Character education in the schools

Holly McLeod Gilliland

University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract
The purpose of this master's paper is to familiarize educators with character education as a curricular entity and to demonstrate that it is worthwhile to intermingle character education into a program without detracting from students' core subjects. A review of literature indicates that there is a character crisis among youth in America. Although character education has been present in some form in the earliest schools up to now, this intervention is being resurrected in schools with assistance from national organizations such as Character Education Partnership and CHARACTER COUNTS!

Ideas for the inclusion of character education are presented followed by a discussion of assessment. It is concluded that character education programs are successful as demonstrated by the Child Development Project in Oakland, CA (Lickona, 1991), the Jefferson Junior High School initiative in Washington, DC (Schaeffer, 1997-98), and the Jefferson Center Character Education Curriculum in Los Angeles (Lickona, 1991). In the summary of this paper, a CHARACTER COUNTS! program that was implemented at Clegg Park Elementary in West Des Moines, Iowa is described in detail.
Character Education in the Schools

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by

Holly McLeod Gilliland

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6-29-99
Date Approved

Gregory P. Stefanich
Graduate Faculty Reader

6-29-99
Date Approved

Donna H. Schumacher-Douglas
Graduate Faculty Reader

7-2-99
Date Approved

William P. Callahan
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Many educators perceive a declining social fabric among today's youth (Vessels & Boyd, 1996). Some may be desensitized to the implications of this moral decline, and others do not perceive it as an essential component to the curriculum. The purpose of this paper is to familiarize educators with character education as a curriculum entity and to demonstrate that it is worthwhile to intermingle character education into a program without deterring from students' core subjects.

This master's paper focuses on the importance of implementing character education programs in the schools. The initial discussion summarizes alarming trends in youth crime, which demonstrates a need for reform in character education. Next, a brief history of moral education in schools is presented, as well as court case documentations on school prayer. Then, the term character is defined followed by a discussion of the components of "good character." Further, national organization guidelines are outlined. Additionally, this paper discusses curricular implications with classroom ideas for all subject areas. Finally, assessment of character education programs is presented with examples of successful implementation.

Trends

What is happening to our society? Our world? The news media has made us quite aware that our moral culture is deteriorating at an
exorbitant rate. Crime is at an alarmingly high level. Every two seconds there is a crime committed in the United States (Crime in the United States, 1997). Our environment is quickly becoming destroyed as evidenced by the hole in our ozone layer, the countless animals on the endangered species list, and rampant pollution. Warheads pointing at major cities all over the world and a raging conflict in Yugoslavia indicate political unrest at a global level. Controversy between the Democrats and Republicans who lead our nation threatens to divide the United States and discourage citizens from an active involvement in their own livelihood. One of our greatest supposed role models, President Bill Clinton, was impeached for lying, and disgraced for his numerous infidelities. Locally, small towns and communities encounter corrupt mayors and philandering clergy.

Americans are aware that society is lacking in moral qualities. As a matter of fact, 76% of adults believe that the United States is in moral and spiritual decline (Fineman, 1994). According to a 1994 Newsweek poll, Americans attributed poor personal character in this country to: the breakdown of the family, individuals themselves, television and other entertainment, government and political leaders, economic conditions, and schools and religious institutions (Fineman, 1994).

While all of this unrest is occurring, our children are suffering. They are not acting like the young, innocent children they should be, rather they are acting more like the adults who raised them. Horror stories of children killing others over professional sports team attire, because of arguments,
or for no reason in particular are seen more and more frequently in the news. Children lie, cheat and steal with no sense of remorse. Examples of this shocking phenomenon are endless.

- On Adolf Hitler's birthday, in Littleton, Colorado, two high school juniors went on a shooting rampage in their high school, killing 15 people, including themselves. Their targets were African Americans, Hispanics and athletes (Weller, 1999).
- “Twin 11-year-old boys...fatally [shot] their father...as he bounded up a staircase after hearing his wife wounded by gunfire.” Next the boys shot their 16-year-old sister (New York Times, 1999, p. 10).
- A 14-year-old was arrested after the decomposing body of his 8-year-old neighbor was found hidden underneath his bed (USA Today, 1998).
- A 16-year-old boy was walking a friend home in the Bronx when he was fatally shot for his stock-car racing jacket (Roane, 1999).
- Three teenage boys poured gasoline on sleeping homeless men in Brooklyn and set fire to them (Smith & Goldstein, 1987).
• An 11-year-old girl was found guilty of beating to death a 2½-year-old girl. At age 14 she was sentenced to 25 years in prison (Herbert, 1998).

• A first grade boy pretended he was giving cocaine to his classmates by passing around chalk shavings (Morrow, 1988).

• "A 14-year-old boy was arrested...and charged with raping a 14-year-old girl in the Bronx" (New York Times, 1998, p. 8).

• "Eight unruly teen-agers...used baseball bats, bottles and their own feet to destroy several vehicles...In addition, a hot-dog vendor said he was roughed up and robbed by the same youths" (Roane, 1998, 8).

History

These illustrations demonstrate a moral decline and character crisis in our nation. There are numerous proposals on how this problem can be eradicated and many hold serious merit. Character education is an intervention that can lead to greater enhancement of the moral culture in the United States and throughout the world.

Character education is not a new concept. Teaching moral character was a core responsibility of the very earliest forms of schooling. Through the ages, however, that responsibility has been extinguished.
This vision of the public schools as the transmitter of a shared public morality held sway into the early part of the twentieth century. Gradually, however, large numbers of people began to lose sight of common values and to think of morality as a matter of private preference or choice. If somebody suggested that schools should teach values, the immediate retort was, "Whose values?" In this climate, public school [professionals] lost their nerve and retreated from their time-honored role as moral educator (Lickona, 1988, p. 8).

During the 1600s moral education was the center of the school's mission (Governali, 1995). Schools were actually formed to promote moral development by using the Bible, maxims, and proverbs to preach "religious doctrine" (ASCD, 1988). During the early 1900s children read tales of virtue and heroism in McGuffey Readers, which had the largest circulation of any book in the world next to the Bible (Lickona, 1991).

The 1960s brought a more pluralistic and secular society and "...students emerged from schools with a greater sense of their rights than their responsibilities..." (Lasley & Biddle, 1996, p. 161). Also, parents began to challenge religious teachings in schools. A landmark case addressing prayer in public schools was Engel v. Vitale, 370 U.S. 421 (1962). In that case, the United States Supreme Court ruled that a "non-denominational" prayer prepared by the New York Board of Regents for use in the public schools was a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The Establishment Clause prohibits laws resembling an
establishment of religion by government. In *Engel*, the court found that it is "no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by government" (*Engel* at 425).

One year after *Engel*, the Supreme Court extended the principles of that case beyond state-composed prayers and addressed a Pennsylvania state law that provided: “At least ten verses from the Holy Bible shall be read, without comment, at the opening of each public school on each school day.” *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963). Here the court concluded that the law required religious exercises and such exercises were being conducted in direct violation of the rights of the challengers.

Following these rulings, school officials became uncertain of what they could and could not legally do. Consequently, they began to shy away from moral education altogether as a way of avoiding controversy and potential litigation (*U.S. News On Line*, 1999).

Values Clarification

Finally, after abandoning religious-related lessons altogether, schools found “values clarification” as the new, vogue teaching technique. Teachers urged students to explore their values, listen to their classmates’ views and then decide for themselves what was right and wrong (*U.S. News On Line*, 1999). But the teachers did not know what to do once the clarification occurred. If during an exercise in values clarification students
were asked if they had ever cheated, values clarification did not allow for discussion of why cheating is wrong. Values clarification began to lose its effectiveness as our nation began to see a moral decline. This was illustrated by the drastic increases in: violence and vandalism, stealing, cheating, disrespect for authority, peer cruelty, bigotry, bad language, sexual precocity and abuse, self-centeredness and declining civic responsibility, and self-destructive behavior (Lickona, 1991). Values clarification “...lacked a moral anchor (and) has been largely discredited although it still exists in some schools” (U.S. News On Line, 1999, p. 2).

The less than stellar success of values clarification brought on a resurgence of character education in schools in the mid-1980s called upon by parents, politicians, states, and local school districts (Black, 1996). Slowly, schools began to implement character education programs into their curriculums.

Definitions

Now that the discussion of character education (which is sometimes called values education or moral education) has begun, a definition of character and its components is warranted. The American Heritage Dictionary (1994) defines character as “Moral or ethical strength” (p. 148). Further, moral is defined as “Conforming to established standards of good behavior” (p. 541). And ethics is defined as “A principle of right or good conduct or a body of such principles. A system of moral principles or
values" (p. 291). This brings up the definition of values, which is “A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable” (p. 887).

As one can see, the word “character” is an abstract word that is difficult to define. It is thought by some, that at birth, no character exists. Human beings are not born with these traits, rather they learn them (Bennett, 1993). Aristotle alluded that we learn moral virtue through practice. “We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts” (Bennett, 1993, p. 101).

Perhaps more difficult than defining character is to define good character. According to Thomas Lickona (1991, p. 51) and Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin (1999, p. 3), “good character consists of knowing the good, loving [and desiring] the good, and doing the good.” This means we need to understand what is right and wrong, feel in our hearts what it is to be good and crave this feeling, and act by doing good deeds.

According to Michael Josephson (1996), a desire for good character can be traced back to at least 500 B.C. when Confucius said, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” Another 175 years later, Aristotle stated, “We should behave to others as we wish others to behave to us.” Mahabharata, another 125 years later, said, “Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst not have him do to thee thereafter.” And finally, in 30 A.D., Jesus said, “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” And so we see the common thread of ethical
theory progress through the ages, The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you" (p. 21).

C.S. Lewis's Common Values (Tao)

The late C. S. Lewis studied holy books of Hindu, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, American Indian, Buddhist, Babylonian, Christian, Hebrew, and many other cultures. Here he found a common core of shared values (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Lewis (1947) called these common values or Tao, and they are outlined as follows:

- Human kindness is essential to a fully functioning society.
- We owe a special love, loyalty, and support to our parents and our families.
- We have a special relationship to future generations, especially our own children.
- Married people have certain rights and responsibilities in relation to each other.
- Some degree of honesty is needed for a society to function smoothly.
- We are obliged to help the poor, the sick, and the less fortunate.
- Basic property rights must exist in any organized society.
- Some things exist that are worse than death, such as treachery, murder, betrayal, and torturing another person.
- Our own inevitable death colors how we view life and, coupled with the promise of our posterity, gives the continuum of life its
meaning.

CHAPTER II
CHARACTER EDUCATION MOVES
FROM THE HOME TO THE SCHOOL

The teachings of good character have been part of numerous cultures over thousands of years. So, if that is the case, then why are we seeing the alarming trends of extreme poor character choices in our youth, as well as in adults? It is difficult to discern a specific cause of these negative trends. It appears, however, that with the increase of dual-income families and single-parent families, parents do not have enough time to give adequate attention to the teaching of good character at home. “Even when families try hard to provide a strong foundation, they often find their efforts undermined by the media, the child’s peers, and increasingly the internet” (Schaeffer, 1997-98). Although the home is the first place where character education should be addressed, more and more responsibility is being placed on teachers to teach these concepts to students in school. As a matter of fact, parents are demanding that character education be taught in school (Woodward, 1994). It is not surprising that 95 percent of people in general feel that schools should teach honesty, respect for others, and the importance of telling the truth (Schaeffer, 1997-98). Children failing to learn responsibility, respect and honesty is a serious problem according to 61 percent of adults (Lawton, 1997). Further, only 37 percent of adults
feel that our children will make our country a better place to live (Lawton, 1997).

Consequently, schools are taking on the responsibility of developing and implementing character education programs. It is argued, however, that teachers still have the same amount of school time to teach a curriculum that continually builds in scope, so some teachers consider the teaching of good character "frills" and "luxuries" (Parr, 1982). Other teachers believe that morals should not be taught because they feel they are indoctrinating someone else's values on the students. Also, some teachers fear that "touchy" topics may come up while teaching these concepts, making teachers and students feel uncomfortable (Banks, 1993). "What appears troubling to them is the judgmental nature of morality—good implies bad; moral, immoral; virtue, vice" (Goodman, 1997, p. 1).

But, it appears that the majority of teachers feel relieved that they are now allowed to address this important issue in their classrooms. The fact of the matter is that morals, character, virtues, ethics and values need to be taught, and because they are not being adequately addressed at home, they need to be taught in school. "...The worst approach is to do nothing at all" (Lasley & Biddle, 1996, p. 162).

Although my own hope is that students become more aware, more caring, and more committed to responsible choice, I am not advocating that teachers argue for a particular code of behavior or a particular set of values. Rather, I think that we
as teachers serve our students best if we can engage them in the learning process, teach them to understand and express the complexities of all that they study, bring them to recognize the value of individual moral choice, and give them a sense that they are part of a larger human community (Parr, 1982, p. 17).

Schools have begun to actively incorporate character education into their curriculums with the help of national organizations such as Character Education Partnership and CHARACTER COUNTS! There are many steps a school needs to follow in order to set up a successful program. This paper will focus more on the teaching strategies rather than the organizational strategies.

Six Pillars of Character

To begin, a set of common values needs to be identified. Many schools have different names for similar values. It does not matter what the names are as long as there is agreement between parents and educators on what the values should be. For example CHARACTER COUNTS! a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics (1996), has identified “Six Pillars of Character” that are used by many schools nationwide. These values and defining concepts are as follows:

1. Trustworthiness: Integrity, Honesty, Reliability, Loyalty
2. Respect: Golden Rule, Tolerance and Acceptance, Nonviolence, Courtesy

4. Fairness: Justice, Openness

5. Caring: Concern for Others, Charity

6. Citizenship: Do Your Share, Respect Authority and the Law

Before any character education program is to be successful, a proper classroom environment needs to be identified and implemented.

Classroom Environment

At the core of the program is the teacher. She should first be a good example for her students by modeling the behaviors she wishes her students to emulate. She should give respect and love to her students, who need and crave positive attention. “Children know when they are being taken seriously by others, and they imitate what they see” (Bennett, 1993, p. 108). Although time is such a constraint in the ever-increasing size of classrooms, the teacher should give as much individual attention to each student as possible.

Next, when younger students are playing, the teacher can use this opportunity to observe how students play and what students play (Burt et al., 1985). Students demonstrate examples of good and bad values when playing. The teacher can use this time to encourage the demonstration of good values and discourage the demonstration of bad values. Statements such as, “I like the way John is sharing his toys with Karen,” or “It makes me feel sad when I see students who cannot share with others,” are subtle
statements that can help build moral character. In observing what
students are playing, teachers may see instances of violence, for example.
Are they playing war and killing each other? Are they hitting and pinching
each other? Are they using bad language, and so forth. When these
situations occur, the teacher should intervene and create discussions
based on these examples, such as asking questions like, “How do you feel
when a person calls you a bad name?”

A favorable classroom environment does not just happen overnight.
It is an ongoing process that works hand-in-hand with a character
education program. But, once a teacher builds the foundation for a
positive classroom environment, she can begin to integrate character
education into most subjects.

Another essential element is having a democratic classroom
(Lickona, 1991). This entails cooperatively deciding on classroom rules
that have rewards and consequences. Giving students ownership in
classroom rules makes them accountable, resulting in more rule-abiding
students. It is the teacher’s duty to be consistent with the rules to keep
stability in check. When rules are broken, conflict-resolution strategies
should be introduced with an active involvement of the students. Along
with rule setting, students should be involved in class meetings (Lickona,
1991). This is another way to offer accountability to students by allowing
them to have a voice in their democratic classroom.
Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is the next device in creating a positive classroom environment (Thomas & Roberts, 1994). Ashley Montagu once said, “Cooperation, not conflict, has been the most valuable form of behavior for humans taken at any stage of their evolutionary history” (Lickona, 1991, p. 185). Cooperative learning diminishes racial, ethnic, and other social barriers by incorporating students into small groups (Lickona, 1997). After taking time to adjust to this new teaching and learning mode, group members find that “...everyone is of equal value and equally deserving of respect, justice, and liberty [and ultimately]...caring and trusting relationships result” (Johnson & Johnson, 1996, p. 64).

According to Lickona (1997), a sixth grade class in Montreal, Quebec obtained a more caring classroom through cooperative learning. Initially, the class was tainted by racial conflict and violence, however, after the teacher implemented cooperative learning for two months, students began to get along, and their test scores increased. Success with cooperative learning takes time, but the positive result of character development makes the endeavor worthwhile (Slavin, 1990).

CHAPTER III
IDEAS FOR INTEGRATING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Initially it may be difficult to imagine how character education can be integrated into most subjects, but it can be quite simple. The following
discussion will illustrate a few of the many ways this task can be accomplished.

Language Arts

In the subject of language arts, carefully chosen literature can be a very effective tool in the teaching of morals (Fassler, 1985). There are thousands of genres that reach across all age levels. Stories, poems and fables that we have enjoyed as children often have lessons to be learned in them. Stories give students specific reference points to which they can relate to their life experiences (Bennett, 1993). The teacher or the students can read these selections, and then a rich discussion should follow. The teacher can ask the students such questions as: How do you feel the characters were treated by others? What would you have done if you were a character in the story? What impact does the selection have on the characters? How would you change the story if you could? The possibilities of questions the teacher can ask are endless to trigger higher level thinking in the students. A nice example of a poem that could be used with high school students is as follows:

The Question

Were the whole world good as you—not an atom better—

    Were it just as pure and true,

    Just as pure and true as you;

    Just as strong in faith and works;

    Just as free from crafty quirks;
All extortion, all deceit;
Schemes its neighbors to defeat;
Schemes its neighbors to defraud;
Schemes some culprit to applaud—
Would this world be better?
If the whole world followed you—followed to the letter—
Would it be a nobler world,
All deceit and falsehood hurled
From it altogether;
Malice, selfishness, and lust,
Banished from beneath the crust,
Covering human hearts from view—
Tell me, if it followed you,
Would the world be better?
(Poem without an author in Bennett, 1993)

This poem stimulates many questions in students' minds such as:
"What do words such as extortion, deceit, defraud, culprit, and malice
mean?" "How do these words make one feel?" "What was the author
trying to say in this poem?" "What would make our world a better place in
which to live?" These are all very open-ended questions that allow room
for elaboration on the parts of the students and the teacher.
Social Studies

Social Studies is another subject that contains many areas that bring up opportunities to interject character education. Historical heroes and villains have always been studied through the use of different genres. Honest Abe, Lewis and Clark, Daniel Boone, Mary McLeod Bethune, Harriet Tubman, Charles Lindbergh, Hitler, Babe Ruth, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nixon, Clinton, and soldiers who have fought in many wars over the years are all examples of heroes and villains who would stimulate much conversation about both good and bad character traits (Lickona, 1991). Most heroes possess such traits as independence, a sense of duty, courage, kindness, and a desire to do good deeds (Cohen, 1993). Villains, on the other hand, show traits of hatred, inhumanity, lying, cheating and stealing. Along the same lines, events in history are opportunities for discussions on morals. Such events as the Boston Tea Party, Slavery, Prohibition, Civil Rights Movement, and the many wars are just a few of the numerous examples of events in history that have a moral background (Lickona, 1991).

The study of historical documents is another means by which character education can be discussed without taking time away from the core subjects. Documents concerning human rights such as The Constitution, The Bill of Rights, and The Declaration of Independence are means by which human rights can be explored. The teacher can ask such questions as: "What does the statement 'All men are created equal' mean
in The Declaration of Independence?" "How has the treatment of these people changed since such documents have been written?" "Why do you think these people were (and still are) treated differently by others?" "How has the meaning of statements in these documents been interpreted differently throughout the years?" Along with these questions, other areas can be opened up by addressing such controversial topics as women's rights, cultural diversity and disabilities.

Science

Next, the field of science offers numerous means by which character education can be interjected. One of the more popular topics that have been taught over the past several years has been the environment. Teachers have been teaching about the environment without realizing they are also teaching about good character. Students seem to love studying about the environment and want to take an active role in making their planet a better place to live. A number of activities that can be explored are: writing letters and lobbying to officials about environmental concerns, taking water samples from local streams to test for pollution, recycling programs at school and home, and organizing a clean-up group to pick up the trash in a local park, just to name a few ideas.

Along with the topic of the environment, teaching respect and responsibility toward animals is an excellent tool for teaching good values (Lickona, 1991). Children have a natural love for animals and are interested in their well being. Topics such as animal neglect and abuse
can be addressed as well as animal rights. This helps children develop their capacity for kindness and compassion. A study of the extinction of animals and the endangered species list would be good additions to this topic.

**Sportsmanship**

Sportsmanship is another component to building good character. This skill can be developed during physical education class and organized sports. The practice of good sportsmanship builds important values such as respect, responsibility, discipline, honesty and courage. A recent survey of 4,800 high school athletes in Minnesota found that 91 percent of these athletes feel that those who are active in school activities are more likely to be role models and school leaders. Also, 92 percent said that this participation provides an opportunity to develop self-discipline (Voors, 1997). Schools across the United States are taking a closer look at their athletic programs. Important to success in sportsmanship are the teachers and staff who should model exceptional sportsmanship. Good role models are not those who swear, act unprofessional, and want to win despite the consequences to the children. To encourage exemplary sportsmanship, many schools are coming up with creative ideas to encourage and reward this positive behavior. “The Florida High School Activities Association has developed the “Thumbs Up to Sportsmanship” program, which rewards good sportsmanship among its athletes, coaches, and spectators (Voors, 1997). If children have more positive experiences in
sports, then society will have fewer people like Dennis Rodman and more people like Michael Jordan.

What about the non-athletes who choose to excel in other areas such as music, art, and other extra-curricular areas like student government, school newspaper, science club, or chorus? These students should equally reap the benefits of character education. Being involved in the arts and extra-curricular activities builds discipline, responsibility, and social skills. As a matter of fact, elementary schools in Clovis, California encourage students to play a part in these activities by calling their extracurricular activities a "co-curricular program." If a student is not getting involved, the teacher or principal will talk with the child and the child's parents and explain the co-curricular program. As a result, the child usually becomes involved (Lickona, 1991).

Guest Speakers, Media, and Community Service

Additional ideas for integrating character education into the classroom is through the use of guest speakers, the media and community service. During the science unit on animals, a guest speaker from The Animal Rescue League could address the class. Or, during a social studies unit, a parent or grandparent could talk with the class about a war in which he or she participated. The list of guests are endless for the numerous topics that have been discussed.

The media is an excellent source for positive and negative examples of virtue. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet can
be used to teach students about past and present moral issues in the news. Students can explore such topics as war, peace, crime, inequality, and the like to help them to develop their own ideas about right and wrong. However, “...students should be required to justify their moral choices within the context of societal values such as human dignity, justice, and equality” (Banks, 1993).

Further, students of all ages can be introduced to doing community service (Bragaw, 1989). Clark (1989) suggests that the following six elements be present when students perform community service:

1. Service must be valuable and worthwhile for the community and the students.
2. Service must provide opportunities for young people to be depended upon.
3. Service must include tasks that challenge and strengthen students' critical thinking.
4. Service must provide students with the opportunity to make decisions.
5. The most effective community service projects involve adults and students working together.
6. Good community service must provide systematic reflection on the experience.
Students will find that their experiences with community service provide opportunities for them to develop their character through their charitable contributions.

Assessment

Having discussed curriculum ideas, the question of assessment should be addressed. Opponents argue that assessment of character education programs is difficult and unreliable. They question how one knows if this intervention is working. Proponents say that indeed character education is successful as proven by the different assessments and studies that have been conducted. “In studies done nationally on character education, it’s been shown that... [character education programs]...cut down on teen pregnancy, absenteeism for students and staff, suspensions and referrals to the office for bad behavior (and increases are seen in academic performance)” (Carkci, 1996). To follow are some examples of studies that demonstrate success in character education programs:

- The Child Development Project in Oakland, California is conducting a longitudinal study on students as they pass from kindergarten through elementary school. Their findings thus far show improvements in classroom and playground behavior, social problem-solving skills and a greater commitment to democratic values (Lickona, 1991).
• At Jefferson Junior High School in inner-city Washington, DC, a character education initiative is credited with drastically improving their academic rating in just five years. Jefferson went from one of the lower rated schools to being recognized as having one of the highest academic achievement levels in the city (Schaeffer, 1997-98).

• After one semester of school in Los Angeles where the Jefferson Center Character Education Curriculum was implemented, 31 schools were surveyed. Findings indicate a decrease in all forms of discipline problems. Office visits due to minor discipline problems decreased 39% while visits due to major discipline problems such as fighting, drugs and weapons declined 25% (Lickona, 1991).

These are just a few of the many examples that show character education programs are successful and support nation-wide implementation.

Eleven Principles for Effective Character Education

Guidelines for schools have been developed by many organizations to help with consistency. The Character Education Partnership’s Eleven Principles for Effective Character Education is probably one of the most widely followed set of guidelines.

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. "Character" must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling and behavior.

3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.

4. The school must be a caring community. For character to take root in the heart of the child, it has to be a part of the daily experience of school.

5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.

6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed. Character and learning are inseparable.

7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation to do what's right and should minimize rewards and punishments that distract attention from the real reasons to behave responsibly.

8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.

9. Character education requires champions from both staff and students who can lead the effort.

10. Parents and community members must be full partners in the character-building effort.

11. Character education efforts are measured, evaluated and improved on an ongoing basis (U.S. News Online, 1999).
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In his January 23, 1999 State of the Union address, President Clinton discussed his concerns for the moral character of this nation. In addressing its implementation in schools, President Clinton stated:

Character education is not a single course, a quick fix program, or a slogan posted on the wall; it is an integral part of school life. The school must become a community of virtue in which respect, hard work, honesty and kindness are modeled, taught, expected, celebrated, and continually practiced (Character Education Manifesto, 1999, p. 2).

All of these characteristics that President Clinton describes as an ideal character education program are implemented at Clegg Park Elementary in West Des Moines, Iowa. Clegg Park has developed a quality curriculum that would serve as an excellent model for all schools. With assistance from The Legacy 150 Institute of Iowa (re-named The Institute for Character Development, in May), they have implemented the CHARACTER COUNTS! program after hearing about its success in Albuquerque, New Mexico, ...“where teachers relayed character-building traits to children and expanded it to involve the entire community. The trait of the month also is printed on utility bills and grocery bags there” (Villanueva, 1998).

At Clegg Park, staff development, faculty goal teams, and parent training are crucial to the success of the program. Also, the aforementioned six pillars (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility,
fairness, caring, and citizenship) are introduced as the corner-stone of the program. Each month a new trait is established and featured throughout the school on bulletin boards. All teachers integrate these concepts into their curriculum and make each student accountable by having him/her write on each trait at the end of the month. To reward students for their efforts, “when they demonstrate one of the pillars, students can earn Panther Pride awards. Quarterly award ceremonies also are used to introduce students nominated by classmates for the Wall of Fame” (Villanueva, 1998, p. 4).

The CHARACTER COUNTS! program has shown to be successful as demonstrated by the betterment of student behavior. Over a two year period at Clegg Park Elementary (1996-1998), disciplinary write-ups on the bus have changed from 35 write-ups to 3, which is a decrease of 91 percent; quiet table assignments have decreased from 94 to 78, which is a 17 percent decline; time-out assignments have gone down from 494 to 345, which is a 26 percent decrease; and Panther Pride awards have increased from 518 to 584, which is a 13 percent increase (Villanueva, 1998). As a result of this success, Clegg Park has been contacted by other districts about the CHARACTER COUNTS! project.

Our nation’s education system has come full-circle since the first schools considered character education a moral mandate. Parents and educators have seen what the lack of character education has done to our society and our youth. Now, parents and educators are embracing
character education as one of the answers to many of the ills our society faces and creates. Character education programs such as CHARACTER COUNTS! are successful in bettering the moral attitudes of students as seen in the Clegg Park Elementary example. Certainly, character education is not the only answer to the dilemma of moral decline in our youth, however, it is an intervention that can lead to a greater enhancement of the moral culture of this country.
REFERENCES


*U.S. News On Line*. Exerpt from “Character Education in U.S. Schools: The New Consensus,” a report from The Character Education


