Putting Academics in Perspective, Relationship Building, Intrinsic Motivation, Modeling Goodness, and Empowering Students: The PRIME Model

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What is character?

“Good character consists of understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values”
Character Education Partnership
(www.character.org)

What is character education?

"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 requires understanding character development and the complex comprehensive approach to character education.

“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

PRIME: 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
"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or human, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

Haim Ginott

"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

Leadership is key

- Walk the talk
- Human relations expert
- Pedagogy of empowerment

Staff Buy-In

- Relationships
  - Brentwood Middle School
- Authentic collaboration
- You have to feed the teachers....
  - Invest in them; e.g. p.d.
- The Four W’s
  - Waiting you out
  - Work with the willing
  - Win over the doubters
  - Winnow out the un-redeemables

PRIME: 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.

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**School Climate: schoolclimate.org**

Character and academics only flourish in the context of healthy relationships.

Healthy relationships only flourish in an authentic ethical and pro-social culture.

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**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."
- They must treat each other as they want students to behave...with character!

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**PRIME: 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.
Basic Needs of Students

- Deci and Ryan (Self-Determination Theory)
  - Autonomy (sense of empowerment)
  - Belonging (social connectedness)
  - Competence (ability to achieve/succeed)
- Eccles
  - Mattering (make a meaningful difference)
  - Responsibility (contributing group member)
  - Engagement (challenge and enjoyment)
  - Identity (knowing one's place in a social context)

PRIME: 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.”

PRIME: 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

Evidence-Based Strategies

- The implementation strategies selected should be theoretically justified.
- They should also be chosen because research has demonstrated their effectiveness.

Most commonly found outcomes

- Socio-moral cognition (77 out of 106)
- Pro-social behaviors and attitudes (71/167)
- Problem-solving skills (57/86)
- Violence/aggression (46/100)
- Drug use (45/97)
- Emotional competency (32/50)
- Risk attitudes (31/70)
- School behavior (28/69)
- Academic achievement (21/33)
- Attachment to school (20/33)
Research supported methods

- Peer interactive strategies
- Service to others
- Developmental discipline
- Role-modeling and mentoring
- Nurturance
- Trust and trustworthiness
- High expectations
- School wide focus
- Family/community involvement
- Pedagogy of empowerment
- Teaching about character
- Teaching social-emotional competencies
- Induction
- Professional development

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