knowledge, which is a prerequisite for authentic self-improvement.

3. *Other-study.* Study, and strive to follow, the character pathways pursued by individuals of performance excellence and high moral character; seek to understand the role of specific character traits or strengths in their realization of excellence and ethics. We must first discern and then emulate the character pathways followed by persons of excellence.

4. *Public performance.* Utilize public performances, such as exhibitions, competitions, speeches, concerts, and shows, to develop performance character and moral character. The motivational power of having an audience for our work raises our "conscience of craft" and allows for an objective, "real-world" assessment of the quality of our performance.

How can a whole school be organized to optimize the development of both performance character and moral character, the integration of excellence and ethics? In our report, *Smart & Good High Schools*, we describe promising practices that good schools across the country are using to create what we call an "ethical learning community," a partnership of staff, students, parents, and the wider community dedicated to the development of performance character and moral character. This, we believe, is the central challenge facing the national character education movement.

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Integrating Character Education into the Social Studies Curriculum

by Casey Jakubowski

In recent years, character education has made its way to the forefront of most school mandates. However, teachers often feel they are being asked to squeeze character education into a crowded curriculum at the same time they are being pressured to prepare students for standardized examinations. One solution is to use stories about the past and situations from the present to integrate lessons on character into what we are already teaching. This can be done at many grade levels and in a number of different subject areas. Including character education in social studies classes can be a challenge, but the possibility exists for a smooth transition back and forth between learning content knowledge and developing character.

Iroquois Culture

In fourth and seventh grades, New York State students study about local Native American peoples. Iroquois culture flourished in upstate New York during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The five (later six) Iroquois tribes formed a confederacy in order to stop the warring and destruction that destroyed a large number of their kin networks. Within this confederacy, women held genuine tribal authority and their opinions were valued. Women had veto power over war plans and could influence treaty negotiations. Students learn from the Iroquois example to value other people and that females can be important leaders.

Industrial Revolution

High School Global history offers many opportunities for students to explore character issues. During the Industrial Revolution, people lost their identities as individual craftsmen and became anonymous workers in huge factories. Labor and capital were increasingly divided, and theorists such as Karl Marx developed class struggle ideologies. Students can examine the role of government and reformers in this time period and discuss questions such as: Did the government do enough to help workers and the poor? Did reformers? Should all people be considered valuable to a society? Did socialists and labor activists offer legitimate alternatives to capitalist industrialization?

Participation in Government

In New York State, Participation in Government is a senior class designed to ready young adults for the world of active citizenship. My students have examined the state school funding formula and local education budgets. Based on their research, they discuss the role government should play in equalizing

educational opportunities for all children. Students can also explore ways to counter bullying in schools and lead an anti-bullying initiative to help at the elementary, middle and high schools.

Geography and Character Education

Geography and character education work together because of the questions that are raised when students explore geographic decisions. Elementary school children can study the role the Erie Canal played in the dispossession of the Iroquois. Classroom materials should include a selection from the treaty, a map of the Erie Canal and a map of Iroquois possessions in New York between the American Revolution and the Erie Canal's completion. This theme can be examined again in middle school when students learn about the Trail of Tears and the effect of moving the "Five Civilized Tribes" from the Southeast to the Oklahoma territory. A good resource is Vicki Rozema (2003). *Voices from the Trail of Tears* (John F. Blair Publishers).

An excellent high school project that combines citizenship, character and geography is an examination of how communities select locations for different types of civic projects. Where do they build prisons? How about schools? Students can study the environmental impact of factories on local communities and discuss whether economic development helps or hurts people. They can also explore the services offered in different parts of the community. Where do bus routes run? How many miles or bus trips does an inner city family have to travel to receive medical assistance?

Character education offers teachers the means and methods to encourage children to think about how their actions influence others. Instead of being seen as an additional burden, teachers should recognize that character education is already taking place in the social studies and it can be expanded with little additional planning.

Character Education in New Jersey Schools

by Philip M. Brown and Maurice J. Elias

New Jersey is leading the nation in its commitment to provide support for the development of character education in public schools through the New Jersey Character Education Partnership initiative which has provided \$14 million in state aid funding to school districts over the past three years. At least half of the state's 1.6 million students will be reached through this four year initiative. New Jersey is one of only five states to receive awards under the Partnerships in Character Education grant program, part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002.

The New Jersey Center for Character Education (NJCCE) has been established by the New Jersey Department of Education through a grant from the US Department of Education to provide guidance, leadership and support for public and nonpublic educators developing and implementing character education programs. The Center provides statewide and regional conferences annually, facilitates the work of ten demonstration project school districts, and supports an information dissemination and collegial response forum, the New Jersey Character Education Network. The Center also provides technical assistance regarding program design and evaluation to school districts in association with the state's Character Education Partnership program of state aid for all school districts. The Center is housed at Rutgers University, in the Center for Applied Psychology in the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Piscataway, NJ.

Understanding character education should begin with some understanding of how the term character is used in a developmental context. For the individual, character is a 'whole person' concept, involving cognition (knowing the good), affect (loving the good) and behavior (doing good). Character is a complex psychological concept that Marvin Berkowitz defines as entailing "the capacity to think about right and wrong, feeling moral emotions (guilt, empathy, compassion), engaging in moral behaviors (sharing, donating to charity, telling the truth), believing in moral "goods", demonstrating an enduring tendency to act with honesty, altruism, responsibility, and other characteristics that support moral functioning" (Berkowitz, 2001, p. 48). Character is not meant to imply, as it might in common parlance, shaping the entire personality of an individual. Rather, character as used in education refers mainly to the moral and ethical guidance used by students in their everyday life and the skills required to enact their highest aspirations. As students mature and learn from the experience of responding successfully and unsuccessfully to life's challenges, their core personality or character forms. This development is a life-long process. Teachers as well as students have their character tested and are challenged to continually grow when faced with ethical and moral dilemmas.

Character education is a growing national movement, which is rooted in the belief that the mission of public education includes the social, ethical and emotional development of young people, as well as academic attainment. It is a transformation of a very old American ideal. In the early years of the republic, it was seen as important to instill democratic virtues at an early age. As Thomas Lickona pointed out in his landmark book, *Educating for Character* (Lickona, 1991), virtues such as patriotism, hard work and altruism were infused through texts such as the famous McGuffey Reader. However, by the 20th century, the advancement of science and work by leading philosophers and psychologists emphasizing 'objective reality' lessened the importance and status of the 'subjective' subjects such as the study of character and core values.

Today, character education represents an important source of balance in efforts to improve our schools. While much recent focus in school reform has been given to the "academic side" of the report card, we risk losing sight of "the other side." That is the side that reflects how we live with one another, whether we are inclined toward peace or war, honesty or cheating, thoroughness and integrity or slipshod work, and how we acquire the attitudes and the skills needed to avoid problems of violence and alcohol and drug abuse.

Character education encompasses school-wide climate enhancements, infusion of core ethical values into the curriculum, and teaching strategies that help young people develop positive character traits such as respect, responsibility and caring. Finally, character education supports academic achievement by providing a nurturing environment for students where

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children feel safe, competent and confident. As Americans, we continue to examine the moral standards of our society and the ability of our nation's education system to prepare young people to be contributing citizens. Clearly, our education system must build students' academic abilities while also helping to provide the basis for sound character development.

The skills that people need to have to make good decisions and develop sound character have been identified in the emerging science of "Emotional Intelligence" or "social and emotional learning." In professional meetings, educators frequently pay little attention to this domain of learning, acting as if it were not as important as academic grades, but consider: in life, does it matter who shows up, who works well with others, who is prepared for what they must do, who can function as part of a team, and who is an ethical person? Are these any less important than algebra, geometry, chemistry, and spelling grades?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning is an international group of educators, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers concerned with preparing teachers for the challenges of education in the 21st century (www.CASEL.org). In their book, "Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators" (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, & Associates, 1997), CASEL identified teachable skills essential for educating students for sound character and seeing themselves and their learning as positive resources for their families, schools, workplaces, and communities. These skills are fundamental tools for citizens in a free and democratic society, and if students do not learn them, the societies they come to inherit and lead will deteriorate: knowing and managing one's emotions; listening and communicating carefully and accurately, recognizing strengths in self and others; showing ethical and social responsibility, taking others' perspectives; perceiving others' feelings accurately; respecting others; setting adaptive goals; solving problems and making decisions effectively; cooperating; negotiating and managing conflicts peacefully; building constructive, mutual, ethical relationships; and seeking and giving help.

Teachers reviewing the list often say that it captures the curriculum in their hearts, the skills they know students need to put their knowledge to

productive use and to live as responsible citizens in our increasingly complex society. Indeed, think about any of the "pillars" of character one would want students to internalize and enact. Think about respect or honesty. What are the skills necessary to act in these ways in everyday situations, especially in stressful circumstances, and to conduct one's life in accordance with these as guiding principles? It would be hard to compile a response without including many of the skills in the above list. Educators at all levels, from administrators to lunch aides, will benefit from being aware of research and field-tested methods for building these skills in students. And the same skills can help parents be more supportive of the work of educators.

Character Education and the Curriculum

The school curriculum provides the organizing structure for what gets taught in schools and, therefore, offers a myriad of opportunities to engage in character education. Direct teaching of virtues and moral lessons may make some teachers uneasy, believing these are matters best left to parents and clergy. However, ethical issues are close at hand in most subject areas or can easily be brought to bear in discussions of how knowledge is applied in real world decisions that affect us all. Indeed, it is naïve to think that ethical issues can be left outside the school house door when in reality, they are pervasive in the personal, familial, and civic lives of children and conveyed powerfully through the media.

Whether it is a discussion of slavery in its historical context, the causes of pollution in a local stream, or the moral dilemmas faced by a character in a classic story, there is fertile ground for teaching applied ethics throughout the curriculum. However, if teaching sound character is left to opportunistic instruction, then we can be confident that students' application of sound character will be similarly sporadic and occasional.

Some school districts have found that it is possible to integrate character education directly into the curriculum using an infusion process. The Newark Public Schools has made a long-term commitment to infusing character education into the language arts and literacy curriculum through a balanced literacy approach in grades 1 through 8 and into the social studies curriculum in grades 6 through 8. Educators are provided with an integrated plan for using carefully chosen trade texts to teach six widely

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accepted core ethical values: caring, respect, responsibility, justice and fairness, trustworthiness, and citizenship and civic virtue. Newark's pedagogy of infusion is highly systematic and carefully developmentally sequenced.

The Hidden Curriculum

Schools function as miniature societies with their own cultural norms, rules of behavior, and power structures designed to accomplish a number of important social and developmental goals beyond what is taught in the overt, printed curriculum. Teachers and students are faced with issues of social-emotional learning (SEL) and character on a variety of levels every day. Decisions to learn or not to learn, to act out in anger or not, to disrupt the class or not, all are matters of skills and character. Classroom management and student discipline are areas where these norms and interpersonal skills are often most obvious and consequential for determining how well the school works to accomplish its mission.

The hidden curriculum is the place where much of the daily learning about character in action takes place for students. There is greater likelihood that behaviors will change and school culture and climate will become more positive and conducive to learning if, through integration of activities, there is more school leadership, staff members embrace core ethical values and virtues in their teaching and especially as role models, and the association between character and student conduct is reinforced.

Student Discipline and Character Education

Successful character education cannot be separated from the system of discipline and student recognition employed within each school. When it

adopted the revised regulations for Programs to Support Student Development, the State Board of Education recognized the importance of laying a foundation for student discipline. For the first time, school districts are required to "develop and implement a code of student conduct for establishing school standards and rules which define acceptable student behavioral expectations and which govern student behavior." The regulation specifies that the content of the code of conduct must be based on broad community involvement and accepted local core ethical values and include student responsibilities and rights; disciplinary sanctions and due process; and positive reinforcement for good conduct and academic success. The state regulations also require that districts provide for annual processes for disseminating the code of conduct to school staff, students and parents, reporting on severe disciplinary consequences and for reviewing and updating the code as necessary based on this information.

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Materials for Teaching about the Holocaust

Holocaust Museum Houston offers free of charge Holocaust Curriculum Trunks. These 20x31x19 inch or 6.8 cubic foot trunks are full of books, posters, CD's, DVD's and other material for use in the classroom. Some of the items come in class sets of 25 or 30, others in sets of 5 or single copies. There is a trunk for elementary grades, one for middle school and three at the high school level including one for social studies, one for language arts and one for advanced placement language arts. Holocaust Museum Houston loans its 100 plus trunks for periods of three to five weeks. There is no fee for the loan, and the Museum pays the cost to ship the trunk anywhere in North America for delivery to the school and pickup from the school. The Museum asks only that the school issue a letter committing to fund the replacement of any of the trunk contents that are lost during the loan. There is never a charge for wear and tear. This fall the Museum will be adding 20 Spanish language trunks. For more information and reservations: go to <http://www.hmh.org> online, email trunks@hmh.org or call Colleen LaBorde at 713 942-8000, extension 118. The Museum also provides onsite teacher training workshops upon request.

Uniondale School District's Character Education Goals

prepared by Cynthia Curtis-Seinik, Margaret McCarthy, Kathleen Nadal,
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The Uniondale, New York School District and community believe that our character education program creates a safe and positive environment for our students. Through character education, we are increasing students' social competence and reducing students' aggressive behaviors. Our school district's goal is "to build a district and school culture that is collaborative and child-centered, focusing on developing the capacity for all students to be well-rounded, achieve academically, be good citizens, and be prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Our priority is to foster character education in content areas with emphasis on social and ethical attributes and values.

We believe that behaviors can be both learned and unlearned. Through character education we can help students unlearn negative behaviors that prohibit them from being successful and learn positive behaviors that will help them succeed in their future endeavors. Our staff is constantly modeling appropriate behaviors for our students to emulate. We are relying on this transfer of learning to occur between students, educators and parents. Every single member of the Uniondale staff, from lunch aids to administrators, is trained in character education. From Kindergarten through 12th grade, we strive to increase positive social behaviors and decrease anti-social behaviors through character education in the classroom as well as during after school activities.

At Uniondale, our character education curriculum is geared to improve our students' social competence and allow these youngsters to mature into productive members of society. By increasing student's self esteem through character education, we can help deter substance abuse, gang involvement, and the likelihood of dropping out of school. As the surrogate parents to the Uniondale students, we must take the proactive approach to properly educate and constantly acknowledge the positive behaviors our children display each day.

Principles for Implementing Character Education

1. The Uniondale Union Free School District has clearly articulated its core ethical values in both its Vision and Mission Statements. Many opportunities exist for all stakeholders to voice concerns and

collaborate on solutions to the many moral issues and dilemmas facing our children today. Because of the diversity of both the district and the community itself, many attempts are made to reach out and include all members. Two examples are the Tri-Lingual Parenting Workshops conducted by social workers on parenting "Best Practices" and the Community Forum for Violence Prevention. It is through this inclusiveness that Uniondale consistently promotes its agreed upon core values as the basis for good moral character.

2. The Second Step Program for character education is used throughout the district on many grade levels. This pro-social program is used to teach social skills, anger management and problem-solving skills in order to decrease aggressive behavior. Students are exposed to social situations, brainstorm reactions, and reflect and analyze the feelings inherent in their responses. The Turtle Hook M.S. seeks to apply character to conduct by making daily announcements that tell everyone about a student's good deed and how the student demonstrated honesty. The California Avenue School monitors its Green Light Behavior program which rewards students for appropriate and consistent behavior. Special incentives are available for green light status for a month, semester and/or year. The Smith Street Elementary School recognizes students who demonstrate good character by their actions. Tasks are completed which demonstrate desirable character qualities and the student's name is then displayed on the Character Stars wall. In addition, the students who demonstrate good listening skills are rewarded. Interaction between the students and teachers help the children learn how to be good listeners. The Grand Avenue School demonstrates the connection between character and conduct by catching students committing acts of kindness.

3. The Uniondale School District strives to promote a healthy environment for both students and staff. Through many educational and extra curricular activities students learn the importance of love, respect, and general kindness towards other human beings. Programs such as Respect Day, Integration of Character Education through the Social Studies Curriculum, Rites of Passage, Social Justice Club, and

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Uniondale As Leaders aim to promote character development in all students across every grade level. For example, the district's Integration of Character Education through the Social Studies Curriculum highlights the character education principles through the use of historical events/figures and documentation in the Social Studies classroom. Another program that the district uses to enhance character is Respect Day. Commemoration of Respect Day takes place one day in October and carries on for a lifetime. On this day students and faculty are involved in an array of assemblies. Guest speakers and motivational speakers attend all district schools to promote respect, love, and understanding for all mankind.

4. The schools in the Uniondale District each have a mentoring program that pairs a caring teacher with a deserving student. Recommendations for students are made by all staff, and volunteers offer their time and attention. Activities are scheduled that bring the pair to a social gathering, to an outside community or to a crafts party. Teachers also create an environment of caring through discussions during an Advisory period in the middle schools. The theme for Turtle Hook M.S. is "We are a family business" which emphasizes caring for and helping each other. Conflict resolution is practiced in all schools using the Peer Mediation approach. Teachers are assigned times when reported conflicts are heard and then resolved. Student leaders who are trained in conflict resolution conduct these discussions. All parties then draft a resolution which is signed by all and approved by the supervising teacher.

5. Uniondale School District provides its students with effective character education by allowing all students actively to participate and make meaningful contributions regardless of their talents or abilities. Students are recognized publicly for making good ethical decisions each day. This recognition inspires them to become committed to moral and ethical actions, and gives them ample opportunities throughout the day to practice moral and ethical behavior. A number of clubs and after-school activities engage students in a number of ethical/moral based activities that allow them to make positive contributions to their community. Students learn a variety of valuable practical skills including: problem solving skills, organizing, collaborating, making inquiries, struggling with obstacles and drawbacks, etc. Recognizing a community's need empowers our students with the

realization that they can make a difference. It is a powerful approach to teaching that provides kids with authentic learning experiences in which they learn academic content in a real-life, real-world context. We also offer clubs and activities like the Social Justice Club, International Day & Dinner and Cultural Diversity Respect Assemblies that help students develop a spirit of compassion and philanthropy in children by providing them with meaningful opportunities to help people outside of the United States. Other events like Hands Across the Campus, Class of the Month, Character Stars, Unity March, and Spirit of Giving Week are organized around the development of relationships between and among students, staff, and community.

6. As students move through the maze of life, they encounter obstacles that can be beyond their control. The Uniondale School District makes a point to allow teachers and students the proper venue to express their differences in a positive and non threatening way. There are many programs in the district that promote a well balanced environment for expression and include International Night, Social Justice, Hands Across Campus, and the Leadership Training Program. International Night takes place the second Wednesday of December on the middle school level. On this night all students, staff, parents, and community members enjoy a night of cultural dancing, singing, and all the international food they eat. Another program that helps students make connections between core values and academic content is Hands Across Campus. Social Studies teachers facilitate discussions, projects, and writing assignments focused on the curriculum but geared toward Character Education.

7. The Uniondale District fosters students' motivation to moral character by issuing a Code of Conduct in each school. The disciplinary procedures require the students to write about the behavior that caused them to be cited. A discussion follows and clearly stated consequences are implemented. Opportunities for reparations are given to students usually by their teachers, who consistently reinforce positive moral character themselves. Positive reinforcement is routinely practiced by the teachers who cooperate with team members to guide disruptive students toward moral behavior. Staff training in the Second Step Program and Tolerance Workshops is offered during staff development days in the district. Best practices

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are highlighted in management settings that do not put down the student, but encourage a change in behavior and thinking.

8. All staff, administrators, teachers, custodians, security personnel and teaching assistants enthusiastically model high moral character in the way they communicate with others and conduct themselves. All staff participates in professional development for character education initiatives during release time or on special district wide staff development days. Turnkey staff members provide additional support and training whenever necessary during faculty meetings and common planning meetings. The faculty meetings and common planning times also serve as models of fellowship and collaboration for students.

9. The Uniondale School District is highly committed to character education. Though there is a district Committee on Character Education that meets for two hours each month, decisions regarding policies, programs, materials and personnel are shared with various departments. Leadership is encouraged and demonstrated from the students on the Board of Education. Classroom rules of behavior are discussed and in many cases written by the students themselves. Many opportunities exist for students to demonstrate leadership in character-related activities including food and coat drives for the needy sponsored by the Student Council, Violence Prevention Week, and Respect Day. Perhaps the most shining example of the district's commitment to foster leadership in students is its Board of Education, which now boasts a student member.

10. Uniondale School District recognizes the pivotal role that parents, families and organizations play in

providing an authentically safe place for all our children. Programs like Planning For your Child's Future, Big Brothers Big Sisters Program, and Long Island Mentoring are designed to promote personal growth, respect, good citizenship, effective and honest communication. These programs give people the chance to develop positive attitudes and responsibility as they help others in the community. We also engage families and community members as partners in the character-building effort by providing Parent Workshops, Site Based Management, Bilingual Parent Volunteer Program, and Parent Resource Center. These groups give parents opportunities to work together on solving specific problems, make improvements, enjoy special events and participate in the day to day responsibilities of being a part of the school community. As an ethnically and culturally diverse community we have many first generation American families. To connect closely with these families we send out all parent correspondences in three languages.

11. There are many ways to assess the character or positive environment of a school community. In Uniondale, year long programs are set up to enforce good behavior, promote academic achievement, and ensure the safety of all students. In this program students mediate one another before a serious problem arises. In addition, on the high school level before students begin the school year the Jump Start program is offered to help at-risk 9th grade students receive summer training to prepare for success on the high school level. Another program that benefits Uniondale pupils is Check-in, this period 1 class is designed for most at-risk 9th graders. They are mentored and counseled to succeed during periods 2 through 9 in a mainstream class setting.

Character Education at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

Source: http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/education/units/content/character_education.htm#TOP

Lou Gehrig was born to German immigrants in New York City in 1903. His parents thought games and sports were a waste of time, but Lou loved to play baseball. Despite their objections, Lou left college to play for the New York Yankees. For 14 years, Lou played in 2,130 consecutive games, enduring many injuries and illnesses. The boy who never missed a day of grade school became a man who never missed a game. He was an outstanding teammate, a man of profound character, and one of the great heroes of the game. In 1938, Lou suddenly and inexplicably lost his ability to play ball. Doctors later diagnosed him with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), a deadly disease that affects the central nervous system. Lou had to leave baseball, and the Yankees retired his uniform number. In a farewell speech on July 4, 1939, Lou said he was the “luckiest man on the face of the earth.” That same year, in a special election, he was voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. In 1941, Lou died of ALS at the age of 37. The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum website includes a thematic unit based on Gehrig’s life. It focuses on character attributes such as perseverance, courage, humility, grace, selflessness, respect, self-discipline, leadership, sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty and citizenship.

Lou Gehrig – The Iron Horse: A Play

ACT I: “Bullies”

Narrator: Lou’s parents moved from Germany to America, where they struggled to earn a living. When Lou was a boy, World War I started in Europe. Later, America joined the war and Germany was our enemy. Although Lou was born in New York, he was picked on because his family was considered German. Lou was a big, strong boy, but he was shy, and usually didn’t say too much. This scene is based on situations Lou encountered in school.

Bully #1: Hey, there’s Gehrig. Let’s get him! (Bullies rush over to Lou)

Bully #2: We’re gonna beat you up, Gehrig.

Lou: I haven’t done anything to you.

Bully #3: You’re a dirty Hun, Gehrig.

Lou: I’m from New York, just like you.

Bully #1: Your parents are German, and you’re a German spy.

Lou: I’m just a kid.

Bully #2: You’re a rotten skunk, and we’re gonna knock you around. (Lou steps toward bullies)

Lou: Don’t make me fight you.

Bully #3: Aw, forget it, guys. He’s not gonna fight. (Bullies leave)

ACT II: “The Scout”

Narrator: After high school, Lou entered Columbia University in New York. In this scene, Paul Kritchell, a scout for the New York Yankees, goes to speak to Lou.

Kritchell: I’m Paul Kritchell. I scout for the Yankees.

Lou: Hello, Mr. Kritchell

Kritchell: You’re a good player with a lot of power.

Lou: Thank you, sir. It’s nice of you to say so.

Kritchell: Would you be interested in playing for the New York Yankees, Lou?

Lou: Gee, Mr. Kritchell, I’d really like that, but I’d need to talk to my parents and think it over.

Kritchell: OK, Lou, do that. We’d offer you a contract for the year, and bonus money for signing up.

Narrator: Lou’s mother wanted Lou to finish college, but the family was poor, so Lou signed with the Yankees.

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ACT III: “Beaned”

Narrator: During an exhibition game in Virginia in 1934, Lou was hit in the head by a pitch and knocked out. In this scene, Lou talks to his doctor.

Doctor: Lou, you were knocked unconscious by a pitch to your head.

Lou: I sure have a bad headache, Doc.

Doctor: Well, you were hit hard, and it gave you a concussion.

Lou: My team has a game in Washington tomorrow. I need to play.

Doctor: You’d feel a lot better if you stayed in the hospital for a few days.

Lou: My team depends on me, Doc.

ACT IV: “Lou Rejoins the Team”

Narrator: Lou left the hospital and went to meet his teammates in Washington. In this next scene, Lou gets to the ballpark and goes to his manager, Joe McCarthy.

Joe: Lou, what are you doing here? You’re supposed to be in the hospital.

Lou: I came to play, Joe.

Joe: But Lou, you were hurt. You need to rest.

Lou: I can’t let the team down, Joe.

Joe: You’re my best player, Lou. If you want to play, I won’t stop you.

Narrator: Lou hit three triples in four and a half innings. But then it rained so hard they had to cancel the game, and none of his triples counted.

ACT V: “Records”

Narrator: Lou set a famous record by playing in 2,130 consecutive games. That record was finally broken in 1995 by Cal Ripken Jr.

Friend #1: Lou, you were a great home run hitter. You were the first American League player to hit four homers in one game, and you hit 23 grand slam home runs in your career, more than anyone in history.

Lou: It’s nice of you to mention it. I’ve been very lucky in my career.

Friend #2: In the 1931 season, you set the American League record for “runs batted in.” And in 1934 you won baseball’s Triple Crown. Only a few players have ever done that.

Lou: My teammates helped a lot, and I had a wonderful manager.

Friend #3: Lou, you haven’t missed a ball game for over 13 years. They call you The Iron Horse. Even though you broke every finger on both hands at least once, you kept playing.

Lou: Playing is my job. I just go out every day and do my best.

ACT V: “Retirement”

Narrator: When the 1939 season got under way, Lou was really struggling on the field. He looked awkward, even stumbling at times. But Lou was team captain and had played in every Yankee game since June, 1925. His manager refused to take him out of the lineup. By the end of April, Lou knew what he had to do. In this scene, Lou goes to see his manager, Joe McCarthy.

Lou: I’m benching myself, Joe. I’m taking myself out of the lineup.

Joe: Why, Lou?

Lou: For the good of the team. I’m not helping my teammates any more. The time has come for me to quit.

Joe: You don’t have to quit, Lou. Take a rest and then maybe you’ll feel better again.

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ACT VI: “Doctors”

Narrator: On May 2, 1939, in Detroit, Lou’s playing streak came to an end. The Iron Horse had worn down. Even though he wasn’t playing, Lou traveled with the team, giving support to the other players, but he wasn’t feeling well.

Eleanor: Lou, it’s been a month since you stopped playing, but you’re not feeling any better.

Lou: I know, Eleanor.

Eleanor: You have to find out what’s wrong with you.

Lou: I guess you’re right.

Eleanor: I made an appointment for you at the Mayo Clinic, Lou.

Lou: All right, Eleanor, thanks for looking out for me.

ACT VII: “Yankee Stadium”

Narrator: Lou went to the Mayo Clinic, a famous hospital, for medical tests. The doctors found that he had a disease called “Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis,” or ALS. It’s a disease which weakens your muscles. There was no cure then and there still is no cure today. On the Fourth of July, 1939, they held Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day at Yankee Stadium. Lou was honored by his team, family, famous dignitaries, and about 62,000 fans. With tears in his eyes, Lou expressed appreciation for the people in his life. Here is part of his speech:

Lou: Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about the bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.

ACT VIII: “Life After Baseball”

Narrator: After Lou retired from baseball, he was offered different jobs, including one by Mayor LaGuardia of New York City. In this scene, Lou talks to Mayor LaGuardia.

Mayor: Lou, I’d like you to come work for the city of New York.

Lou: What would I do, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: You’d serve on the Parole Commission. You’d help young people who have gotten into trouble.

Lou: I wish I could, sir, but I’m not trained for that kind of job.

Mayor: You would do a great job. All you need is common sense, Lou, and you have plenty of that.

Lou: All right, Mr. Mayor, I’d like to help others if I can.

Narrator: So Lou worked hard for the city until his ALS made it impossible to continue. Lou died on June 6, 1941 at the age of 37.

Sometimes Character Education Lacks Character

by John Staudt

The movement to incorporate character education into the school curriculum includes some excellent goals. Foremost among them are promoting the role of teacher as mentor and educating students to respect others as well as themselves. However, recent proposals contain several substantial shortcomings.

The current round of character development initiatives in public schools began in the early 1990s as a response to the belief of a number of education reformers that modern American society is in deep moral trouble. The character reform movement solidified with the creation of the Character Education Partnership (CEP) founded in 1993. Advocates for making character education a top priority in public schools based their position on perceptions that family units were breaking down, there was a demise in civility among members of the general population, a pervasive and perverted sexual culture, excessive greed, and a rise in violence in schools and on the streets.

According to character reformers, these problems are largely a result of the promotion of logical positivism which had its roots in early twentieth-century Darwinism. The problem was compounded, when society entered a state of perpetual flux in its moral laws due to the wide-spread belief since the 1960s in the supremacy of individualized "value judgments." They blame the turmoil of the sixties and seventies for a value system that tosses aside civic responsibilities and emphasizes the Jeffersonian principles of individual freedoms and rights.

Complex and Troubled Society

The CEP argues that the only way to save young people from the great uncertainties in a "complex and troubled society" is by molding them into upstanding citizens based on the eleven character education principles they designed. They believe the vast majority of Americans share a respect for these fundamental traits of character (The CEP's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education are available on-line at <http://www.character.org>).

The general sentiments of the CEP, that students should be taught that all people, including themselves, have worth and something to contribute to society, are admirable on the surface. However, there are

fundamental flaws in the CEP's approach to character education. First, the idea that their eleven specific principles or core ethical values make up the basis of good character should be approached with skepticism. The idea that there are eleven specific principles severely limits some of the key characteristics that have long been the greatest strengths of American society. Missing are the ideas of equality and diversity of the people and the safeguarding of individual liberties.

Secondly, the CEP's program contradicts itself in several instances. For example, one of the leading scholars of the CEP's program, Thomas Lickona, has argued schools have to teach the values children are not receiving at home. But by Lickona's own admission, instruction in morality and character is not something that can be taught on the academic level alone. It is not like a baseball cap that can be taken on and off or left in a gym locker. It must include thinking, feeling, and behavior, which must be reinforced at all times in all places until it becomes a reflex of the student.

If the community and parents are not a critical part of the equation to reinforce specific principles or if family ideals of morality and character differ from any of the CEP's ideals, the whole program will fail. It may divide children, pit them against their parents, and even turn neighbor against neighbor. The idea that there is one moral code overlooks some crucial elements of what can be judged as good character by almost anyone, including tolerance, acceptance, and the absence of judging one another.

I fear that in the end, the scenario presented in the CEP's idea of specific principles will lead not to the adoption of the best possible set of values but rather, as occurred in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s, to the implementation of the principles of those who are the most ruthless.

From 1998-2003, I taught 11th grade honors classes in a Catholic high school, an experience which often exposed me to some incongruous situations concerning character education. The school's main emphasis was on religious morality as defined by the Roman Catholic Church. Instruction in this area was conveyed to the students through two main venues, Catholic religious services and religious education

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classes. The great majority of students were Roman Catholic. Although religious diversity was minimal there was a considerable mix in the ethnic and racial background of the student body. For the most part, students responded well to the religious education they received and were active participants in the spiritual life of the school.

As part of the school's religious approach to character education, teachers were required to have their students reflect, meditate or pray before each class session began. In most cases this was perfunctory. Many teachers had the class say a quick "Our Father" or "Hail Mary" before putting the day's "Do Now" up on the board. Other teachers took this more seriously and would have the students listen to long passages from books issued to them by the administration. In an effort to keep my classes pertinent and student-centered, I allowed the members of my classes to bring in a music CD, passages from books or for those who were motivated enough, prayers that they themselves had written. Overall, the students were very responsible and appreciated their involvement in the pre-lesson activities.

Discussion was Forbidden

The school followed the Church's rulings on issues such as its right to life/anti-abortion. Time and again I was told by my senior colleagues that discussion of certain topics were forbidden outside of the approved curriculum of religion/morality classes. I often ignored such warnings, shut my classroom door and discussed whatever topic I believed was important to the curriculum and for the students to discuss. At times, I would catch a school administrator lurking around my closed door and would invite the person to come into my room and have a seat. My invitation was usually declined. One of the most effective ways I was able to maintain a sense of academic freedom in the classroom was to volunteer to produce the standardized grade-wide exams given at the end of each trimester. This was a lot of work, 200-250 multiple choice questions and three out of four essays. I thought it worth the effort as long as it helped me teach what I wanted to get across and the other teachers were happy enough to let me do the work. Although the exams had to be submitted for administrative approval, the academic dean was a mathematician who had little interest in history and I don't believe really looked over the exam closely for content.

The school's approach to character education outside of the teachings of the official Church was summed up in an acronym the administration titled C.O.R. (Civility, Order, Respect). Although there was a certain degree of civility and respect in the school, over everything else, the "O" for order was emphasized. There were some positive aspects to this; discipline was tight and the children were very safe. Uniforms and the secluded location of the school reinforced a sense of physical well-being. I broke up one fight in five years. Nevertheless, the emphasis on order was stifling to both student and teacher creativity. From uniforms, to the way students stood in line, to the way teachers taught and a dozen other issues, the emphasis was on automation, keeping order.

Most teachers followed the company policy. A great majority of the faculty were graduates of the school or alumni from another Catholic high school in the area. This led to an inbred culture in which few people questioned openly the goings on of the administration. It was amazing how many teachers bought into the corporate culture sincerely or at least said they did publicly.

The administration was comprised mostly of religious brothers and priests with a sprinkling of lay people. Except for one or two, I found them to be stuffed shirts, hypocrites and sycophants. Because it was a non-union school, the few brave teachers I found there did not have a leg to stand on.

Over the years I taught in the school I tried the best I could to create an environment that was relaxed and respectful of my students' value as human beings and their ability to make responsible judgments at 17 and 18 years of age. I was no push over and they worked hard for me and themselves. Everyone knew where I drew the line in my class room and abided by it. They sincerely loved and respected me for that and often told me so in so many words. They knew I was looking out for them and in turn they had my back. However, the last two years of my tenure there I knew I could not last much longer.

There was serious concern at this school with character education. Nonetheless, actions often speak louder than words. There were too many things the school did that were outright wrong and downright stifling of the student's individuality, creativity and overall development as unbiased, thoughtful human beings.

Concerns about Character Education

by Alan Singer and Judith Kaufman

Alan Singer (catajs@hofstra.edu) and Judith Kaufman (catjsk@hofstra.edu) are teacher educators at Hofstra University. They are willing to discuss their views on character education with school districts, administrators, teachers, parents and students.

In the 2004 Presidential election, many Americans claimed that they cast their ballot because of moral concerns. They argued that traditional American values had to be protected and the nation's character revitalized. Overwhelmingly, the people who took this position voted to reelect President George W. Bush. They did this despite the fact that he had continually misled the American public about ties between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 and the existence of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq.

We believe their supposed support for "morality," "traditional values" and "character" were actually used to justify fear of people who are different from them, especially Muslims, non-White American minority groups, and homosexuals, and efforts to force a particular set of religious beliefs on other people. Their political agenda includes government funding of religious initiatives, banning gay families, ending reproductive freedom, limiting scientific research, and virtually criminalizing sex outside of marriage. In education, they support a pedagogy of preaching and oppression. Their idea of character building and teaching is to control young people with constant jeremiads against sin, peons to patriotism, a curriculum that stresses factual recall instead of critical thinking, and waves and waves of standardized testing.

If this is character education, we want no part of it!

Concerns about character and character education are not new. In the 5th century BC, Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher wrote that "Man's character is his fate." In the nineteenth century, Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevski advised, "It is not the brains that matter most, but that which guides them – the character, the heart, generous qualities, progressive ideas."

Herbert Spenser, one of the leading 19th century proponents of Social Darwinism argued that "Education has for its object the formation of character." In his 1963 speech in Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr. asked that his children be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the "content of their character."

Perhaps the most famous discussion of character in the western literary canon remains the words Shakespeare has Polonius offer to his son in Hamlet: "And these few precepts in thy memory Look thou character. . . . This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Among contemporary educators, there is virtually uniform support for some form of character education in schools, but there are serious questions about what educators can and should do. What exactly do we mean by character? Is it inborn, learned or an act of will? Is character universal or dependent on cultural contexts?

Can Character Be Taught in Schools?

Is character something that can best be taught in schools? If it can be taught, how do we do it? Is the job of the school to help students evaluate what they already believe, introduce them to a variety of ideas and values, or to present them with one system of true beliefs? Are there simple solutions to the problem of character development such as espousal of individual virtues or is the development of character in young people a much more complex process.

Thomas Lickona, who writes widely on character education, has defined character as "reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way" and suggested that the decline of American youth is the result of a decline of the family and troubling trends in youth character ("The Return of Character Education," *Educational Leadership*, 51 (3), 6-11). He believes "There are rationally grounded, non-relative, objectively worthwhile moral values" including "respect for human life, liberty, the inherent value of every individual person, and the consequent responsibility to care for each other and carry out our basic obligations" and argues that "These objectively worthwhile values demand that we treat as MORALLY WRONG any action by any individual, group, or state that violates these basic moral values."

Thomas Lickona argues that the content of good character involves leading a virtuous life based on ten essential virtues that are "intrinsically good" and "have

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a claim on our conscience.” They are Wisdom, Justice, Fortitude, Self-Control, Love, Positive Attitude, Hard Work, Integrity, Gratitude, and Humility.

On the face of it, these “virtues” are laudatory, but there is an underlying message that needs to be carefully examined. In Lickona’s world view, good character is universal, devoid of historical or cultural context, and requires an act of individual will. Community-building, caring for others, democratic decision-making, the encouraging of cultural diversity rather than toleration, advocacy, activism and citizenship, all aspects of New York, New Jersey and NCSS Social Studies standards, are missing from his essential virtues and curriculum.

Lickona’s second virtue is “justice,” which he equates with the Judeo-Christian Golden Rule, “treat other persons as we wish to be treated.” But if an individual or society chooses to be treated in a particular way, sexually repressed, politically silenced, required to be obedient to authority, does that mean that the person or society has a right to force their preferences and values on others?

Lickona’s third virtue is “fortitude.” He blames teen suicide on a failure of individuals to accept disappointment, rather than injustice or the failure of our society to provide emotional support for young people and health care for the mentally ill.

The virtue that concerns us the most is “self-control,” which Lickona describes as the need to “regulate our sensual appetites and passions” and “the power to resist temptation, to wait, and to delay gratification.” In writing on sex education, Lickona argues that his goal of espousing respect and responsibility means the focus must be on abstinence from sex out of wedlock. For Lickona, sex is an extremely risky activity; it puts physical, mental, psychological, and emotional health in jeopardy, not to mention its effects on one’s future and one’s relationship. Students need to be educated on the responsibilities that are attached to a sexual relationship. When you respect someone, you want what is best for them, and when you understand the responsibilities involved with sex, the choice, for Mr. Lickona, seems clear. Because of this he is part of The Heritage programs that teaches adolescents the risks and negative consequences associated with having sex outside of marriage. The programs include pro-abstinence resources to be used by significant adults and peers in the adolescents’ environments. These resources are designed to help adults and peers direct

adolescents to abstain from (heterosexual and homosexual) sex outside of marriage.

On the website of the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (www.cortland.edu/www/c4n5rs), Lickona explains a “Character-Based Approach to Sex Education.” School districts should be familiar with this explanation of his program before adopting it.

According to Lickona, “Sex education that doesn’t send a clear abstinence message can be a green light for sexual activity.” He explains, “No discussion of moral and character education can exclude sex education. More young people, I believe, are at risk from the destructive consequences of premature, uncommitted sex than from any other single threat to their healthy physical, emotional, and moral development. To consider just one dimension of the physical dangers: In the United States, according to the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, about a third of sexually active teenage girls are now infected with human papilloma virus (the leading cause of cervical cancer) and/or chlamydia (the leading cause of infertility). Recent medical studies show that condoms provide virtually no protection against either human papilloma virus or chlamydia. Unfortunately, our children are growing up in what Boston University’s Kevin Ryan calls a “sexually toxic” environment. This environment trivializes and debases sex and leads young people into patterns of short-lived sexual relationships that undermine their self-respect and corrupt their character. There is fortunately now a growing effort to bring sex education into line with the principles of good character education. That means adopting an approach to sex education that develops character traits of good judgment and self-control, and guides young people toward morally sound conclusions about how to apply the values of respect and responsibility to sexual behavior. And this means helping students understand all the reasons why sexual abstinence is the only medically safe and morally responsible choice for an unmarried teenager.”

Does Abstinence Until Marriage Make Sense?

Abstinence until marriage may have made sense in some societies in the historical past. People lacked effective birth control; they married considerably younger; lived short lives; and resided in agricultural communities that needed children as unskilled labor. Abstinence from pre-marital sex was also the only way to ensure the inheritance of property by certified heirs in a male-dominated patriarchal society. However, it

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makes much less sense in a post-industrial world where people have effective birth control, live significantly longer lives and where both males and females need to postpone marriage and child-rearing until after they complete complex vocational and professional training.

A 2004 study by the Network on Transitions to Adulthood at the University of Pennsylvania (http://www.innovations-report.com/html/reports/social_sciences/report-24700.html) reported that “In the industrialized economy of the first half of the 20th century, most men were able to attain such [financial] independence by age 20. As the economy shifted, young men, and increasingly young women, have had to gain the education and skills necessary for an increasingly technical and information-based market. As a result, 25 year-old men in all [demographic] groups are more likely to remain single and childless.” Women, the study found, are increasing “postponing marriage, but not necessarily motherhood, until after age 30.”

Historically, abstinence was a value honored more in the breach than in the practice in the western world. Many well-known individuals, including Moses, King Solomon, Aristotle, John the Baptist, Charlemagne, Charles Martel, William the Conqueror, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, Martin Luther, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington Carver, and Oprah Winfrey were probably born out-of-wedlock. Galileo, Thomas Jefferson, and most of the Kings of England had children outside of marriage. In most of pre-modern, Christian, European history, marriage was a sacrament reserved for the propertied class. In Sweden in the 1850s, half of births were to unmarried women (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A872408>). In colonial Puritan New England, people were never as “pure” as they are presented in social studies classes. In the 18th century, scarcity of available land forced young men and women to postpone marriage. Evidence gathered from marriage and baptismal records shows that in some towns between one-third and half of the newly wedded women gave birth “prematurely,” which suggests that young couples had not postponed sexual activity.

The Center for the 4th and 5th Rs website also contains Lickona’s views on masturbation and homosexuality. According to Lickona, “‘Expert’ advice regarding masturbation has swung between extremes—from doctors in the 19th century attributing various diseases and even insanity to this habit, to recommendations by some 20th century sex educators

encouraging the young to masturbate as a healthy way to “explore their sexuality” and as a safe alternative to intercourse. Many parents, however, without resorting to scare tactics, wish to gently but firmly help their children resist this temptation. For some parents, the reason may be religious—their belief that sex is meant by God to be relational, an expression of love between two persons. “The problem with masturbation,” as one father explained to his 13-year-old son, “is that it’s having sex with yourself.” Apart from religion, there are also psychological considerations: Once it becomes a habit, masturbation is hard to stop and may lessen a young person’s feelings of self-respect. Many teens use masturbation as a way to escape emotions of anxiety and depression, and end up feeling worse because the problem is still there. Carried into marriage, the habit of masturbation can weaken the attraction between husband and wife and cause problems in their sexual relationship.”

Don’t Count on Abstinence (4/13/05)

Source: National Post (Ottawa, Canada), A18

According to a 2002 Canadian study, the pregnancy rate for U.S. teenagers enrolled in abstinence-only education programs is higher than for students who take part in programs that include sex education. More than 2.5 million teenagers participate in an Arizona abstinence-only program called the “Silver Ring Thing.” These students wear rings symbolizing their commitment to pre-marital chastity. More than 90% of them break their pledge, STD rates for pledgers and non-pledgers are about the same and the pre-marital pregnancy rate for pledgers is actually higher.

Lickona explains that “There is no scientific consensus about the factors influencing sexual orientation. Possible factors include genetic disposition, family relationships, peer relationships, and one’s sexual experiences.” Columbia University researchers William Byrne and Bruce Parsons reviewed 135 studies on sexual orientation and concluded: “There is no evidence at present to substantiate a biological [genetic] theory, just as there is no evidence to support any single psychological explanation.” Some young people are unsure of their sexual orientation in their early teens. By adulthood, however, only about 2% of the population self-identify as homosexual. Several studies have found a significantly higher risk of attempted suicide among teens who identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual. For each year’s delay in

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bisexual or homosexual self-identification, however, the odds of a suicide attempt diminish significantly. Higher rates of depression and other psychological problems have been found among adults who report “some homosexual experience in the past twelve months” even in a country such as the Netherlands, where social attitudes are more accepting of homosexual relationships and same-sex couples have the legal right to marry. In February, 2003, the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* reported a study of 103 pairs of twins, one of whom was homosexually active and the other not; the twin who was homosexually active was over five times more likely to experience suicidal symptoms.

If your child thinks he or she may have a homosexual orientation, above all you want to maintain a loving relationship. You can do this without necessarily approving homosexual activity. For example, parents whose moral or religious beliefs do not approve homosexual sex can stress the distinction between having an attraction to the same sex and acting on it sexually. If you do not have moral or religious objections to homosexual activity, you will still want to strongly encourage your child to practice abstinence to avoid the physical and psychological dangers of uncommitted sexual activity. The risks of homosexual activity are even greater than those of heterosexual activity. Homosexually active males have been found to be at greater risk for HIV, hepatitis, gonorrhea, anal cancer, and gastrointestinal infections. Homosexually active females (the great majority of whom, at some point, also have sex with men) have been found to be at greater risk for bacterial vaginosis, Hepatitis B and C,

and having sex with men who are high-risk for HIV. If your child experiences a homosexual attraction, it’s wise to seek competent professional counseling from someone whose values and beliefs are consistent with your own.”

We believe the problems of youth are more directly related to the conditions of their lives than to an absence of moral values. We believe that the function of education in a democratic society is to promote critical thinking, not to transmit a particular set of moral values. The fact that Thomas Lickona disagrees with what they teach does not mean that parents, communities, and religious institutions have abandoned their responsibilities. We agree with Mr. Lickona that there is “significant disagreement on the application of some of these values to certain controversial issues” and prefer an open discussion on these disagreements to the imposition of a mythical “common ground.”

We believe character education should involve students in an open discussion of human sexuality as a normal biological process and its impact on their emotional and physical health. But we reject Mr. Lickona’s effort to impose his religious beliefs in the guise of character education. Sex education programs that are limited to abstinence condemn young people to ignorance, disease, unwanted pregnancies, secret and destructive relationships, guilt and isolation from the adults they need for guidance and support.

The point of honoring values, the most important goal of character education, is to respect that people have different value systems. By trying to enforce their own views of morality, Dr. Lickona and many advocates for character education fail the “character test.”

President Bush Discusses American Character in his 2nd Inaugural Address

“In America’s ideal of freedom, the public interest depends on private character -- on integrity and tolerance toward others and the rule of conscience in our own lives. Self-government relies, in the end, on the governing of the self. That edifice of character is built in families, supported by communities with standards, and sustained in our national life by the truths of Sinai, the Sermon on the Mount, the words of the Koran and the varied faiths of our people. Americans move forward in every generation by reaffirming all that is good and true that came before -- ideals of justice and conduct that are the same yesterday, today and forever. In America’s ideal of freedom, the exercise of rights is ennobled by service and mercy and a heart for the weak. Liberty for all does not mean independence from one another. Our nation relies on men and women who look after a neighbor and surround the lost with love.”

“Americans, at our best, value the life we see in one another and must always remember that even the unwanted have worth. And our country must abandon all the habits of racism because we cannot carry the message of freedom and the baggage of bigotry at the same time. From the perspective of a single day, including this day of dedication, the issues and questions before our country are many. From the viewpoint of centuries, the questions that come to us are narrowed and few. Did our generation advance the cause of freedom? And did our character bring credit to that cause?”

A Personal View of Family, Character and Morality

by Jessica Trubek

All people have multiple identities. Among my identities, I am a teacher educator, a former social studies teacher, a parent and a lesbian. For a character education program in schools to be worthwhile, it must place its highest priority on teaching children to respect the full range of human diversity. There has to be an environment in schools that embraces everybody. A character education program must create space so that people like me, children like my daughter, and other children from what are considered non-traditional families, are welcomed and valued, not just tolerated, and certainly never forced into silence about who they are.

People who view my sexual orientation and my way of life as immoral, as something to be hidden away, do not know me and my family. If they got to know us, they would realize that we are just like everyone else except our family has two moms.

I am open about my sexual orientation with my teacher education students. My partner and I work in the same university and my students know her as well. We also live near the university and I have brought my daughter to class. Some people believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible and think that homosexuality is sinful behavior condemned by God. I have students who are religious. I find that when they come to know me as a person, it complicates their thinking and forces them to reconsider assumptions about what is normal and acceptable human behavior.

For teachers who work with younger children, the situation can be more complicated. They need to make individual judgements about whether to publicly identify their sexual orientation. It depends on the community where they teach and what is appropriate in their classrooms. In general, I think it is important to be open because it helps to develop an environment for kids, teachers and parents where everyone feels included. I think openness and honesty should always be part of a character education program.

I would not send my daughter to a school where teachers were afraid to talk about homosexuality and gay parents. I do not want her to have to live her life with a secret or to be ashamed of her family. There will always be students who have parents like me and my partner or who are starting to think about their own sexuality as they approach adolescence. A teacher who really cares about all students would feel compelled to

address the issue in an inclusive fashion, no matter what her or his private religious beliefs. Exploring human diversity and learning to know and respect people should be the basic goal of any character education program.

I have arrived at these conclusions after years of trying to understand who I was as a person. I think discussing my personal odyssey may be useful to help teachers understand why character education programs should teach children to respect the full range of human diversity.

Discovering Difference and Identity

When I was about eleven years old I started to feel that I was different from the other girls at school. I was interested in boys, but not exactly the same way that they were. I had no one to talk about this with as a teenager. I did not even have the language to articulate what I was feeling. I could not talk to my parents about my feelings, even though they were very progressive. I might have been able to speak with them if I was able to figure out what was going on with me, but I kept my feelings deep inside. My mother noticed that I was not dating boys but I don't think she had any concept that maybe I was interested in girls.

In high school, I joined some of the other girls in a group that baked cookies and cakes for the athletes. We were called the "Little Sisters." I think I did this to overcompensate for how I actually felt. My friends were really into boys and some of them were sexually active. Some were drinking and smoking pot, but I did not participate because I felt so unsafe about who I was. I am sure there were other gay and lesbian students in my high school, but I did not know them. I had a secret life that was so secret, I was not consciously aware of it.

It has been a very long process of self-discovery for me. I tried to be with men but it was never really right for me. When I was thirty-six, I met the woman who became my life partner and I was finally able to publicly acknowledge an important part of who I am. My sister lives in Vermont and we went there the first year they permitted civil unions for gay couples. My sister's best friend, the justice of peace in the town performed the ceremony. We also wanted to affirm our relationship with our families and friends so we had a big party when we came home.

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We talked about starting our own family and either having a child biologically or adopting one. We started meeting more and more gay and straight couples with children and decided to adopt a child internationally because there seemed to be so many children who needed a family.

I think a lot about what the impact of having lesbian parents will be on our daughter, who is now two years old. I know a lot of families with two moms or two dads and having a father and mother is not necessarily better for a child. It depends on the relationships within the family. Some of the local kids say she is lucky that she has two moms. I think the loving relationship in our family will be very positive for her. The hard thing will be the rest of the world so we will try to prepare her as best we can. She is Latina, so she will also have to face other prejudices. I hope the strength of our family will give her powerful tools for life and a broader perspective on the world.

Eventually our daughter will date and explore her own sexuality. Research on children of gay parents says they are not more likely to be gay than other people, but they are more likely to be open about issues of sexuality because they have had to exposure different alternatives. When she is ready to date, I will listen to what she wants. I will follow her lead and discuss her options.

Before I openly acknowledged my sexual orientation, I always felt that something was wrong with me. Now that I have my own family, things have all finally come together for me. For me, it is a joyful thing to be a lesbian and a mom and to live my life openly. My hope is that people in our society will eventually come to know the people they feel are different and with whom they are uncomfortable. A character education program that makes this possible does children a great service.

Teachers Join the Discussion About Character Education

Douglas Cioffi, Kellenberg High School, Uniondale, NY: I feel that character education is vital in today's society. The moral fiber of our country is declining rapidly. While I feel it is a bit absurd to blame the violence and sexuality depicted on the big screen as the number one factor for the moral "epidemic" sweeping the country, I think Lickona is correct in most of his arguments. The virtues of Wisdom, Justice, Fortitude, Self-Control, Love, Positive Attitude, Hard Work, Integrity, Gratitude, and Humility should be stressed in schools. It would be hard to find someone to argue against possessing these qualities. Community-building, caring for others, democratic decision-making, and encouraging cultural diversity should also be included in a Character Education curriculum. Is it not possible to use Lickona's virtues to achieve Singer's and Kaufman's goals? One of the adages that my school adheres to is C.O.R. (Civility, Order, Respect). This is an important guideline that students must follow to be an vital part of the school community. Students are told time and time again of the importance of possessing these three qualities and it seems to work in a positive way. Students believe it, follow it and live it. I do not feel that the school is "imposing" anything on the students that they would not need to have anyway.

John Boland, Point Pleasant Beach (NJ) HS (President, NJCSS): Social studies teachers should be teaching civics education and civic responsibility. As part of that, we need to be role models for students to reinforce the values of our society. This has to be done both implicitly and explicitly. The schools have a mission to prepare our students for the future and that means helping to develop their character. However, we should not be teaching morals in place of parents. There is a fine line that has to be respected. With the breakdown in the traditional family we have to be careful to support parents, not replace them.

Nancy Shakir, Social Studies Supervisor, Orange, New Jersey School District: Social studies teachers have always taught character education. I think it is our responsibility. When we teach about other cultures and democracy in the United States, we are discussing the character of America as a democratic society. To me, character education is basically about teaching citizenship, good behavior, how to participate in the democratic process, helping others, and respecting property. However, students have a right to their own values. These must remain personal and should not be prescribed by schools. We should not be teaching religion or a particular philosophy. I am not willing to present the doctrine of a particular group of people, as if it were the truth.

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Spring Banks, Social Studies/English Supervisor, Essex County (NJ) Vocational-Technical Schools: Character education is the responsibility of all educators, not just social studies teachers. We need to prepare young people to act ethically and to be free thinkers. However, teachers have to be sensitive to concerns of parents and careful to gear instruction so it is age-appropriate. We should not impose our own morality on students.

Sherry Gibbon, former teacher, Penn Yan (NY) Central HS (Pres. Elect, NYSCSS): For me, character education is the basis for good citizenship. Social studies teachers are responsible for preparing citizens who will be shaping the future. What more logical a place is there to focus on character development than a curriculum that examines the evolution of societies, cultures and civilizations? I am concerned that because of No Child Left Behind mandates, schools are paying less attention to social studies. I worry about the future because this will mean less attention to teaching about who we are and how we came to be as a nation. When this happens we lose the opportunity to teach about what it means to be a good citizen in a participatory democracy. With this loss, the issue of character education becomes moot.

Deborah Doolittle, Grover Middle School, West Windsor, NJ: As a U.S. history teacher, I have a responsibility to teach civic responsibility to students, such as voting and thinking about and discussing issues. Middle school students are just starting to think about many important things. In my class, I let students bring up topics that they want to talk about. I acknowledge their views on controversial issues, try to clarify disagreements and do not tell them if I think they are right or wrong. I teach them not to discount someone else's point of view and they must present their ideas without using inflammatory language.

Diane Maier, Long Beach (NY) Middle School: One of the main purposes of social studies is to teach our children to understand and tolerate differences that exist amongst people. Every day we are faced with the difficult task of presenting different cultures and beliefs to our students in ways they can appreciate. During these discussions we often run into the predicament of students biases judging these people based on their own morals and beliefs. This is where character education comes into play. It is our job to

teach these students to open their minds to diverse beliefs. We must teach our students that although they may not agree with the views and beliefs of others we should try to understand, accept, or at least tolerate them. I believe that we need to teach character education through respect. If our students learn to empathize with other people, and respect their beliefs then I think we have developed healthy citizens. My personal views have no bearing on my students' lives. They need to be taught to weigh their choices and make a decision that they feel is good for their lives, not mine. As long as they are doing their best, and not hurting anyone or themselves than I think we have the basis for a very successful generation.

David DeCrescenzi, Sparta (NJ) High School: I teach ninth grade World history and 12th grade sociology. My job is to be a facilitator to get students to present their views. When you teach character education, there is a dilemma. Whose morals should you be teaching? Many topics are religious in origin and are better left at home. Families need to discuss these issues with teenagers, not their social studies teachers. In school, we should limit ourselves to addressing general topics such as honesty and respect.

Kerry Schaefer, MacArthur High School, Levittown, NY: The United States is the most violent industrial nation. At the same time, the ever-expanding American empire is spreading American values throughout the world. While it may be extreme to teach a Biblical version of character and morality, something must be done in American classrooms. A first step could be to teach ethics instead of morals. The idea of ethics covers more ground and is less controversial. Besides teaching social studies, we have a role in shaping human beings so they function ethically in society. This involves knowledge of laws and the consequences for not adhering to them. Part of ethical development is recognizing when a law is unjust. There are two ways to cope with an unjust law. One solution is to disobey it, while realizing and accepting the consequences. Another solution is to work to change laws. On the other hand, I strongly believe that teachers should not espouse their views on the moral beliefs and decisions of other people. We are the prisoners of our own biases and many, if not all of us, engage in practices that some people would consider immoral.

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Jennifer Tomm DiPasquale, Social Studies Lead Teacher, grades 3 through 6, Rochester, NY:

Although character education is not the primary focus of education, it absolutely has a place in our schools. For many children, schools are the primary place where they are exposed to important values. Our district has a character education program in every elementary school. Each month teachers focus on a different value, such as responsibility, trust and honesty. One problem in the schools is that there are many time pressures on teachers. At the beginning of the school year teachers tend to be more gung-ho about addressing these topics in class.

Mitch Bickman, Oceanside (NY) High School: It is almost impossible to teach without indirect character education, due to our own values, which may influence our view of others and unconsciously shape the way we teach and relate to others. Finding the right balance between these issues is the true challenge when we enter the classroom. Although we might not dedicate specific units or even lessons to character education, we must strive to ensure that students leave our class with the skills and reasoning (perhaps, moral reasoning if needed) necessary to succeed in the world.

Danielle Mazzo, Wisdom Lane MS, Levittown, NY: My belief is that, as a social studies teacher, my obligation to my students goes far beyond what Lickona sees as promotion of living a virtuous life. Social studies education includes a more active approach to character development. In preparing our students to enter a democratic society, I believe that our job is to expose our students to, and encourage, cultural awareness, active citizenship, and democratic principles. Another problem with Lickona's approach is that it ignores the student's ability to make educated decisions. Character education should not become an opportunity for educators to push their own moral views on young people. They will benefit more from open discussion than from being presented with "truths" that attempt to shelter them from the realities of the world.

Anne-Marie Calitri, South Middle School, Lynbrook, NY: Jakubowski argues that Character Education can be incorporated into daily lesson plans. I thought about this and realized that I am often teaching character education. For example, in a lesson about Christopher Columbus, students use their moral values

to decide the qualities that make someone a hero or a villain. Jakubowski argues that responding to bullying is part of Character Education. I don't think enough time is spent on preventing bullying, especially in middle schools. The role of the bully in history can easily be explored using primary sources and movies.

Brad Seidman, Kennedy HS, Bellmore, NY: Although, it is important for the teacher to provide mentorship and to set examples, I think it is parents, not teachers, who can truly influence the lives of children. My role as a social studies teacher is to prepare students who are able to think critically about their actions, the actions of others, and their role in society. This process includes self-reflection. As a high school student, I found it an annoying form of discipline. Today, I believe it allowed me to think critically about what I did wrong. In my classes, I try to promote positive reinforcement, fairness, forgiveness, and a strict plan of discipline in my classroom. Nonetheless, when the school day ends, there is little that I can do to influence the values of my students.

Tim McEnroe, IS 394, Brooklyn, NY: The problem with Lickona's argument is that people have different moral philosophies. Lickona comes from a Christian background and he has the right to offer his opinion. However, forcing one's beliefs on others is a different story. This is where his argument fails. His stand on homosexuality hurts his overall argument. There are going to be gay teenagers in our schools. What happens to these children? I don't think it is wise or moral to tell them that their natural feelings are wrong. There is clearly a problem with discipline in classrooms. Working in an inner city school, I see, on a daily basis, the problems that arise from a lack of discipline. Children who exhibit poor self-control have a terribly negative effect on the educational process. Kids aren't learning, teachers can be miserable at times, and nothing is changing. However, I do not think character education offers us the answer to this problem. I would argue that a stricter enforcement of existing rules would help promote better "character" among children.

Charles De Jesus, IS 72, Queens, NY: I do not oppose exposing children to some level of character education in public schools. However, our society first needs to decide what constitutes character education, who will define the curriculum, and who will present it

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in schools. Lickona seems to blame all of our society's shortcomings, from increasing divorce rates to HIV/AIDS infections, on the breakdown of character. I can't accept that. He also blames Charles Darwin and evolution for undermining morality. The misinterpretation of Darwin, by Lickona and people like him, is a corruption of legitimate scientific inquiry to promote social engineering and mind control. Darwin explained how species develop and change in response to environmental conditions. He did not present guidelines for moral behavior.

Joseph Thill, Saranac Lake (NY) HS: Character development is addressed in the health education program in our school. As a global and United States history teacher, I do not expressly focus on character. However, I do include lessons on the role of individuals such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Upton Sinclair in shaping history.

April Francis, Lawrence Road MS, Uniondale, NY: Teachers have become the only steady foundation for many of our students. We have no choice but to teach character education. However, it is not an easy thing to do. We must always ask ourselves, "How do we decide what are the positive character traits we are reinforcing?" and "How do we teach these traits to adolescence in a way that is meaningful to them?"

Kerri Creegan, Ames Campus, Massapequa, NY: Every teacher in the nation has a story of at least one child who seems to live a life of unethical and immoral decision making and activity. Too often I hear teachers moan that "Students didn't think and act like this when I went to school." Thomas Lickona can quote them all to support his theory that character education needs to be promoted in today's schools. However, Lickona's argument that students must be educated on "moral

norms" fails to address a fundamental social aspect of America, diversity. A norm to one ethnic culture may not be to another. Sex outside of marriage is viewed differently by members of different religious groups. When Lickona stresses abstinence as a means of curbing sexual behavior amongst American youth, he is trying to enforce one particular religious code on other people. Character can never effectively be taught this way.

Tabora Johnson, Bushwick School for Social Justice, Brooklyn, NY: In our school, students meet in an "Advisory" session daily. Discussion in "Advisory" is honest and open. We examine moral issues and encourage self awareness. I believe that if adolescents are allowed to discuss their concerns in a free, thoughtful, respectful environment, they can help eradicate some of the problems in our communities and society as a whole. In discussions of human sexuality, I encourage a "real" talk style and I try not to be judgmental. Students are often unaware of the consequences of having unprotected sex. If sex, birth control, STD's and abortion are taboo topics or if students are criticized for engaging in normal human behavior, they will not listen to teachers, will not learn, and will place themselves at risk.

Bill Bray, Downesville (NY) HS: Students need to learn that our country was founded on the importance of code or law, not on relationship and rank. Its fundamental principles, such as liberty and reason, are based on natural laws. While our society's rules allow individuals some space for interpretation, students must learn to adjust their behavior so it is consistent with these rules. If our society says an individual can choose between options A and B, they do not have the right to choose C. They do not have the right to make choices that are outside the parameter our laws.