Being Good: Comprehensive Character Education

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What is character?
Head Heart & Hands

“Good character consists of understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values”

Character Education Partnership
(www.character.org)
The 3 Pieces

- **The Head:** Knowing about and reasoning about
- **The Heart:** Caring about, motivated to, wanting to
- **The Hand:** Knowing how to, Doing
Being Good

• Character is a broad domain
• It is not always about goodness
• Performance character vs. moral character
  – Performance: Doing things well
  – Moral: Doing the right thing
• Moral requires wanting to do the right thing: This is the “Heart”
Pedagogies of the 3 Pieces

- None of these are exclusive; they are tendencies
- **Pedagogy of the head** focuses on teaching about and providing opportunities for grappling with ideas
- **Pedagogy of the hand** focuses on learning and practicing skills
- **Pedagogy of the heart** focuses on social bonding and role modeling
A Word on Internalization

• The ultimate goal of character education, especially for moral character, is for students to internalize values
• Hence we need to emphasize the pedagogy of the heart (social bonding and role modeling)
What is character education?
More than a program..

• Henry Huffman, a pioneer in implementing character education at the district level, pointed out that character education is more than a program.
Character education is...

A way of being, and most notably a way of being with others.
For most educators...

It is a NEW way of being.
Character education IS rocket science

Effective character education is neither simple nor easy. And often best practices are neither intuitive nor obvious.
A Clash of Metaphors

- Given that the Pedagogy of the Heart is about relationships, bonding, and role models, the typical mechanical metaphors of education are not fully appropriate.
  - Teaching character
  - Character lessons
  - Doing character education
Metaphors cont’d

• Instead, the Pedagogy of the Heart fits better with organic metaphors
  - Fostering the development of character
  - Nurturing character
  - Being
“Schools are perfectly designed for the results we are getting. If we don’t like the results, we need to redesign schools.”

Paul Houston
Former Executive Director, American Association of School Administrators
PRIME Character Education

- Prioritizing character education
- Relationships
- Intrinsic motivation
- Modeling
- Empowerment
Prioritizing Character Education

• There are two primary purposes of education: academic and character
• Schools often overlook character and focus primarily or exclusively on academics
• Character has to be an explicit centerpoint of the school’s mission and of the school leader’s philosophy
“To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society”
President Theodore Roosevelt
Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness: Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmans. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.

Sadker & Sadker, 1977
Relationships

- The 3 R’s of character education are Relationships, Relationships, Relationships
- Need to consider ways to doing the same work that also build positive relationships
- Relationships should be targeted within and between all stakeholder groups
A Source of Moral Character

UNRELATED SIGNIFICANT ADULTS

“Invulnerable children” invariably have an adult outside the family who takes an enduring benevolent interest in the child.
“Golden Child” and “Tarnished Child”
School Climate
Adult culture of the school

- Adults in the school must function as a caring professional learning community
- They must “walk the talk” and “talk the walk”
- The must treat each other as they want students to behave...with character!
Intrinsic Motivation

• Educators often rush to using extrinsic motivation to promote character
• The true goal of character education is for students to internalize moral values
• Different pedagogical strategies are needed to foster intrinsic motivation
Modeling

- Cannot demand from students what you will not do yourself
- Lickona: The single most powerful tool you have for influencing a child’s character is your character
- Students learn more from what you do than from what you say
- Ghandi: “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”
Empowerment

• Character develops in part through a sense of one’s autonomy
• Character education should focus on the empowerment of all stakeholders: teachers, administrators, support staff, students, parents, community members, etc.
• A philosophy of empowerment should be at the heart of the school
“The first service that one owes to others in community consists in listening to them."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life Together*
ANTI-BULLYING EFFORTS & SCHOOL SAFETY

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See Dr. Marvin Berkowitz discuss bullying here.
When in doubt...

- Go back to your base:
  - Prioritize character education
  - Relationships are the building blocks
  - Intrinsic motivation must be nurtured
  - Model good character
  - Empower all stakeholders