



Georgia Association for Supervision
and Curriculum Development

The Reporter

Issue Theme: Character Education

Four-Time International Award-Winning Newsletter • Winter 2000

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President's Remarks

Each month, I receive numerous professional publications. I am sure that you do, also. Annually, I make a promise to myself to find the time each day to read a portion of this professional literature. As the months go by, the stack of unread publications grows as large as my guilt for failing to fulfill the promise I made to myself! Does this scenario sound familiar to you? If you have discovered a remedy, please let me know! I reflected on this professional reading dilemma of mine to make a point. This issue of THE REPORTER is one that you will NOT want to put in your "to read later" pile! It is a "must read now" issue!



Connie Hoyle

One of the goals of Georgia ASCD is to create partnerships with other professional organizations. This publication represents such a collaboration with the Georgia Humanities Council. As a result of that collaboration, you are holding in your hands a wealth of information on the topic of Character Education. Articles have been written by Governor Barnes, State School Superintendent Linda Schrenko, various legislators, national experts in the field, as well as practitioners from across the state. The guest editors, Jamil Zainaldin and Paul Weimer, do an excellent job briefly highlighting the content of the essays in this issue in their article entitled "Character Education as 21st Century Citizenship." I encourage you to read it carefully before proceeding to the other articles.

When schools across the state of Georgia open for the 2000-2001 school year, they will have in place a Character Education program for grades K-12 which incorporates 27 character traits (H. B. 605). Plans are underway now in every school system in our state to determine exactly what this program may look like. But as several guest authors point out, a commitment to infuse Character Education into the curriculum is not about establishing a special program, rather it is a dedication to an on-going process that brings education back to its "traditional" purpose of teaching both the *head* and the *heart* of our students.

As final plans are being made in your school district, this issue of THE REPORTER will provide each of its readers with helpful insights, suggestions, and resources. I would encourage you to share it with your colleagues as you work together to educate our students—tomorrow's citizens.

Sincerely,

Connie Hoyle, President

The Reporter

Winter 2000

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From The Editor



Donna Q. Butler

Dear Georgia ASCD Colleagues,

In this issue of THE REPORTER, you will find an exciting collection of essays about Character Education. Guest editors Jamil Zainaldin and Paul Weimer, Georgia Humanities Council, collaborated with Georgia ASCD to bring you local, state, and national views of the most important concerns for school districts undertaking Character Education initiatives.

From Governor Barnes' opening message to Paul's closing remarks, this issue will be an important resource for you and your school district. Please let us know how you use it with colleagues, parents, and students as you develop your plans for including Character Education in the important work you do each day.

I want to thank our guest editors for all of the work they did in bringing this issue to publication. They made developing this issue an interesting and enjoyable experience.

We are fortunate to have had this collaboration with the Georgia Humanities Council and encourage you to learn more about Council programs and opportunities!

Sincerely,

Donna Q. Butler
Executive Director
and Guest Editor

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Graphic Design by *Troy Bassett*

What Is ASCD?

ASCD is an international nonprofit and non-partisan association of individuals who share the belief that all students can succeed in a challenging, well-planned educational program. With approximately 150,000 members, ASCD is one of the largest education associations in the world.

ASCD is committed to the mission of *Forging Covenants in Teaching and Learning for the Success of All Learners*. Because its members—superintendents, principals, supervisors, teachers, specialists, school board members, professors of higher education, and central office staff—are involved in every facet of education, ASCD possesses a unique vantage point in the education community. The Association looks beyond isolated concerns to address systemic issues as it works to transform education and create a better future for students.

ASCD provides leadership in the areas of supervision, instruction, and curricular design. Serving as a catalyst for positive change in education, ASCD disseminates information on educational research and practice and forges links among educators around the world through:

- Media and technology;
- Publications and training programs;
- Seminars and conferences;
- Affiliates in every state and around the world;
- A topical Networks program; and
- Panels, study groups, and collaborations.

A Tradition of Progress

Since its inception in 1943, ASCD has worked to improve teaching and learning by serving as a clearinghouse for ideas and a forum for debate. The Association has foreseen significant trends in education and sought to shape the future to benefit students and schools. With the help of ASCD, talented educators have been able to effectively integrate pioneering concepts into classroom practice.

The Association at a Glance:

150,000 members, including superintendents, principals, teachers, specialists, school board members, professors, central office staff, counselors, and supervisors.

Affiliates:

Sixty-eight affiliates located in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, and East Asia.

Networks:

ASCD's 52 networks connect educators with similar interests and concerns on topics ranging from indigenous peoples' education to teacher leadership and school-university partnerships.

Annual Conference:

ASCD's Annual Conference gathers over 13,000 educators each year to one of the most diverse and rewarding events in education.

This Year's Conference:
New Orleans, March 25-27, 2000

Publications:

- ASCD's many publications include:
- *Educational Leadership*, the ASCD Journal
 - Books on current topics in education
 - Newsletters including *Curriculum Update*, *Education Update*, *ASCD Bulletin* (Online Newsletter)
 - *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, a refereed, scholarly journal published quarterly
 - *The ASCD Curriculum Handbook*, updated regularly
 - *The Curriculum/Technology Quarterly* newsletter
 - *The ASCD Yearbook*

Affiliate Action

What is Georgia ASCD?

Georgia ASCD is a professional organization dedicated to improving instruction in Georgia and to developing the capacity of each member for leadership.

Georgia ASCD provides a forum for state and national issues, the exchanging and sharing of quality educational practices, resources and effective implementation models through opportunities for involvement of persons interested in and supportive of quality instruction.

The organization offers an environment for interaction, problem solving, policy analysis, joint planning, research, and publications.

What are the Benefits of Membership?

- *Networking with educational colleagues and advocates across Georgia.*
- *Communicating through a regular Georgia ASCD newsletter.*
- *Providing a forum for contemporary issues in education through local/regional Drive-in Conferences.*
- *Training offered both on a statewide and regional basis.*
- *Participation in a two-day statewide Spring Conference and one-day Fall Conference, featuring nationally known consultants.*
- *Maintaining a working relationship, representation, and a leadership role in International ASCD.*

Contact:

Office of the Exec. Director, Georgia ASCD • Aderhold Hall • The University of Georgia • Athens, Georgia 30602

Annual Dues: \$25.00

What is the Relationship Between Georgia ASCD and ASCD?

Georgia ASCD is an independent state unit affiliated with international ASCD through compatible constitutions and participation in the governance of ASCD through membership on the national board of directors.

ASCD provides special services and assistance to the state unit. On approval of the Georgia ASCD board, the state president recommends national committee appointments, articles for national publication, and programs for the national conventions. Georgia ASCD and ASCD cooperate still further in providing the opportunity for joint dues solicitation.

Georgia ASCD Membership Application

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$25.00 in payment of the membership fee for the Georgia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development during 1999-2000.

Miss, Ms., Mrs., Mr., Dr. _____

Title, Responsibilities _____

Work Address _____

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Member of National ASCD: Yes No

Please Return This Application & Check To:

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Georgia ASCD Award Recognition Program

Georgia ASCD presents six Quality Educational Leadership Awards at the Spring Conference in March. The awards and nomination qualifications are as follows:

CHILDREN FIRST

This award recognizes an individual or group of individuals for initiative in developing and implementing a program consistent with the mission and beliefs of Georgia ASCD and international ASCD. The award includes a \$500 stipend.

The criteria used in selecting the Children First award recipients are demanding. The group or individual must:

- Advocate good schooling for “at-risk” students;
- Use talent, commitment, and energy to positively influence the education of “at-risk” students;
- Champion increased financial support of strategies resulting in high achievement for “at-risk” students;
- Enhance the capacity of districts and schools to recruit and retain the “best and brightest” personnel; and
- Identify, develop, and support programs that serve the needs of “at-risk” students and their families.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT (Leadership Kelly)

This award recognizes an individual or group of individuals for initiative in developing and implementing a program consistent with the mission and values of Georgia ASCD that has had a powerful impact on the improvement of instruction in Georgia. Nominations must be submitted by Georgia ASCD members; however, the individual or group does not have to hold Georgia ASCD membership.

CAREER PERFORMANCE (Career Kelly)

This award recognizes an individual member of Georgia ASCD whose cumulative accomplishments show exemplary professional dedication and good works consistent with the mission and values of Georgia ASCD. Nominations must be submitted by Georgia ASCD members.

QUALITY CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOLS AWARD (QUSIE)

This award recognizes an individual or group in the non-school community who has developed and sponsored an initiative which has substantially supported the mission and values of Georgia ASCD. Nominations must be submitted by Georgia ASCD members.

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION MINI-GRANT AWARD

This mini-grant, in the amount of \$250.00, is awarded to the individual who implements an

innovative research-based program that supports the ten belief statements of Georgia ASCD. Nominations must be submitted by Georgia ASCD members.

RAY BRUCE FELLOWSHIP FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This fellowship recognizes one outstanding individual who is currently enrolled in a graduate program in educational leadership or instructional supervision at an accredited institution of higher learning in the state of Georgia. A \$250 cash award to go toward graduate study will be presented to an individual who has demonstrated initiative and commitment to education consistent with the mission and values of Georgia ASCD. Nominations may be submitted by a college dean, department chair, advisor, or any Georgia ASCD member. An individual does not have to hold Georgia ASCD membership to be nominated.

Applications for the awards are available from Georgia ASCD District Directors or you may contact:

Jean Walker
Awards Chair
Gwinnett County Schools
School Improvement
Department
P.O. Box 343
Lawrenceville, GA 30046
(770) 513-6609

Character Education as 21st Century Citizenship

Guest Editors:

Jamil Zainaldin ♦ President ♦ Georgia Humanities Council

Paul Weimer ♦ Director ♦ Georgia Center for Character Education, Georgia Humanities Council

Introduction



Jamil Zainaldin

Character Education has now become part of our national discourse. Presidential candidates from both political parties have pledged their support for it. The Governor of Georgia has supported legislation that mandates its teaching in all schools beginning in 2000. The Georgia Superintendent of Schools has created the Georgia Character Education Partnership. Twenty-two other states have enacted Character Education legislation of one kind or another and others are considering it. Where is this coming from?

Certainly, the school shootings in Colorado and Georgia have prompted a national discussion over how best to ensure the safety and security of our children. These discussions are shadows of larger ongoing rumblings in our public discourse. We are worried about our communities, worried about the emotional, physical, and economic wellbeing of our children, worried about a decline in civility, worried about a democracy where fewer and fewer people bother to vote, and worried about the influences of media (and commercialism) that glorify violence, hedonism, and greed.

To be sure, there are positive trends as the nation basks in the glow of a strong economy and world leadership. The United States remains a powerful magnet to people in other lands, its philanthropic impulses felt far beyond its borders. Still, there is cause for concern—who would deny that?—and reasons for acting.

As it becomes better known, Character Education (CE) is attracting practitioners and advocates. Some of the more commonly expressed fears about CE (“whose values will you teach?”) are beginning to recede as a greater variety of perspectives join the discussion. In the process, we are learning that parents, schools, and communities want many of the same things and that raising ethical, educated, and healthy children is a goal most share.

As we enter a new Millennium, “Citizenship” is a helpful metaphor for much of CE. Democracy requires a spirit of citizenship. Citizenship depends for its survival on a respect for learning, trust,

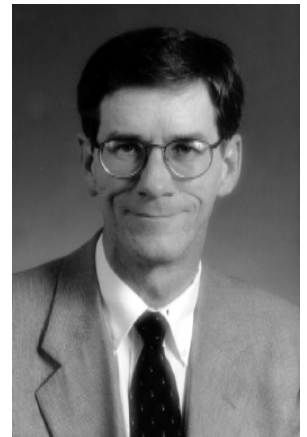
respect for the other person, respect for self, honesty in our dealings, courage to lead, a spirit of inclusion, compassion, a willingness to sacrifice and to serve, toleration of differing points of view, freedom of expression, creativity, self-restraint. These values are fundamental to our democracy and serve as its national civic currency. We are as apt to think of ourselves as wanting to be “good citizens” in the polling booth as in our families, in our friendships, in our communities, in our workplaces, and in our classrooms.

In the essays that follow we will hear the voice and experience of a superintendent, class room teacher, principal, psychologist, historian, scholar, advocate, community activist, author, corporate employee, non-profit leader, elected official.

Three articles take a national perspective by looking at the impact of the media (Ryan), the principles of Character Education from both a historical and present-day perspective (Vincent), and the connections among CE, community, and citizenship (Zainaldin).

Several articles look at Character Education from the vantage of schools or counties. Each offers its own twist, philosophy, or strategy (Parsons, Morgan, Dolinger, Guillory, Morris, Woods, and Adler). The experience of one child and a teacher in an alternative school suggests the importance of leading by example (Shorthouse).

We have a variety of theory/practice/approach contributions. One (Gootman) argues that “caring” in the total school environment is at the heart of all character building activity. In a selection on “how to think about Character Education,” the writer (Weimer) gives us the good news that most schools and faculty already have the tools to implement a sound, comprehensive program. Sound advice for any school considering a comprehensive approach ap-



Paul Weimer

Continued on page 40

Character Education and Education Reform

Roy E. Barnes Governor State of Georgia

I am pleased to have the opportunity to be part of this special issue of *THE REPORTER*. Education is one of my highest priorities as Governor and Character Education is an important part of education reform.

It was no coincidence that a mandate requiring Character Education in Georgia schools was part of the *Improved Student Learning Environment and Discipline Act of 1999*, which for the first time put into state statute a requirement that Character Education be taught in every school. This reflected a consensus among educators, parents and elected officials that Character Education needed to be highlighted. It was also very intentional that parental involvement was stipulated on both the discipline and Character Education sides of that law. Parents are the first and lifelong educators of our young people, and they must be involved in the teaching of values, in the enforcement of good behaviors and in the correction of bad behaviors.

In the school setting, it has always been the mission of the educator to relay skills for success in life. These lessons take the form of not only the traditional “three R’s” of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also an ever-increasing array of technical skills that prepare our children for success in the workplace. Equally important are the life lessons that come through the study of history, the social sciences, the arts and all the other subject areas that help us to gain an understanding of the world around us. Study in these subjects helps us to sort out who we are, where we’ve been and where we may go in the future.

In addition, bound up tightly in all these areas of study are lessons about character – what it means to be honest, courageous and respectful; what has worked and what has

not in our lives as individuals, as communities and as societies, and scores of other values that young people must learn. These lessons go to the heart of citizenship and being a responsible member of society.

A comprehensive approach to Character Education recognizes an opportunity to think intentionally about how what we already do in the school can reinforce the kind of expectations for behavior that parents and the larger community strive for. It invites the business community and other organizations to reflect on the kind of habits and character that will contribute to success in work and life and to imagine how these might be supported during the school



Roy E. Barnes

“Education is one of my highest priorities as Governor and Character Education is an important part of education reform.”

years and beyond. It requires an effort to understand and appreciate how what we may already be doing and teaching contributes to the formation of character and an effort to imagine new or additional strategies to enrich the lives of our young people.

In this respect, Character Education is not so much a single curriculum as it is a commitment to an ongoing process that extends from home to schools to the workforce and beyond. I commend the Georgia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development for their foresight in devoting a special issue to this subject. I invite you to read the essays in this issue and to take to heart the commitment to be a part of Character Education in your daily life.

commend the Georgia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development for their foresight in devoting a special issue to this subject. I invite you to read the essays in this issue and to take to heart the commitment to be a part of Character Education in your daily life.

Principles of Character Education

Philip Vincent ♦ Director

Character Development Group ♦ Chapel Hill, North Carolina



Philip Vincent

“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children.”

John Dewey

Let us take Dewey’s maxim seriously and ask the question, “Assume that I am one of the best and wisest parents. What would I want for my child as well as all the children in my community?” I would imagine that each of us would want a safe community for our children to play. We may desire a community in which groups such as Boy and Girl Scouts as well as other social opportunities are available for all children. Perhaps we would desire faith communities of all persuasions to be actively involved in the life of our children. Finally, we would want our schools to be supportive of our work as parents and community members.

We would recognize that schools have two missions: the first is to help children become smart and skilled in the academic demands. The second fostering a climate where children learn to “know, love and do the good,” in other words, academics and Character Education would represent the role of the schools. Putting it all together we want a community that understands and applies Martin Buber’s observation that “Education worthy of its name is essentially education of character.”

Should this be an important role of

public schools? Historically the answer was a resounding yes. Dr. B. Edward McClellan in his work, *Schools and the Shaping of Character: Moral Education in America 1607- present* (1992), illustrates the importance citizenship placed on Character Education from the first public schools until the 1960’s. The methods of infusion of character, from *McGuffey’s Readers* to service

clubs, may have changed, but the importance of Character Education within the schools went unabated. By the 1960’s, the Vietnam War and other cultural upheavals had Americans reeling. Cultural relativism was leading the way as Americans questioned whether there could be common ground or even common standards concerning what was good or right. Educators claimed, “If we can’t come to an agreement on what good character is, then perhaps we should leave it out.” To avoid controversy and unpleasantness, it was easier and perhaps “safer” for public school teachers to abdicate the instruc-

tion of virtues to parents and the faith community. Thus for the first time in our history, public schools were no longer intentionally focusing on helping children “know, love and do the good.”

What was the effect? Values clarification, an approach in which all values are treated the same with equal moral standing, was placed in the public schools. Scenarios were presented to children, such as the lifeboat dilemma in which there is only room for twenty and there are twenty-one who want to be in the lifeboat. Who gets left behind? According to values clarification, no matter what is stated, the “answer” is correct because all values have the same moral standing. It should not be surprising that this would occur. Nietzsche had called for it. Gertrude Himmelfarb in her thoughtful book, *The Demoralization of Society* (1996) noted that Nietzsche degraded virtues that represented standards of a particular people to values that were subjective and personal. “Values brought with it the assumptions that all moral ideas are subjective and relative, that they are mere customs and conventions, that they have a purely instrumental, utilitarian purpose and that they are peculiar to specific individuals and societies.” If codes of morality are couched in values instead of virtues then personal choices trump social or moral standards. Values clarification represented Nietzsche’s “transvaluation of values.”

In the 1980’s, there was a focus on

*Education worthy of
its name is
essentially
education of
character.*

—Martin Buber

helping children develop or obtain self-esteem. It was as if feeling good was equated with being good. It is not. I can feel good by robbing a liquor store and having plenty of liquor and hopefully a little money. This does not mean I have been good. True self esteem is tied to success and improvement. It is not given away...it is earned. The goal of the teacher, parent or community member is to establish the conditions so a child may earn his/her self-esteem through effort.

Starting in the 1990's there has been a renewed interest in Character Education. We are finally realizing that we as a culture have failed to inculcate standards in our children, such as respect, responsibility and caring that are so important in developing a virtuous people. Led by thinkers such as Thomas Lickona, Kevin Ryan, William Bennett and Gertrude Himmelfarb, Character Education is finding a place at many public as well as private schools in America. How are schools doing this?

They have returned to a recognition of the truths of Plato and Aristotle. Plato felt that if one intellectually sought the good, one could know and then practice it. Aristotle felt that there

are two kinds of virtue, one being the intellectual virtue of Plato and the other the practices and eventual habits that one develops which shape one's character.

To be successful, schools must combine Plato and Aristotle. What do successful character building schools and communities look like?

Character developing schools recognize that not all character is taught—much is caught. Therefore the instructors must model as well as teach the character traits to students. The teaching involves the use of consistent rules and procedures that are designed to foster practices of civility and kindness. If you want children to be respectful they must have this modeled and also taught intentionally and practiced. Students must also work cooperatively. This does not mean they spend all their time engaged in cooperative learning. There is much that must be individually mastered. It does mean that cooperative learning and work must be a part of the pedagogy of the school.

Schools must also place literature and narratives rich in meaning at the forefront of their curriculum planning. It does matter what students read. For example, students should read, discuss and understand the *Declaration of Independence*, *The United States Constitution*, *The Gettysburg Address*, and *King's Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Younger students should be exposed to *Aesop's Fables*, *Amazing Grace*, *The Coyote Tales* and other readings that instruct them on standards of excellence in action and behavior. All students must be intimately acquainted with great literature, poetry, and parables that are uplifting to the human spirit. Our students should also explore patriotism and civility and develop the habits of respect and responsibility through the arts. Finally our children

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can only learn to care by the practice of caring. This requires that they serve others both in and outside the school environment. This can involve high schools working in elementary schools, 5th graders assisting 1st graders in reading or working in nursing homes, and so on. What is important is that children as well as the adults understand that the more you give, the more you receive.

We must also involve our communities. It does take a community to insure a child receives all the possible role models and lessons which will enable him/her to “know, love and do the good.”

The following are eight suggestions on what communities and community groups can do to support the school and build healthy moral communities for all its citizens.

- *The School Board must support the character developing efforts of the school as well as the community. The school*

Continued on page 10

**“
In the 1980's, there
was a focus on
helping children
develop or obtain
self-esteem. It was
as if feeling good
was equated with
being good. It is
not.
”**

board should treat Character Education as an important mission of the school equal to the focus on academics. This sends a powerful message to the community. The board should also recognize the efforts of those in the community that are working to promote character and civility. Recognizing a "Citizen of the Month" from the community as well as the school can do this.

- *The school district's character "point person" should speak to all service organizations concerning how they can support Character Education in the schools as well as the community.* Support can be financial as well as moral support. For example, a Rotary Club might involve students in some of their service work. A Civitan Club might choose to sponsor a school professional library on Character Education. A 4-H Club might organize a stream cleaning activity and ecology training for a high school. What is important is that key social groups and organizations give verbal and modeling support to the character efforts of the schools and community as a whole.

- *The faith communities must be involved.* Faith communities must be involved in assisting the schools in their character efforts. Several years ago, religious leaders in Cumberland County, North Carolina agreed to preach once a month on the character trait that was being emphasized in the schools us-

ing their interpretation of their holy books. Other faith organizations have worked with schools on how their members might tutor students as examples of modeling service as well as having students assist faith communities in their service efforts, e.g. soup kitchens.

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- *All community-sponsored recreational opportunities must give the character message.* It is true that as a nation we are failing to teach the importance of sportsmanship. I believe a county or community recreational association should form a committee to determine what good sportsmanship is and how adults can model this to our children. The list of traits and practices should be given to all coaches, parents, and athletes. They should sign a pledge to abide by these guidelines in the recreational arena. Those who continually violate these guidelines should be temporarily removed from the recreational organization. Several examples go a long way.

- *All public meetings should strive to be civil in their dealing among themselves and with the community.* There are many controversial issues that County Commissioners, City Council or School Boards must consider. They must strive to act with civility and caring towards themselves and their fellow citizens. They must seek to be moral models even if those around them are failing.

- *Media outlets should seek to recognize acts of good character in the schools and in the community.* I have been told that good news does not sell, but I beg to disagree. How many of us loved Charles Kuralt's "On the Road" series on CBS-TV? It celebrated the goodness of our nation. I don't believe we get enough of this. Where are the examples of people giving of themselves to help others? Take some time to celebrate this with us viewers. Not all news is bad. Some is quite wonderful. I believe the print media can be especially helpful and influential. Newspapers can do focus stories on people in the community and tie this to their character traits. If the school is going to focus on caring, present historical examples of people who have acted with great caring towards others. Give examples of local citizens. Finally, offer suggestions on how the citizenry can promote caring in the community over the next month as well as throughout the year.

- *Business must take the time to recognize and celebrate good character among their employ-*

ees. When you hire someone do you not try to determine something about the person other than his/her technical or intellectual skills? Most employers report that people who are respectful of others, responsible in their work, caring towards others make good employees. We should take time to recognize this in our employees. We can also include reminders about the importance of character in paychecks, bulletins, and during meetings.

- *Finally, all our efforts must funnel toward the support of families.* The future of our nation rests with our first teachers—our families. Whatever we can do to help families in their effort to raise children who “know, love and do the good” as a community and ultimately a nation, we must do. Put bluntly, although the parents are the keys, we all have a role in helping “raise up” the future of our country.

As an outsider, I have been a careful observer in Georgia’s efforts to bring Character Education to every child and ultimately community. This is no small undertaking. It will demand a great deal of work on the part of educators and citizens within the state. We must take the time to learn from others who have begun the work in their schools and communities. Dr. Mary Alice Morgan and the citizens of Bibb County are moving in this direction. The wonderful people at Georgia Mili-

tary College are taking their efforts to the community both in their service and in their willingness to start and continue the dialogue on the importance of Character Education. The federal character grant Georgia received will allow three districts—Atlanta City, Cobb County and Habersham—to try various approaches and hopefully play a leadership role in curriculum, climate and community leadership develop-

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The school board should treat character education as an important mission of the school equal to the focus on academics.
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ment. Their efforts should merit our attention. I have great faith in the Department of Education and the Georgia Humanities Council’s Center for Character Education to facilitate and lead in this great undertaking. The question is whether we, as teachers and citizens, choose to be adequate to the challenge. Since I am known as someone who loves to make points with stories I ask you, the gentle reader, to indulge me as this essay comes to a conclusion.

Two Protestant ministers, one Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi were on the troop ship *Dorchester* during

WWII. The ship was torpedoed and these four individuals gave up their life jackets so that others might survive. When last seen, they were singing religious songs as the ship sank. One of the chaplains had written a letter to his wife and family several months earlier in which he said, “War is a dangerous business. Please do not pray that God will only keep me safe. Pray that God will make me adequate.” I think he was adequate (LeGette, 1999).

The question we must ask ourselves is whether we will choose to be adequate and bring Character Education back to the forefront of our nation’s dialogue, focus and efforts. I think we are adequate if we commit and recognize that this should be our purpose in life. Helping us, others and especially our children “know, love and do the good” must be *our* greatest secular calling. Let’s get busy.

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The Moral Imagination: Adrift in a Media Sea

Kevin Ryan ♦ Director Emeritus

Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character ♦ Boston University



Kevin Ryan

For ten years, from 1987 to 1997, I began each semester with a simple inventory of my students in an undergraduate education course. Over that period I collected inventories from over eighteen hundred students, all planning to be teachers. Among the questions I asked during that first encounter were “Who is your hero or heroine?” and, “Who, other than Hitler, do you consider evil?” They were told that they could select someone living or dead, real or from fiction. The paucity of answers to this second question suggests that it was clearly the more difficult for the students. Many left the space blank or wrote in “Nobody.” One particularly memorable answer was “My supervisor in the Men’s Underwear Department at Filene’s Basement.” It was, however, in their answers to the first question that the students revealed most about their inner lives. Many students mentioned a parent or relative. Many, too, left this question blank. Most, though, answered with the name of a public figure. Over the years, perhaps forty of the eighteen hundred plus students mentioned Martin Luther King; another, approximately equal number wrote in Mother Teresa. About half that number mentioned Jesus Christ and John F. Kennedy, although Kennedy’s name rarely appeared in the latter five years. Most striking, however, was the omnipresence of television and film stars, singers and musicians and often entire groups,

such as the cast of “Friends” or the Back Street Boys.

My informal survey mirrored a similar annual survey of 8th to 12th grade students conducted by the Rand Corporation. This study, based on a national random sample, asked the same question “Who is your hero or heroine?” and showed similar results. Teenaged Americans take as their heroes Eddie Murphy, Mariah Carey, Julia Roberts, Mike Tyson, and Michael Jordan with a sprinkling of high

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**Who is your
hero or
heroine?**
”

profile politicians, such as Barbara Bush and Ronald Reagan. Overwhelmingly, though, students identified performers and entertainers as their heroes. Presumably, these are individuals whose lives they are trying to emulate.

Recently I came across an account of George Washington’s life in which the biographer described the young Washington’s efforts to educate himself isolated as he was on his Tidewater plantation (Brookhiser, 1996). As was the fashion of the time, he carefully read

Plutarch’s Lives with an eye not merely to deepen his knowledge of the great figures of antiquity, but to select a life model, an example that he would use to guide the crafting of his own character. Washington selected Cincinnatus, the great hero-general, who shunned leadership, wanting only to ply the land as a farmer. After coming out of retirement and beating back the barbarian hordes threatening Rome, the senators wanted to make him Emperor. He refused, telling them that his heart was on his farm. Throughout Washington’s life, at key moments such as the surrender of the British at Yorktown, Cincinnatus’s example guided him. When Washington’s generals and lieutenants came to him saying they wished to take him to New York City to make him king of the newly independent nation, he coldly rebuked them and said he was returning to Mount Vernon. A powerful example had prepared Washington for many of life’s hardships, including crucial moral choices.

From the time of the Greek to the latest journal of cognitive psychology, human example has been recognized as the primary way we humans learn how to be social beings. The great English political philosopher, Edmund Burke, only slightly overstated the case when he wrote, “Example is the school of mankind and they will learn at no other.” Philosophers, religious leaders and wise parents have continually affirmed the importance of good examples to put us in touch with what Lincoln called “our better angels.” The Humanities have had a particularly crucial mission to be carriers

of our moral heritage. We make contact with this source of moral wisdom primarily through the lives, the examples, found in texts from Homer to Eliot's Prufrock. These stories instruct us about what it is to be human and, also, how we are capable of betraying our humanity. These narratives, biographical or fictional, have been humanity's teaching tools from the nomads' campfires down through the centuries to the present. Through these tales of individuals' struggles and failures and victories, educators have attempted to ignite the moral imagination of the young and to engage them in the task of carrying humanity further and higher. At this moment in our long march, the classic stories have been buried by a blizzard of lesser tales. Television, which many consider the first curriculum in the lives of our children, is continually presenting them narratives of people. But what kinds of people? Living what kinds of lives?

While it is unfashionable in polite company to suggest that children need to learn to be human beings, it is a truth nevertheless. Even the most satisfied parents would, with a little reflection, acknowledge temper tantrums or gross self-centeredness in the past of their now thriving accountant son or software engineer daughter. This not-ready-for-prime-time quality of children, however, is easily recognized during a weekend visit to the Mall or the Multiplex. Socrates' cranky complaint "children are tyrants.... They contradict their parents, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers," seems tame, however, in the era of the Trench Coat Mafia, binge drinking and rampant sexual promiscuity. Still, though, American adults, parents, teachers and community members take what is historically an extremely passive or permissive view toward the young. With few family farms or small businesses, we have little work for them at home. Since

in recent years schools have cut way back on homework, our children have vast amounts of leisure time, time that they are free to fill with whatever their unchecked pleasure principle puts in their way. We give them "their space" physically, but especially morally and intellectually.

While the widespread delinquencies, pathologies and sheer unhappiness

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A powerful example had prepared Washington for many of life's hardships, including crucial moral choices.
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of our young get attention, the cause is rarely identified. Causation in human affairs is always difficult to pin down precisely. However, it is a brute fact that adults, particularly parents and teachers have been given the responsibility for creating healthy environments for our children. We are expected to create environments, that is, homes and classrooms, where they learn our core moral values and where they learn how to weave

them into their daily lives. But there has been a break. Our species wisdom that children needed to be formed, captured in such truisms "As the twig is bent, the child will grow" has been drowned out by more insistent slogans "You're only goin' around once. Get all the gusto you can." We have believed the romantic, 'Dewey-eyed' educators who have said that it is incorrect to "impose" our values on our children. Rather we should let them discover the "more authentic" moral values that come from within. We have been lulled into a belief that providing affection and opportunities (i.e., computers in the classroom, soccer camp, unlimited amounts of Pokemon cards or whatever the latest commercial craze happens to be) will suffice. But while parents and teachers have been on vacation from their primary responsibilities to help children form good habits, which constitute good character, others have invaded their lives.

This struggle to humanize our children is hardly a lost cause. Throughout history, societies have rallied to save their children and re-engage them with their moral heritage. In this effort, we clearly need to cut off the stream of toxic images from television, from the music and film industries and from the other commercially driven influences feeding on our children. But that will not be enough. We need to reseed in their hearts and minds the great narratives, the great stories which will tell them not only who they are, but more important what they can become. This is the essential task of the educator. This is the essence of the Humanities.

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Dr. Ryan is Director Emeritus of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University. He is the author of many books and articles on Character Education, most recently co-authoring *Building Character in Schools: Practical Ways to Bring Moral Instruction to Life* (1999) with Karen Bohlin.

Building Vital Communities and Strong Citizens: The Character Education Connection

Jamil S. Zainaldin ♦ President ♦ Georgia Humanities Council



Jamil S. Zainaldin

Community is a vague word and it means different things. It is geographic, from local to regional to national and even international. We use “community” in all these contexts, as well as referring to groups that make up our communities. Community also applies to personal identity, professional association, avocation, and so forth.

A form of community that is often highly identified with the United States is the “voluntary association” that the Frenchman and aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville immortalized in his mid-19th century observation that Americans are joiners. In this sense, communities are organizational, those places where people come together. A bowling league makes up a community, as does a Rotary Club and Girl Scout Troop. Faith communities are one of the most common of voluntary associations, and they exist along side networks of “joined” action such as preservation societies, literacy efforts, soup kitchens, the PTA, and even government itself.

What most excited de Tocqueville about communities was their linkage with democracy. He worried that democracy would run awry in the new American nation unless people understood how to act like citizens. And where do they learn that? From voluntary associations. Lacking in patience, courtesy, respect for others, toleration of differing points of view, he saw Americans as capable of trampling

on each other’s rights—or worse. Voluntary associations, on the other hand, could counteract that tendency by habituating Americans into working with others, getting along, hearing and listening, joining, sharing a mission, acting, and developing vision. Voluntary associations are the vital link between the lonely individual and the group. They are one of the necessary bridges from personal isolation to membership in the group. They are the answer to the question “what difference can one person make?”

“Helping shape the child’s character has been one of the functions, if not the function, of the public school in American history.”

De Tocqueville introduced the language of citizenship to the modern world. In the post Civil War era, all persons born in the United States are citizens. However, action turns political fact into a craft—citizenship. Today, we commonly think of ourselves as a nation of consumers. Consumers are takers. We are also a nation of citizens. Citizens are givers. De Tocqueville was talking about the world of “giving” not “getting.” Keeping citizenship alive is important. When we stop being citizens and become just consumers, we become little more than a collection of greedy people bound together by

our self-absorption. How can we talk about serving or respecting others in a world where taking is what matters? All of us are, in fact, takers because we are also all consumers. However, we are also capable of being citizens by virtue of an attitude that must be cultivated to stay alive.

When we speak of “building vital communities” we mean helping make communities strong. Vital communities have characteristics, like people—and these characteristics can be keyed to the specific traits contained in Georgia’s character education mandate.

- Vital communities nurture leadership. They cultivate their leaders and encourage others in taking on a difficult and at times impossible assignment. Vital communities recognize that leadership is shared, not the domain of a single person. If leadership is shared, that means that at one time or another, many of us are followers as well as leaders. The art of followership is as important as leadership. Leaders draw their strength and their vision from a conversation with the led. There must be, among the led, a capacity for vision if leadership is to thrive (character trait examples: courage, patriotism, citizenship, patience, loyalty).
- Vital communities are inspirational. Human beings do their best when motivated by an ideal. Life becomes worthy by the meaning that we give to it. Our sense of worth is a product of our mind, our soul, our imagination, those things

that give us a sense of what is possible and personally affirming. Inspiration is the enemy of the short-lived urges that make us mere consumers. Inspiration and vision are two sides of a coin. (Character trait examples: creativity, respect for the creator, respect for self, school pride)

● Vital communities nurture and cultivate their children. They understand that their children are the next generation of leaders and citizens. Cultivating children means caring, minding, and educating the head and the heart and teaching children what is good. (Character trait examples: honesty, virtue, fairness, courage, kindness, self-control, cleanliness)

● Vital communities practice inclusion. They understand that true communities are powerful by including everyone, by recognizing our common humanity and therefore right of membership. The opposite of inclusion is division. (Character trait examples: generosity, cooperation, sportsmanship, citizenship, respect for others)

● Vital communities empower. The qualities of leadership, inclusion, and empowerment work toward common goals. Empowerment invites individuals to see themselves as able to make a difference, as worthy, as givers. Dignity, self-hood and connection with others are the fruits of empowerment. From connection grows responsibility. (Character trait examples: self-respect, patriotism)

● Vital communities instill responsible attitudes. Responsibility recognizes that there are legitimate “other” interests that coexist with my own. These “other” interests limit or expand my own voluntary options. Responsible attitudes allow us to think in terms of “thou” as well as “we,” to think beyond the “I/me.” Responsibility turns individuals into citizens. (Character trait examples: compassion, cooperation, kindness)

● Vital communities remind us that we are all living models of behavior—all the time. Children learn from watching, from listening. What we say and do, for good or for ill, are the messages we give to young people about how to live life. Vital communities do not let us forget that fact. (Character trait examples: diligence, honesty, fairness, cheerfulness, loyalty, perseverance)

Where do education and the Humanities fit in to this picture? By Humanities I mean history, literature, language, philosophy, ethics—thought, reflection, dialogue, the study of values. The Humanities are present in the curriculum in all grade levels. The Humanities are the head and the heart working together. They are food for citizenship, the conscience of communities.

“Our best teachers always have been and always will be character educators. It is, they believe, the whole point of education.”

Humanities are stories, in their simplest. They are stories read and told, and shared. Stories are the building blocks of the craft of citizenship. They have the capacity to do this, and always have, because they have the power to inspire. Inspiration is central to leadership. Inspiration is part of imagination; communities need imagination to understand how our separate members in fact are linked by their humanity and even share a common past and future. (Character traits: creativity, respect for others)

The Humanities are a traditional source of wisdom. They give us the “rules of life’s road.” Wisdom grows out of the ability to distinguish self and others not as separate entities, but as relational. We are joined with one another at the hip, if we but have the wisdom to see. (Character

trait examples: respect for self, respect for others, courage, cooperation, self-control)

The Humanities promote empathy. What better way to know about the other than to walk in her shoes, see the world through the eyes of another, find common connections in tragedy, pain, and joy. To be brought into another’s life is the essence of story and the beginning of empathy. (Character trait examples: compassion, loyalty, generosity, kindness)

The Humanities give us context. The world’s boundaries do not stop at our front doors. Nor did all intelligent life begin the day we were born. We fit into something bigger—something that preceded us, helped shaped us, and remains a reference point beyond us after we are gone from this earth. Context creates a possibility for responsibility: it places our portrait in a bigger picture, with the portraits of others, which then pull on us. The Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. is a living example of this power. (Character trait examples: patriotism, citizenship, respect for the environment)

Vital communities are practitioners of the craft of citizenship. They have developed the fine skills of learning how to give and to honor what is worthy. Giving is a daily challenge to every one of us, one that we are adept at avoiding. Because democracy depends on a spirit of citizenship to survive, it has had its skeptics, critics, and doubters. The Humanities—our history, our literature, our individual stories and the stories of our families, our communities, our state, our nation, and the world—are one way of keeping the craft of citizenship oiled. This view is not the sum total of the Humanities, which can have different meanings and which, in any event, predate democracy by millennia. Rather it is a fortunate connection and one that education reformers historically employed to develop models of good character and citizenship.

In Georgia, the craft of citizenship is a priority. We rank low nationally in voter turn out. In metropolitan Atlanta, we are facing a new pluralism of a complexity and diversity that many residents have not yet fully recognized. Beyond Atlanta, we have

Continued on page 16

a thin civic infrastructure, a situation not uncommon to rural populations elsewhere in the United States with under-served populations. Forging vital communities in these new, and older, environments is a challenge.

There are places where this work must take place, foremost in the family, but also in our public institutions and faith traditions. The school has a special role to play because it is the first community our children encounter beyond the home. Helping shape the child's character has been one of the functions, if not *the* function, of the public school in American history.

Georgia's new Character Education mandate recognizes this role by calling education back to its traditional purpose of teaching the head and the heart.

There are thousands of opportunities in the existing curriculum of Georgia, especially in the social studies and language arts, to teach the lessons that build good citizens and vital communities. Character Education is also academic; it is the lessons and messages contained in the academic subject matter that is waiting to be uncovered by our teachers. Our best teachers always have been and always will be "character educators." It is, they believe, the whole point of education.

This is a challenging task, to say the least. For starters, many of us are rusty,

or plain inexperienced. Since World War II the goal of Character Education has been eclipsed by other educational priorities that continue to accumulate, dominating our time and attention. How well we do as a nation in the new Millennium will depend largely on how well we all do in shaping our future citizens. With the new Character Education mandate, Georgia has an opportunity to point the way to the rest of the nation. Much may depend on our success.

Dr. Zainaldin, an historian, is President of the Georgia Humanities Council.

The Georgia Center for Character Education

Jason Wetzel ♦ Associate Director ♦ Georgia Center for Character Education



Jason Wetzel

The Georgia Center for Character Education is a project of the **Georgia Humanities Council** in partnership with the **Georgia Department of Education** with additional financial support from the **Georgia Power Foundation**. The mission of the Georgia Center for Character Education is to collect and disseminate information to assist local school boards, school personnel, organizations, policy makers, parents and communities in complying with the General Assembly mandate for Character Education instruction.

The Center is located in the office of the **Georgia Humanities Council** in Atlanta. A plan for the development of a web site that is also linked to the **Department of Education** is in progress. The Center may be reached through the general number for the Georgia Humanities Council: (404) 523-6220. The address is 50 Hurt Plaza, S.E., Suite 1565, Atlanta, Georgia 30303. The fax number is (404) 523-5702.

The primary purpose of the Center is to provide information to those interested in Character Education concepts, resources, and practices. Because the Georgia Center for Character Education recommends a comprehensive approach, it does not endorse any specific products, vendors, or agencies. Nonetheless, the Center recognizes that communities may wish to explore approaches based on specific curriculum products. In order to serve the widest possible base of users, the Center is developing a physical collection of books, articles, vendor-produced materials (curriculum and other), information about programs currently in use in Georgia, and model lesson plans developed by Georgia educators.

The Center is developing a "Speakers and Consultants Resource Guide" that will list educators, scholars, experts and specialists, parents, business and civic leaders, faith leaders and others who have experience and interest in the field of Character Education. Also in progress is a "Community Partners Resource Guide" of organizations, service groups, associations, businesses, foundations, and others who

share a Character Education mission in Georgia and are available as partners for communities and schools.

We are in the process of developing a web site. It will contain bibliographies, sample lesson plans, profiles of local programs, conference announcements, product overviews, new and noteworthy books or articles. It will also highlight training opportunities in Georgia and elsewhere, and special initiatives or news made available through the **Georgia Department of Education** and the **Georgia Humanities Council**.

In all of these areas the Center's staff welcomes your assistance! Feel free to call or write to us to share—whether it is news regarding programs or to share materials, curricula, organizations or other initiatives. We look forward to hearing from you.

Mr. Wetzel is Associate Director of the Georgia Center for Character Education, representing the Federal Programs Area of the Georgia Department of Education.

Character Education in Georgia Schools

Linda C. Schrenko ♦ State Superintendent of Schools ♦ Georgia

In 1997, the General Assembly asked the Department of Education to create a comprehensive model for Character Education for grades K-12. The guide includes 27 traits including courage, loyalty, honesty, moderation, respect and responsibility. You might notice that these are not new words or concepts. They've been around a long time. What is different is that today our children are assailed every day by shallow, sensational and negative messages. The norm has become for some, extremely abnormal behavior. Students are often confused by the mixed messages played out in the media. They don't know what to value or how to act. And too often in the past schools have tried to become "value neutral" and have succeeded in becoming valueless! Georgia's Character Education programs are helping to reverse the valueless trend by actively promoting and integrating character and value into every subject we teach.

In the 2000-2001 school year, every school in Georgia will be incorporating Character Education in every grade level. We realize that no one can be successful if we do not work with our businesses, community leaders and most of all our parents who are our children's first and most important

teachers. To help local systems do this, the Georgia Character Education Partnership formed - it is a collaboration with the Department of Education, the Georgia Humanities Council and three very special school systems. These three systems had already invested time and money into Character Education. So it was fitting that they were co-recipients of a \$1 million dollar federal


Council over four years and develop Character Education programs that fit their communities. They will become models for other systems in Georgia and throughout the nation.



Linda C.
Schrenko

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We realize that no one can be successful if we do not work with our businesses, community leaders and most of all our parents who are our children's first and most important teachers.
”

grant for Character Education in Georgia. The systems are the Atlanta Public Schools, the Cobb County Schools, and the Habersham County Schools. These urban, suburban and rural counties will work with the Department of Education and the Georgia Humanities

At the same time, schools and systems throughout Georgia are making plans to meet the legislated mandate--and many of these programs will also emerge as models worthy of emulation and replication. For this reason, the Department of Education partnered with the Georgia Humanities Council and Georgia Power Company to establish the Georgia Center for Character Education. Based in Atlanta, the Center's mission is to be a resource to local schools and systems in their work to establish Character Education programs. The Center seeks to collect information about ongoing initiatives around the state and the nation for the purpose of sharing best practices as widely as possible. I urge you to share the successes of your emerging programs with the Center, and to call on its resources as you develop programs in your own communities. 

Ms. Linda C. Schrenko is the first woman to be elected State Superintendent of Schools in Georgia. She has been in office since 1994. Prior to her election, Ms. Schrenko was a teacher, counselor, principal, and educational consultant.

The 1997 Law— Why Character Education Mattered Then, and Now

Carl Von Epps

Member ♦ Georgia House of Representatives



Carl Von Epps

I am a Georgian. When I was a little boy, people in my family and in my neighborhood addressed our elders and our parents with “yes ma’am” and “no ma’am.” There was respect for people, and trust, and our behavior showed that. The adults knew we were watching them, too. They knew we were going to learn from their behavior. They were strict, but also fair.

Today, the simple rules of manners and courtesy seem to be heading out the window. People have changed, parents have changed, and families have changed. Even our communities have changed. We live in a different world, a technological world, and the values of civility seem like a relic of the past. It should not be that way.

Respect for one another is important if we are to have the communities that we want to raise our children in. Respect for self is important. We need a renewal of citizenship—the values that make us willing to sacrifice for others, to think about the greater good.

I believe that this work, like in my own childhood, is the fundamental responsibility of parents and families, with support from our houses of worship and communities. As I have grown older, though, I have become convinced that they need help.

For that reason, in 1997 I introduced legislation to encourage Character Education in Georgia’s schools. My bill attracted co-sponsors and passed in both houses quickly, and unanimously. I confess I was surprised. I did not expect that the legislation would attract that much attention. In hindsight, I think it showed that many people in the legislature felt as I did: the time had come to act, to put our cards on the table, to do something.

“Character education may be our best hope for true education reform.”

Initially, the legislation I proposed was mandatory. Too many people at the time worried about making Character Education a state mandate, so we made it optional. Three years later, Governor Roy E. Barnes introduced new legislation that made Character Education a mandate. Before that legislation, the State School Board had taken a similar step. Times change. Governor Barnes is a visionary, in my view, and he saw that we needed to go forward.

I also congratulate the State School Superintendent, Linda Schrenko, for her support of Character Education. She has shown leadership in helping establish the Georgia Center for Character Education, in partnership with the Georgia Humanities Council. Under the leadership of Ms. Schrenko, the Department has also received a major grant to support Character Education pilot projects in Georgia through the U.S. Department of Education.

I am one of those who believe that we learn best in school when we have a climate that supports learning. I do not think we can separate building character from true academic achievement. We need not only “smart” children, but “good-smart” children. Character Education may be our best hope for true education reform.

I think we are at the dawn of a new day. We have a Governor who speaks and acts strongly about the importance of character, in children and adults. We have an opportunity to restore in our communities and schools the values that were so important to us as we grew up.

I commend the Georgia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the Georgia Humanities Council for their leadership in putting this special issue of *THE REPORTER* together. It is a public service to the people of Georgia, and maybe even to the nation.

Carl Von Epps (D-131), a member of the Georgia House of Representatives, introduced the 1997 bill that became law. Representative Epps is also Chairperson of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus.

Editors' Note

A Brief History of Character Education in Georgia

After many years of following national trends in the ongoing endeavor to teach social skills to generations of students in Georgia, a significant step occurred in 1991 when the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted rule 160-4-2-.33, "Values Education." The Values Education Rule outlined 37 core values that fell under the broad categories of *Respect for Self*, *Respect for Others*, and *Citizenship*. The Values Rule urged K-12 instruction in the values concepts and opportunities for students to practice the values. Further, it urged the local school system to develop a plan for implementing values education, including materials and strategies to be used.

That same year the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) produced an *Implementation Guide* outlining the values concepts and strategies for implementation. A passage from the *Guide* outlines the philosophy of the Rule:

*The SBOE's values education concept is comprehensive, developmental, and continuous across grade levels and throughout the curriculum. The family is recognized as the cradle of values development, and the school's role is to complement the family's contributions. Because values education should appear explicitly through classroom instruction and implicitly through modeled behavior, the total school climate becomes extremely important.*¹

Further, the *Implementation Guide* also urged school systems to assess all aspects of the school in planning a values education approach:

*What materials are presently used? What funds are available? How can QCC objectives be keyed to the core values list? How can explicit values be conveyed in the curriculum? What kinds of opportunities on and off campus are provided for student practice of the values taught? To what degree are implicit instructional strategies used; for example, cooperative learning, developmental discipline, building positive school climate?*²

The *Implementation Guide* urged a comprehensive, blended approach to Values Education including specific instruction and implicit strategies. Modeled behavior and in-school and out-of-school activities permitted students to practice the values taught. The *Guide* also stated that "Values Education will be a local decision." Subsequently, local school approaches to Values Education became as varied as the level of commitment and creativity of local leadership.

The broad range of the 37 core values and the Rule did provide an impetus for many schools to adopt approaches (some implicit to the existing curriculum, some explicit) to teaching values and social skills to address various aspects of respect for self, respect for others, and citizenship. Some of the programs--drug

awareness, health classes, citizenship, or civics--already existed; and sometimes more strategies were added as the need arose.

The 1991 Values Education concept in Georgia bore a striking resemblance to the national movement in Character Education (CE). In fact, based on the Values Rule, Georgia was cited by the Character Education Partnership in 1995 as one of twelve states in the forefront of character instruction in the 1993-1995 period.³ Georgia continues this trend today.

One outcome of the 1991 Values Rule was to provide the stimulus for the start up in 1994 of a "word-of-the-week" program

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Section 20-2-145 of the Georgia State Code as amended in 1999 by actions of the Georgia General Assembly:

(A) The State Board of Education shall develop by the start of the 1997-1998 school year a comprehensive Character Education program for levels K-12. This comprehensive Character Education program shall be known as the "character curriculum" and shall focus on the students' development of the following character traits:

courage	self-control	school pride
patriotism	courtesy	respect for the environment
citizenship	compassion	respect for the creator
honesty	tolerance	patience
fairness	diligence	creativity
respect for others	generosity	sportsmanship
cooperation	punctuality	loyalty
kindness	cleanliness	perseverance
self-respect	cheerfulness	virtue

Such program shall also address, by the start of the 1999-2000 school year, methods of discouraging bullying and violent acts against fellow students. Local boards shall implement such a program in all grade levels at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year and shall provide opportunities for parental involvement in establishing expected outcomes of the Character Education program.

(B) The Department of Education shall develop Character Education program workshops designed for employees of local school systems.

Character Education: One Legislator's View

Louise McBee ♦ Member ♦ Georgia House of Representatives



Louise McBee

I was associated with education as a teacher and an administrator for over three decades. I was an observer of, and participant with, thousands of young people in their growing, groping, and searching for some vision of what matters in the world. In my role as an elected official I remain concerned about young people and what role education can play in the development of character.

Do schools have a responsibility to transmit moral and ethical values to the youth with whom it works? Is the building of good character a part of what education is all about? I believe the answer to both of these questions is an emphatic yes.

In a society that depends for its strength on free citizens who must be able to make difficult moral choices we need to find ways to assist and prepare them for these tasks. Decisions about “what is the good?” and “what is worth doing?” and “what is worth striving for?” are implicit in every human endeavor. Schools along with the community, businesses, government, churches, youth organizations, and the media must join with and support the family in this endeavor.

Historically, schools along with the home and the church were viewed

by society as transmitters of ethical standards. There was general agreement that education should aim to make people good, as people and as citizens and that moral development was one of the finest fruits of the educative process. Social changes in the 1950's and particularly in the turbulent 1960's and 1970's, along with the “values clarification” movement changed all of this.


“Decisions about ‘what is the good?’ and ‘what is worth doing?’ and ‘what is worth striving for?’ are implicit in every human endeavor.”

Schools moved into a position of moral neutrality and relegated moral authority and character development as a concern more appropriate for the family and the church than for schools.

In the last decade the picture has changed again, and changed dramatically. Our society is concerned about signs of moral decay and the fear that as a people we have lost our moral compass. There probably has never been a time in our country when dissatisfaction with moral behavior has been more pervasive and more widely discussed.

There is concern about the self destructive behavior of our youth, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, premature sexual activity, the lack of respect for authority, and the erosion of faith in our leaders and our institutions.

I believe education must share responsibility, at least in part, for these disturbing trends. I further believe this is the opinion of many in our society. In the 1997 session, the Georgia General Assembly passed H.B. 393 encouraging the implementation of a Character Education program for grades K-12 using 27 character traits. In 1999 Governor Roy Barnes followed with H.B. 605 that requires all schools to teach Character Education beginning in school year 2000-2001.

I worked for and voted for both of these bills and am pleased that Georgia's governmental and educational leaders believe that we are not hopelessly adrift and that it is possible to build a new sense of social and ethical responsibility. Further, there is confidence that our schools, through its curriculum and the environment that supports the curriculum, can and will play a major role in this effort. The Department of Education and the Georgia Humanities Council have a number of initiatives already underway. Someone has said “At the end of the day, we are right to judge a society by the character of the people it produces.” The same might be said of our schools. 

Louise McBee (D-088) is a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. She serves as Vice-Chairperson of the University System of Georgia Committee.

Character Education: Important Addition to Georgia Classrooms

Kathy Ashe ♦ Member ♦ Georgia House of Representatives

Here I sit on the eve of the next millennium thinking about the tasks left unfinished in 1999. One is a reflection about the significance of Character Education for the students in Georgia's schools. Perhaps if I had been exposed to the character trait of punctuality when I was a student in the schools of Tallahassee many years ago this task would have long since been completed.

“It is only in our ability to feel connected to each other, to our own power, to our world, and to our opportunity to live in it and to impact it, that we find meaning.”

But this is a time to reminisce and so I return to the first day in my first classroom as THE teacher. It is the early 1970's and we are in a seventh grade English class in a Marietta City Junior High School. In an attempt to look like the authority figure I knew I was supposed to be, I pulled open the top desk drawer to pull out the formal lesson plans that I had quickly come to realize had no relevance to the students assembled before me. Much to my surprise out popped a live snake! What began was a year of education for all of us trapped for 180 days in that room. We spent the year learning to respect

the cultures from which we all came. Teaching reading and writing came as the natural extension of learning about the values that motivated us and the mores that shaped us.

Skip ahead to the 1999 Georgia Partnership for Excellence's Bus Trip to the stop at Bleckley County Elementary School in Cochran, Georgia. The riders were greeted by an entire school and its extended community committed to the intentional transmission of positive character traits.

The tree painted on the entrance hall tells about the traits and rewards of those who demonstrate their existence in their everyday lives. The play performed in the cafeteria was a “vote” about which character traits are the most important. The excitement for me was the way in which “Character Education” has permeated the entire community and has become the backbone for what happens in that school.

Yes, as a teacher and as a legislator, I believe that we have a clear responsibility to model and teach the importance of living by a strong moral compass. That which I did in that Marietta classroom because it just seemed to be the way to survive and that which House bills 393 and 605 added to State law are both attempts to provide a clear sense of social and ethical responsibility to the students and to the rest of us in society.

We live in a day when the world seems to be shrinking but many of us feel that our ability to impact anything in our world also seems to be shrinking. It is only in our ability to



Kathy Ashe

feel connected to each other, to our own power, to our world, and to our opportunity to live in it and to impact it, that we find meaning. Without shared basic character traits that connectedness is impossible. No, it is not essential that we agree on what needs to be done to

“No, it is not essential that we agree on what needs to be done to impact our world but there are some skills of living that make communication and dialogue possible.”

impact our world but there are some skills of living that make communication and dialogue possible. That's why I continue to believe that our schools (as well as our families, communities and churches) have a responsibility to pass on civility.

P.S. My response to the snake was, “To whom does this belong?”

Kathy Ashe (R-046) is a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. She serves on the Education, Banks and Banking, and Ways and Means Committees.

Life Lessons: Making Character Education Happen in America's High Schools

Bill Parsons ♦ Principal ♦ Troup County Comprehensive High School



Bill Parsons

"You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Character Education was once a hotly debated topic. Now it is the focus of countless schools across the nation whose teachers and parents see the obvious decline in respect for authority, self-control, honesty, and other character traits in our society. While the success of Character Education spreads, slow is the growth in America's high schools that face the added challenge of shaping character in a school full of skeptical teens. Consequently, few Character Education programs are found in high schools. High schools can no longer afford to be values neutral. We must tell students what character is and be prepared to model it in our classrooms on a daily basis. Perhaps the most important message that can be conveyed to students as we prepare them for adulthood is that character may, in large part, determine the success achieved as adults!

Making Character Education happen in today's high schools is particularly challenging in light of the many obstacles educators face. "They are teen-agers...why bother?" is the sentiment echoed by many teachers, administrators, and parents. As we consider the many obstacles, we must be reminded that the self-concept of teen-agers is in a formative, uncertain state. They are very vulnerable to believing what parents, teachers, peers, and significant others tell them about who they are. Therefore, if we communicate to teen-agers that they are lovable, caring, and responsible people, then they just might entertain the

idea that they are in fact lovable, caring, and responsible people capable of acting that way.

As leaders we must also realize that a committed effort to Character Education will help us all see and, we hope, take advantage of, the million and one opportunities to celebrate, model, communicate, and recognize good character in our classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, gym, athletic fields, and teachers' lounge. This effort will also help to develop a "caring

"Perhaps the most important message that can be conveyed to students as we prepare them for adulthood is that character may, in large part, determine the success achieved as adults!"

community" within each high school. This effort led to a significant decrease in school violence and destruction of school property in our own school. Teen-agers were quick to point out that they did not treat each other better because "character ed said so", but because it just "felt right" and reminded everyone of others feelings on a daily basis.

Finally, Character Education can, and will, touch the lives of our students. It will also touch our lives and influence our interaction with one another as a staff. This was neither a goal nor an advertised aspect before beginning, but rather a

wonderful by-product discovered by the ninety teachers who made it happen. As the saying goes, "When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves."

Having realized the potential Character Education could have on our school, we rolled up our sleeves and set about the task of making it happen. The staff dedicated an entire year to research, plan, and write the program tailored to fit the needs of our school. The Troup High Character Education Program, deemed "Life Lessons", was born initially out of concerns by the staff to create a school-wide emphasis on positive character. An existing School Leadership Team was used to direct the effort. The process began by creating a survey of 34 character qualities. Students, parents, and teachers were asked to select the ten qualities in which the school should focus in a Character Education program. Parent surveys were mailed home to every parent, and staff and students completed surveys at school. Results from the parent surveys and staff surveys showed overwhelming support for Character Education in the school. Support and interest from students were initiated through classroom discussions by teachers, discussions with student government groups, and discussions with individual students. In addition, character became a word used and recognized often by guest speakers chosen to address the students at student assemblies. A student recognition program named "P.A.W." (Personal Achievement Winner) by the Student Advisory Council, was begun to recognize one student a month from every class who demonstrated outstanding character in the classroom. The P.A.W. assembly featured entertainment by students and teachers, snacks, and awards.

Survey results were tallied and revealed that scores were consistently high in several areas. One character quality was assigned to each of the ten months of the school year.

Having established support and the basic framework, the team considered four essential elements in writing the program. Those include:

- **Support**

To be successful, any program must have the support of parents, students, administrators, and teachers. Parents were kept informed and involved before and during the process of writing this program. After the program began, parents were kept informed through school newsletters, student planners, and workshops held to explain the program. Parents were also involved in evaluating the program after it began. The process of establishing initial student support was discussed previously, but did not stop there. Monthly P.A.W. student recognition programs continued. “Tiger Brags” continued to be used to recognize good character on a daily basis. These were written by teachers and administrators, for students and staff, and dispersed using the school intercom. “Tiger Pride Cards” were distributed to honor roll students, students with good attendance, and students caught in the act of demonstrating good character. These were exchanged for free items from the school store, chances at special prizes such as stereos and limousine rides to school, or excused tardies from participating teachers. Administrators designed the entire school schedule around the Character Education time. The first ten minutes of second period is scheduled, school-wide, as

“If we communicate to teen-agers that they are lovable, caring, and responsible people, then they just might entertain the idea that they are...capable of acting that way.”

Character Education time where the Life Lessons curriculum is used. Administrators make it a point to visit classrooms during this time on a daily basis and recognize teachers periodically. Every administrator and counselor also displays a “Word of the Month” poster in his/her office and links disciplinary conferences to that given character quality. Initial teacher support was generated by the very need for such a program. Keeping the program teacher friendly generated further support.

- **Teacher Friendly**

Perhaps the most important key is to keep the program teacher friendly. The materials are simple, accessible, and easy to use by every member of the staff. Each lesson format is identical and prepared in advance

“Character Education does not have to be a divisive factor that brings on a feeling of ‘not another new program’ among the teachers. Handled properly, it can unite a staff and student body, as it did at Troup High School.”

for the teacher. Very few of the lessons require any copying or extensive preparation by the teacher. A simple, planned program such as this helped the program gain acceptance by teachers and is thereby taught effectively. Every member of the staff received a copy of the completed curriculum.

- **Instruction**

The Leadership Team realized that character education will not just “happen”. It will only occur when direct instruction is planned as part of each school day. Life Lessons instructional activities are written in terms students could understand and relate to. They do not occupy large blocks

“Following the success of the Troup High model, the community got behind an enormous Character Education initiative involving schools, businesses, churches, media, and civic clubs.”

of time, but rather serve as a 10-15 minute lesson that sets the tone for the day. Teachers in each subject area then reinforce the character qualities in their regular instruction using curriculum integration ideas provided for them. School-wide media is used to reinforce the instruction through “Tiger TV”.

- **Application**

As with anything we teach children, students must not only know about the information, they must know how to apply it. Learning the definition of cooperation does a child little good when he/she has seldom seen it in action. Lessons were written which point out and provide examples for each character quality in terms and conditions high school students can relate to. A fictional student named “T.C.” (Troup County), a character found in many of the stories, is confronted with daily dilemmas common to any student. Students wrote many of these stories. Students and teachers edited all before including them in the program.

Character is not a concept dealt with for ten minutes then forgotten. It is seen and heard in every part of the building from the Einstein mural in the math wing noting that $E=MC^2$ really means, “Everyone Must Care, Too”, to the numerous posters, banners, murals, and character related class assignments.

Following the success of the Troup High model, the community got behind an enormous Character Education initiative involving schools, businesses, churches,

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media, and civic clubs. This "Focus on Character" campaign was centered on the ten character qualities from Life Lessons. Elementary and middle schools also focused on the same word of the month and planned special activities in each school. Businesses and churches supported the effort by displaying posters that contained the character trait of the month and a brief definition. Local radio stations allowed students to make public service announcements supporting the initiative. Local newspapers featured tips for parents to promote the word of the month at home, and honored employees of area businesses as role models for each quality. Civic clubs provided bookmarks promoting character for students, and provided speakers for schools highlighting the importance of character in the work place. Students quickly realized that character was not only important from 8:00-3:00, but is important twenty-four hours a day in a community determined to shape the character of its most valuable resource.

Character Education does not have to be a divisive factor that brings on a feeling of "not another new program" among the teachers. Handled properly, it can unite a staff and student body, as it did at Troup High School. With a little planning and tapping into the creative resources of the school and community, schools can create their own effective program tailor-made to the population they serve. The resources are before us. The time for action is now.

Mr. Parsons is Principal of Troup County Comprehensive High School in LaGrange, Georgia. His successful work as Principal of West Point Elementary School has led that school's curriculum to become the most widely known in the state.

at West Point Elementary School under the leadership of then-principal Bill Parsons. Based upon the list of 37 values, Parsons surveyed parents and faculty of his school to rank the list by priority. Based on the strong support of parents, Parsons and his staff set about the task of creating a climate in the school that promoted the practice of the values by students and staff. Further, faculty developed age appropriate definitions of the values and accompanying stories that put the values into context. A routine was developed around the introduction of each value that progressively delved deeper into the term each day of the week. Community business partners became interested in the program and were happy to discover ways to assist. Within a year, Parsons and his colleagues saw the climate of the school transformed: a startling drop in conduct referrals, and the birth of an environment of caring and respect that allowed teachers to spend more time teaching and less time with disruptive behavior.

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) featured the West Point program on its Bus Trip Tour in 1995. The same year GPEE and the Georgia Humanities Council (which had begun to explore Character Education as an appropriate response to the Values Rule) felt the time was right for a statewide conference on CE. Convened in Atlanta in early 1996, the conference attracted just over 300 educators from around the state, featured national speakers and practitioners, and provided a very broad smorgasbord of approaches to Character Education, including the West Point program. In June of 1996 the Georgia Humanities Council announced an initiative inviting grant applications for community-based pilot projects in CE, granting approximately \$170,000 for 12 projects in the first year.

Several important developments have further contributed to the statewide "climate" for Character Education. The first of these was HB 393 (1997), and most notably HB 605 "The Improved Student Learning Environment and Discipline Act of 1999."

In HB 393 the General Assembly formally adopted the terminology of Character Education, and trimmed the list of 37 values to 27 character traits. In August of 1997, the Georgia Department of Education subsequently issued the *Values and Character*

Education Implementation Guide which significantly updated the previous *Values Guide* of 1991. The new *Guide* defined key concepts in Character Education and clarified definitions of the character traits outlined in HB 393. With HB 393, implementation of a Character Education program was still optional for local boards.

In tandem with senate legislation addressing bullying, House Bill 605, the *Improved Student Learning Environment and Discipline Act of 1999*, brought significant changes. While the character traits did not change, Character Education is no longer a local option and local school boards are mandated to implement a program by the 2000-2001 school year. The bill also links Character Education to discipline through the title of the act, implicitly acknowledging the relationship of character, discipline and conduct, and the learning environment. Additionally, in both the discipline side and the CE side the law invites parental involvement in establishing goals and objectives for both Character Education programming and discipline plans.

With the 1999 legislation, the General Assembly has continued in the tradition established with the 1991 SBOE Rule and carried forward the language of the 1997 law. It has identified in Character Education a conceptual framework that invites multifaceted approaches to teaching social skills that can be customized to local communities and school environments. And, as with its predecessors, the *Improved Student Learning Environment and Discipline Act of 1999* is a framework that draws on existing strategies and resources, and intentionally envisions how they fit together in the classroom, school activities, and other programs. In the same spirit, it invites partnerships with the community of adults, whether they are parents, community members, or members of other organizations.

¹ *Values Education Implementation Guide*, Office of Instructional Services, Georgia Department of Education, May, 1991.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Character Education in U.S. Schools: The New Consensus, A Report on Development During 1993-95*. Character Education Partnership, Inc., Alexandria, VA, February 1996.

Founding Fathers Formed Basics of Character Education

Stephen Dolinger ♦ Superintendent ♦ Fulton County Schools

Public education in this country sprang from the principle that, to maintain a free democratic society, the nation must have an educated citizenry. In 1999, the Georgia General Assembly mandated that all schools teach Character Education; but in reality, this has been our charge for more than 200 years.

“This process of educating for good character is interwoven throughout our curriculum and in the way we do business.”

In the Fulton County School System, we believe common threads tie our society and culture together and guide the way we live, work, and play. These common beliefs are taught at home and reinforced by the community, schools, religious institutions, and youth service groups. We help young people develop good character that includes knowing, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values such as fairness, honesty, compassion, responsibility, and respect for self and others. This process of educating for good character is interwoven throughout our curriculum and in the way we do business.

The tenets of Fulton’s Character Education program are simple:

- Students learn from what they observe; therefore, all

employees must model productive and responsible citizenship.

- Character Education should be a daily part of instruction in all content areas.
- Safe, orderly schools support learning.
- Students must understand what it means to be fair, trustworthy, and to care about each other.
- Parents should be the primary teachers of Character Education. Communities, schools, religious institutions, and other service agencies should reinforce the lessons taught by parents.

The Fulton County School System takes our Character Education program seriously. As Superintendent, I have reinforced this by asking all instructional leaders to:

- Act as models; set a good example.
- Create a positive moral culture.
- Create democratic classrooms.
- Find opportunities to teach Character Education in all content areas.
- Recruit parents, business leaders, and community members as partners.

While we have always taught Character Education in Fulton County, the state mandate led us to more clearly focus on our objectives. Our schools now include Character Education initiatives in their local school strategic plans. We have a Character Education steering committee to oversee and guide our efforts. We have taken a careful look at our curriculum, at every grade level and in every subject, to make sure the 27 character traits mandated by



Stephen Dolinger

“...we believe common threads tie our society and culture together and guide the way we live, work, and play.”

the state are evidenced across the board.

The school tragedies last spring in Colorado, and closer to home in Rockdale County, caused us to take an even closer look at our Character Education program. We believe one step to reducing school violence is to focus on character and conscience. Our program in Fulton County does that. We believe we support the values and beliefs of our parents and communities, and we believe our students benefit from our efforts.

Dr. Dolinger is Superintendent of the Fulton County School System in Atlanta and a member of the Board of the Georgia Humanities Council.

A Common Thread in Fulton County Schools' Curriculum

Pat Guillory ♦ Social Studies Director ♦ Fulton County Schools



Pat Guillory

Character Education is a common thread that runs through the curriculum in Fulton County Schools. Quality teaching and a respect for students as learners are part of the formula that makes the school system's model successful. Character Education (CE) is the long-term process of helping young people develop good character.

With the first CE legislation in 1997, the Fulton County School System whole-heartedly embraced the implementation of a Character Education program. At that time, our schools as well as the curriculum department were inundated by companies trying to sell ready-made programs and materials. Our first step was to organize a Character Education Screening and Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and community members. It screens major programs and materials before they are purchased or used by individual schools. The materials used must meet the philosophy of the school system before the committee approves them.

The next step was for each content area to identify the character traits that are taught in their content. As curriculum is developed the character traits are labeled, so that teachers can highlight the character trait as it is being taught. It was not surprising to find the traits in most of the content areas. They are found in career technology, art, health, and physical education as well as social studies and literature. Classroom management strategies such as cooperative learning are also used to foster the traits of cooperation, dependability, and courtesy.

Each school in the school system has developed a Character Education plan for their school that addresses their unique problems.

These plans address the uniqueness of each school, which along with curriculum integration comprises a comprehensive Character Education program.

These steps along with continued emphasis in the value of Character Education have resulted in a program that is accepted and sup-

ported by the Fulton County community. We believe we have developed a quality model for others to emulate.

Ms. Guillory is Social Studies Director for Fulton County Schools in Atlanta, Georgia and Chairperson of the Character Education Advisory and Screening Committee.

Character Education at Lakeside Middle School

Bill Morris ♦ Principal ♦ Lakeside Middle School

Curriculum is defined as "all the courses of study offered by a school, college or university." Certainly, each course of study is important, yet no one course can stand-alone. Subject matter experts in every discipline have established performance standards believed to be essential for the future success of each student.

At least two problems arise with curriculum as we have come to know it. First, there is not enough time in the school day to teach all of the standards. Second, there is no mutually agreed upon curriculum focal point. For both reasons, Lakeside Middle School (LMS) looks at Character Education not as an additional curriculum area, but instead, as the center point from which all other disciplines emerge.

Try to imagine, if you will, a wagon wheel. Immediately should come to mind spokes, representing the different disciplines, emanating to the outer rim of the wheel, with the center hub being Character Education. Everyone knows how critical it is to have confidence in the integrity of any such structure as a wagon wheel, for it supports the weight of the wagon. To be truly effective, Character Education should not serve as just another spoke on the 'curricula' wheel, but it should be the center point from which all other curriculums branch. In this way, all disciplines

are held in proper alignment by their connection between the inner hub and the outer rim.

In the opinion of this writer, the absence of Character Education is the integrity that is lacking in the present-day curriculum. At Lakeside Middle School, by structuring our curriculum as described above, we have established a practical way to connect the various subject areas and provide the support necessary to facilitate the education of our students.

Everything we are about at Lakeside Middle revolves around instilling proper character traits in our students. Since the implementation of our Character Commitment Program beginning in 1995, we have enjoyed the benefits of improved standardized test scores and significantly lower disciplinary referrals requiring administrative attention.

Please visit LMS electronically at lms@ccboe.net to view a list of the character building Words-of-the-Month, and a detailed explanation of the development and implementation of our highly successful Character Commitment Program.



Bill Morris

Mr. Morris is Principal of Lakeside Middle School in Evans, Georgia.

Character Education: Continuing Impact of 1997 Workshop

Emma Adler ♦ Chairperson of the Board ♦ Georgia Humanities Council

David Denby returned to Columbia University at age 48 to restudy the humanities. His experience is chronicled in *Great Books* (1996), in which the classics are reviewed and student reactions to texts as well as his own comments and those of his professors are considered. The book is full of ideas. To begin an article on Character Education now mandated in Georgia's schools, the following quote from *Great Books* provides a point of departure.

In a country in which the media set many values, derision can bully parents out of having standards at all; and almost everything the children hear from the media or their friends turns 'culture' and 'learning' into a joke. . . . In movies, dumb is in. . . . For teenagers, knowing something is rarely cool In a TV sitcom anyone who thinks he's special becomes a butt At many American schools, a teenager had better hide or make fun of his intellectual interests if he doesn't want to face a daily gauntlet of ridicule Mediocrity defines what's normal and therefore what's human; excellence is an attack on all the others. It's the nightmare side of democracy, and truer every year (Denby, 1996).

Against this prevailing cultural climate, a Teacher Academy sponsored by the Georgia Humanities Council in cooperation with the Savannah-Chatham County school system provided an enlightening and exhilarating experience that challenged its 30 participants. Conducted with the utmost professionalism, the workshop was located at the Massie Heritage Center, June 16-20, 1997, from 8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. each day. Its leadership included Dr. Kevin Ryan, Director of Boston University's Center for the Advance-

ment of Ethics and Character, Dr. Karen Bohlin, Assistant Director, and two outstanding humanities scholars, Dr. Brian W. Jorgensen and Dr. Linda S. Wells.

Although almost three years have passed, the impact of this workshop remains. We remember Dr. Ryan's opening lecture on education reform as he reminded us that ninety national reports have appeared since *A Nation at Risk*. All have described common problems but have provided no easy solutions. However, William Kilpatrick's book, *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong* (1992) suggests that the core problem in education today is moral, and that all other problems derive from the lack of character development. Believing this to be true, Dr. Ryan quoted the following inscription on the teacher's desk in Massie's 19th Century Classroom: "What you are to be, you are now becoming." He emphasized the fact that character is molded from an early age, as he acknowledged the truth in this century-old statement.

Continuing his overview of trends in education, Dr. Ryan pointed out that the traditional role of the teacher included character development until the 1960s. At that time, a series of changes diminished the classroom authority of teachers while leaving them uncertain as to whose values they should teach.

Workshop participants spent the next several days studying Aristotle, Shakespeare, Sophocles, Anne Frank, Susan Glaspell, Nadine Gordimer and more. No add-on Character Education curriculum was proposed, but it was made clear that rules of conduct leading to respect for others and to responsible citizenship should be taught from the elementary grades upward, as students are exposed to history and literature.

Recently, I contacted two teachers

who were a part of the 1997 Teacher Academy. Tim Melvin, social studies teacher at Mercer Middle School, says that the Academy added focus and a deeper sense of purpose to his work with students. Reflecting on



Emma Adler

the impact of the program, his observations recognize that it is impossible to separate Character Education from school climate:

It is important to remember that Character Education, as discussed in our workshop, does not consist of a discrete body of knowledge, but rather a method of recognizing and engaging excellence in the world around us.

Character Education is not some mystical curricular concoction which will inoculate our students from the shadow of temptation. Instead, it offers students a chance to fashion a taste for what is good and what is just through exposure to examples of such excellence in the Great Conversations of the Western Canon.

Students learn what they live. As educators, we teach students more about character in how we conduct our daily practice and in what type of school climate we create for them to inhabit than we will ever fully recognize. Accordingly, schools implementing a Character Education program are challenged to more reflectively attend to the unintended lessons of school processes.

Character Education as discussed in our workshop, is not about providing something that the home did not, but is about creating a space

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within schooling in which those home-values may be deliberately fostered.

Linda Artley, language arts teacher at Bartlett Middle School, reported that the workshop “had a greater impact on me than any continuing education course I have taken. It was profound....” She continued, “Middle school children are so eager to please if we can just give them quality.” She appreciated the fact that the scholars from Boston University did not try to tell the participants what to teach but assumed that they could go forward with depth of perspective added by the reading. She had reviewed the materials from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* recently. “Character Education needs to be a part of every teacher’s curriculum,” she said.

One result of the workshop is a realization that character education is not a single curricular module or set of daily definitions but a strategic and intentional focus on the entire school climate. Teachers recognize that honesty, respect, and integrity have validity across all cultures.

There is increased recognition that guidance from teachers is necessary in establishing codes of acceptable behavior. Given these and other changes at work in Georgia and the nation, teachers have an opportunity to reclaim their traditional role and authority. I am convinced that Boards of Education and school administrations, with the support of parents and communities, must provide institutional leadership if meaningful implementation of Character Education is to take place in Georgia.

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Ms. Adler is Chairperson of the Board for the Georgia Humanities Council and lives in Savannah.

Bibb County Character Education Update

Mary Alice Morgan ♦ Mercer University Center



Mary Alice Morgan

“We become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage.”

Aristotle

“Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The two quotations above have inspired the philosophy of the Character Education program in Bibb County. This philosophy holds that every child deserves a moral education just as much as an academic education and that a Character Education curriculum should provide students with opportunities to act upon the character qualities they are learning. Thus, the Bibb County program stresses service learning, peer mediation, class meetings, restitution, and school procedures that are linked to character principles rather than isolated rules. The principles of respect for others, honesty, perseverance, and good citizenship should be the fabric of the school climate—on the school bus, in the classroom, in the lunchroom, on the sports fields.

Preparation for the system-wide implementation of this program has been three years in the making. We have focused on creating a strong curriculum and teacher preparation. The effort began with the formation of a Character Education Task Force under the auspices of the Macon 2000 Partnership, a community educational advocacy organization. Key members of the Task Force included the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services and two principals who had pi-

loted Character Education in their elementary schools and could speak from experience. Other members included parent and community volunteers who studied Character Education research and have spearheaded community involvement, including compiling a directory of 200 community members who have volunteered to go into the schools to discuss such topics as “respect for the environment” or “respecting cultural diversity.” Together, the school system and Task Force have sponsored two staff development conferences (funded in part by the Georgia Humanities Council). These conferences featured national Character Education consultant, Dr. Philip Vincent, as well as Georgia educators. Leadership teams of four members from each school attended the conferences and conducted on-going staff training. The Task Force has also developed a climate survey that will become part of the assessment plan.

Plans for the future include creating a position of Character Education Director in the central office. Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Rotary Clubs of Macon, next year teachers who develop exemplary curricula for specific areas such as citizenship will be eligible for Character Educator awards.

Dr. Morgan is Chairperson of the Macon 2000 Character Education Task Force and a faculty member at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia.

Character Education: Our Greatest Responsibility

Gordon Vessels ♦ School Psychologist ♦ Atlanta Public Schools

Throughout a three-hundred-year period between 1640, when schools were established to ensure an adequate moral education for all children, and 1940, when moral education in America began to disappear from the public schools, moral education and Character Education (a broader concept that includes moral, social, cultural, civic, and prudential) were viewed as equally important or more important than academic instruction. Adults felt responsible for all children in their communities and helped to provide them with interpersonal support, boundaries, expectations, direction, skills, and values. During the nineteenth-century, the press for liberty and the decision by many to pursue opportunities outside their home communities produced an increased demand for moral purity and social conformity and the belief that moral education should be intensified during the early years.

During the early twentieth century, as schools began to teach skills necessary for the new corporate order, Character Education continued to be a very high priority. This century brought two schools of thought. The culture-centered approach that dominated during the first twenty years sought to maintain nineteenth century values. It centered around codes of conduct and lists of virtues, and it used direct instruction, group activities, reinforcement, and motivational techniques. As members of school clubs and organizations like the Boy Scouts, students were expected to encourage one another to follow codes of conduct. The child-centered alternative reflected progressive education's emphasis on autonomy, democratic decision making, and critical thinking. It gradually increased in popularity, but during the years prior to 1940 when moral education began to decline, it did not replace the traditional approach. It defined character in terms of civic responsibility and the ability to make moral judgments. It used children's social learning experiences as the starting point for instruction rather than virtues.

In 1951, the Educational Policies Commission of the NEA sought to blend the best of the traditional-didactic and progres-

sive-developmental schools of thought and recommended bringing parents and educators together to establish agendas for moral education. Their vision of an eclectic approach anticipated Character Education in the 1980s and 1990s, but it failed to keep Character Education within the schools. A variety of forces and events contributed to the disappearance of formal Character Education programs including the push for better academic and technical instruction, the "cold war," increasing cultural diversity, the civil rights and antiwar movements, U.S. Supreme Court rulings, and the common belief that values and morals were personal and not the responsibility of public schools. Americans ceased to believe that Character Education could occur at school without violating the law, offending parents, and taking away from academic instruction.



Gordon Vessels

"The eclectic approach to Character Education that has emerged as we approach the twenty-first century requires an inclusive definition of character education and a clear definition of moral character."

The void that was left by the decline of Character Education was filled by two forms of progressive moral instruction in the 1960s and 1970s. Although very popular for awhile, values clarification was ultimately judged to be too relativistic and not well suited for young children. Although fairly well supported by empirical research, moral developmentalism was viewed as too narrowly focused on moral reasoning. Even those who contributed the most to these approaches came to view them as inadequate. It was a combination of the shortcomings of these approaches and the shared perception of a rapid moral decline in America that

spawned the current Character Education movement.

Character Education in the 1980s and 1990s succeeded in drawing support from parents, politicians, educational organizations, and some educational administrators. It was also characterized by open communication between traditional and progressive character educators and the emergence of eclectic

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programs. It failed to re-establish character building as education's highest priority. Character Education was typically included on lists with higher-priority educational goals that ostensibly precluded optimum character development. The few scholars who viewed Character Education as the key to reform believed that all of the goals on these lists could be achieved by placing Character Education at the top where it was for three hundred years of our history.

In order for Character Education in the twenty-first century to become an organizing centerpiece for all schools, it must be explicitly and inclusively defined. In addition, proponents must use (a) moral philosophy, (b) scientific theories of social, moral, cognitive, and affective development, (c) scientific theories of learning, (d) past and present programs, and (e) the results of Character Education research to construct and improve core curriculums that can facilitate developmentally appropriate Character Education. Teachers will have to be provided with information about instructional strategies, guidelines for infusion, more helpful textbooks, and opportunities to innovate and share. Teachers and school administrators will have to feel that character building is their moral obligation. They must realize that it flows naturally from strong relationships and good "habits of the heart" including "a nurturing attitude, friendship, brotherhood, responsibility, dependability, and high expectations" (Taubert, 1997).

The eclectic approach to Character Education that has emerged as we approach the twenty-first century requires an inclusive definition of Character Education and a clear definition of moral character. Character Education combines direct instruction with community building strategies to promote the development of personal and social integrity (general qualities of character) and the moral virtues, moral reasoning abilities, and other personal assets and qualities that make this possible. It seeks to develop people who (a) show *kindness* and compassion with empathetic understanding; (b) show the *courage* to be honest and principled irrespective of circumstances; (c) acquire a wide range of *abilities* that enable them to think independently, adapt to change, and evaluate themselves and others; (d) show much *effort* in their work and a commitment to individual and group goals; (e) show a concern for others in the spirit of *friendship* and brotherhood; (f) perform as responsible and other-directed team members in families and groups (*teamwork*); and (g) view the improvement of self and community as civic duties (*citizenship*). Character Education seeks

to develop people who are motivated by empathetic understanding, a sense of social responsibility, and reflexive, self-reinforcing judgments of conduct that are accompanied by emotions including pride, shame, guilt, and anxiety (conscience).

In working with pilot schools in Atlanta, I began my effort to construct a core curriculum by developing these definitions of Character Education and of character and by exploring moral philosophy, theories of social and moral development, theories of learning, current programs, and the results of Character Education research. I defined the seven "primary virtues" (identified as a-g in the definition of character above) in a way that students of all ages could understand, and then listed, for each "primary virtue," twelve "elaborative virtues" that vary in terms of their complexity and appropriateness for various ages. Next I wrote general and instructional objectives for each of five developmental levels: pre-K and K, grades 1 and 2, grades 3 through 5, middle school, high school. Seven of the eight objectives for each of the five levels targeted the seven "primary virtues" using age-appropriate "elaborative virtues." An eighth objective for each level focused on developmental changes that occur at each level in terms of moral reasoning, moral emotion, friendships, and empathy. I also identified learning modes and provided guidelines for using all six of them at each level.

Character and Community Development (Vessels, 1998) explores in some detail the great variety of instructional strategies for Character Education. In the book I used a six learning-modes (interpersonal/environmental support, direct instruction,

active participation within classrooms and schools, developmentally appropriate discipline and reinforcement, and unstructured peer-group interaction and play) to group them. The list is long, and by no means all-inclusive: class meetings; service learning; storytelling and literature; social skills training; cooperative learning; rule making and related student involvement; cross-grade buddy activities; teaching a virtue vocabulary and related concepts using a word of the week or month; visual displays; school and classroom newsletters; infusing Character Education into daily lessons and all aspects of school life; giving students leadership responsibilities; chores at school and home; using instructional discipline; multicultural instruction; intercultural exchange projects; teaching about world religions; building strong adult-child relationships; creating a caring community within classrooms and schools; teaching parenting K-12; providing mentors and models; peace education; peer mediation and conflict resolution; rewards for good citizenship and virtuous behavior; student behavior codes and pledges; a new grading system.

"My three-year study in the Atlanta Public Schools showed a significant drop in student aggression, an improved school climate, and possibly some improvement in terms of inner moral functioning and achievement for the youngest children...."

As you might gather in reviewing such a list, few studies of Character Education have satisfied scientific-research standards and provided decision makers with the information they needed to develop, implement, and improve their programs. Such studies require (a) pre-post measurement in program and comparison schools, (b) a variety of reliable and valid instruments and techniques to assess needs, implementation, and outcomes, (c) a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods, and (d) appropriate data analysis procedures. The few good studies that have been done have produced mixed results. My three-year study in the Atlanta Public Schools showed a significant drop in student aggression, an improved school climate, and possibly some improvement in terms of inner moral functioning and achievement for the youngest children in the one school where implementation was fairly good. Other studies have shown more improvement in terms of character traits. A few pioneer studies and use of the new Assessment Instrument Index on the national Character Education Partnership's web site (<http://www.character.org>) should lead to more good studies.

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Dr. Vessels is a School Psychologist with the Atlanta Public Schools. He is author of *Character and Community Development: A School Planning and Teacher Training Handbook* (1998).

Character Education First Priority at Alfred Blalock Elementary

Jacquelyn C. Woods ♦ Principal



Jacquelyn Woods

Alfred Blalock Elementary is a school that puts character first. At the beginning of the 1996-97 school year, we initiated a Character Education Program (CE)

as part of a five school pilot project directed by Dr. Gordon Vessels, and supported by a grant from the Georgia Humanities Council.

In the course of the project, Dr. Vessels credited Blalock with having the best CE program among the five schools involved in the project, and with significantly improving school climate and reducing school violence. By the end of the 1998-99 school year, three years after the CE project at Blalock began, the school had received favorable attention from local broadcast networks and from *Education Week*, in a front-page story.

Our CE program gives balanced focus upon all aspects of development including social, ethical, intellectual, and academic. Committed teachers and administrators are concerned with:

- 1) building caring relationships,
- 2) encouraging students to display positive character

qualities such as kindness, fairness, respect, and responsibility,

- 3) creating school and classroom environments which foster character growth through modeling, direct instruction, and active student participation.

Our teachers, staff volunteers, and Dr. Vessels spent hours and hours of overtime working after school and on weekends to develop this caring environment for our students and parents.

When you enter our school building, our Character focus is evident—from the large boards showing the character qualities friendship, teamwork, and cooperation to the character line that zigzags across our walls, speaking of love, respect and kindness. Even our cluster names define character—Lovable Dinosaurs, Sunshine Kids, Peaceful Parrots, Fantastic Bears, and Friendship Village.

As proponents of CE, we share the view that students will not realize their full potential in terms of academic achievement, self-discipline, and responsible citizenship, now or in the future, unless we adopt an approach which is child-centered and that puts character first.

Dr. Woods is Principal of Alfred Blalock Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia.

Is Building Character a Science?

Paul Weimer ♦ Director ♦ Georgia Center for Character Education, Georgia Humanities Council



Paul Weimer

We live and work in a world that looks to the bottom line. This is especially true in education, where the pressures to see quantifiable results, i.e., better academic achievement, fewer discipline referrals, and so on, are a constant fact of life.

Character Education (CE) is by no means immune from questions that look to the bottom line. Can we quantify results when it comes to Character Education? How do we know when we have produced a person of good character? What is the science behind this?

The answers to these questions are certainly mixed, and depend on how they are asked, and what one is trying to measure. The effort to measure results in a school based CE program is an on-going one, and in many respects is still in its infancy. For example, the Character Education Partnership's (CEP) web site (www.character.org) features an interactive database of measurement instruments. Its inventory ranges from "Academic Attitudes" to "Outgroup Ethnocentric Attitudes," from "Affective/Cognitive Development" to "Problem At-Risk Behaviors" and "Program Quality Assessment." This broad spectrum tells us that there are a number of approaches to CE, and hence a lot of different ways to ask (and perhaps answer) the question, "can we quantify results?"

For many educators it is enough

to note an improvement in the general climate of the school population: quieter hallways, cleaner grounds and washrooms, better student to student or student to teacher interactions. They may also be pleased to report a decline in conduct referrals or an improvement in test scores. For those who want science, however, these reports are purely anecdotal—the decline in vandalism may stem, they might argue, from an improvement in the lunchroom menu!

There are, however a growing number of CE practitioners whose research seeks to directly connect

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character instruction to measurable results, both behavioral and academic. While space does not afford a survey of their work here, readers may wish to examine the work of Battistich and his colleagues with the Child Development Project at the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland CA, which represents one of the few longitudinal studies in this relatively nascent field of research.¹ Researchers like James

Leming (at Southern Illinois University), Gordon Vessels (Atlanta Public Schools), Jacques Benninga and others, whose serious studies attempt to account for the complex variables and interactions that may play a part in character instruction in a school environment, are also doing important work.² All of these researchers build on the substantial body of knowledge related to child development and the learning process, and cognitive development and its relation to moral development. In fact, many of the measurement instruments in the previously cited CEP web site are based on this research.

A related avenue for considering CE is the growing area of remarkable brain and behavioral research, perhaps best encapsulated in Daniel Goleman's best selling volume, *Emotional Intelligence*.³ The book, in essence a report on the state of brain research, provides startling insights into the neural and physiological foundations of our emotions. Goleman distills new clinical research in brain development and innovative studies of behavior and treatment for a variety of areas of emotional and social dysfunction. Two brief, but very compelling examples from the book are foundational to CE, and suggest a further answer to the question, "what is the science behind this?"

It is well known that the brain continues to develop and grow over a number of years, with the most significant growth occurring in infancy and early childhood. These early years rep-

resent a “window of opportunity” for external stimuli to influence the growth and development of neural pathways of all kinds, ranging from emotional to numeric, from linguistic to visual. In the earliest years these stimuli come from parents—for example, if there is a caring, nurturing presence the infant develops a neural-emotional capacity to know and understand these qualities, demonstrating a capacity for empathy at a very early age. Conversely, in the absence of these stimuli, development is slowed and perhaps not present (see Goleman, Part Four, “Windows of Opportunity,” especially Chapter 12, “The Family as Crucible,” pp.189-199).

To put it most plainly, as the very young *experience* caring, nurturing, and encouragement, they *learn* appropriate emotional responses themselves, and *develop* the internal circuitry governing emotional balance and healthy social interactions. *An important message for parents and early childhood educators, brain science is showing us that there is a neural foundation in the positive change that can result from Character Education properly done.*

A second example has profound implications for CE as it relates to older students, or to young people denied the positive types of stimuli just mentioned. Studies of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) patients show that great physical or emotional trauma can actually cause physical changes in the limbic circuitry of the brain’s amygdala, and the secretion of certain chemicals that stimulate appropriate responses in the face of external events. Even in this most catastrophic of emotional states, where changes in the very structure and function of the brain has occurred, “emotional retraining” of the

brain is possible, with new learning taking place in alternative parts of the brain, suppressing or replacing the functions adversely effected by trauma. As Goleman puts it, “In short, emotional lessons—even the most deeply implanted habits of the heart learned in childhood—can be reshaped. Emotional learning is life long” (Goleman, Chapter 13, “Trauma and Emotional Relearning,” p. 214).

“Emotional intelligence,” or the EQ, may be one of more practical metaphors we have for Character Education. Our intuition and experience tell us that

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success in life is not only a function of rational/linear forms of thinking (the IQ we seek to measure). We know that intelligence is subtler, more complex, and that the odds for success in a child’s life, in work and in relationships, depends on the successful integration of emotional and intellectual skills. Character Education acknowledges this multifaceted intelligence by joining the IQ with the EQ, moral *knowing* with moral *feeling*.

Goleman begins his book by quot-

ing from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: “Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not easy.” As Goleman observes, “Our passions, when well exercised, have wisdom; they guide our thinking and values, our survival... As Aristotle saw, the problem is not with emotionality, but with the appropriateness of emotion and its expression. The question is, how can we bring intelligence to our emotions—and civility to our streets and communal life?” (see Goleman, “Aristotle’s Challenge,” pp.ix-xiv).

Not only our success as individuals, our opportunity in life to live with fullness and usefulness—not only is that at stake as we talk about Character Education, but also the wellbeing of our communities, our culture, and our life as a nation.

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¹ Interested parties should visit the Center’s web site at www.devstu.org or see: Battisch, V., Solomon, D., Watson, M., Solomon, J., and Schaps, E. [1989] “Effects of an elementary school program to enhance prosocial behavior on children’s cognitive-social problem-solving skills and strategies” in *Journal of Applied Developmental*.

² See for example, Benninga, J.S. (Ed.) *Moral, Character and Civic Education in the Elementary School*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1991b or also Vessels, Gordon (1998) *Character and Community Development: A School Planning and Teacher Training Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group/Praeger.

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Mr. Weimer is a member of the staff of the Georgia Humanities Council and Director of the Georgia Center for Character Education.

Character Education and Alternative Education

Neil Shorthouse ♦ President ♦ Communities In Schools of Georgia



Neil Shorthouse

When Alex (not his real name) entered the alternative school he was antagonistic and feared. The director knew she had to assert control but not through a power struggle. Like many kids in alternative schools, Alex was an expert in power games; further, such games were not her style and not within the culture of her school. She carefully laid out the rules and emphasized the importance of respecting others. . . nothing new to Alex, as he had

“Character Education’s character traits enable all of education to focus on what author Douglas Heath argues is the primary goal of education — helping students become ethical, happy, and healthy people.”

heard this before. But then she caught him off guard by asking him to talk about his best points and especially his academic strengths. Amazingly, Alex said he liked to write poems. She then covered him with requests for poetry and loaded him down with praise for his work. He was asked to present his poems to the student body. Upon hearing them, his fellow students asked for and gave interpretations. Eventually Alex gained respect as a poet. He grew to value the different reputation his new behavior earned.

The director of this school and her staff were modeling traits of Character Education. These traits were identified in 1997 and written into House Bill 605 which was approved by the Georgia General Assembly last spring and signed into law by Governor Roy E. Barnes. The bill contains a list of 27 character traits that are to be taught in each of Georgia’s nearly 1900 schools next year through a locally adopted Character Education approach.

Respect for others, for example, along with *courage*, *self-control* and *school pride* are some of the Character Education traits that helped enable Alex to turn himself around. Educator, leader and youth advocate Michael Pritchard says, “Lack of respect is the root of all evil. “ In society seeking reform of its education systems, Tony Wagner calls for standards ... of the heart. Character Education emphasizes 27 character traits that are essential for society—including homes and schools—to function properly. Communities In Schools has found that when the staff of an alternative school live out these traits, their students are much more apt to fall in line and to begin modeling the behavior the staff demonstrates. Further, such life styles of the staff provide a touchstone for students and eliminate some of the guesswork about what Character Education means. As the school director says, “It takes time and does not happen overnight, but it’s the only way to break through to the kids.”

We’ll never overcome violence by kids until we overcome violence *against* kids. In a very real way the “ball is in the adults’ court” and not only those in the schools. Most researchers assert that the behavior of adults greatly influences the

behavior of their children, which is one of the reasons that most child abusers were also abused as children. But the responsibility lies not only with adults closest to kids. It’s also the ones who market our music and our movies as well as our leaders whose lives and reputations help define cultural norms.

Governor Barnes has stated that the lack of discipline is one of the biggest problems facing education. The character traits of HB 605 help achieve discipline *by setting a behavioral standard* based on traits such as tolerance, cooperation, courtesy, fairness and patience which help to build an environment where learning and personal growth can thrive. Alex’s experience illustrates how a good policy in the hands of creative, dedicated, hard-work-

“Alex is now a different person and a contributor to Georgian life because of an alternative school grounded in the principles of Character Education.”

ing and moral adults can help youth find a way through the chaos and uncertainty many of them are experiencing. Alex’s director and teachers knew Character Education was not just for students. In fact they knew that if they as staff members would live out the character traits, students could profit. Teach and lead by example is their mantra.

Character Education’s character traits enable all of education to focus on what author Douglas Heath argues is the primary

goal of education: helping students become ethical, happy and healthy people. Certainly, Character Education is not just a "Program of the month" for educators to tack onto an already full set of required academic courses. It requires a skilled

"In the final analysis, achieving the Jeffersonian ideal of democracy requires an informed and educated citizenry that works its will in a society governed by laws based upon the trust, respect, responsibility and discipline of its members."

teacher who has "earned the right to be heard". Teachers use a carefully crafted strategy that allows students to talk through the difficulties and benefits of applying the characteristics in real life situations.

In the final analysis, achieving the Jeffersonian ideal of democracy requires an informed and educated citizenry that works its will in a society governed by laws based upon the trust, respect, responsibility and discipline of its members. The facts of history, the principles of science, the forces of economics and the appreciation of the arts are learned through an organized system of education, which gains strength and meaning within a society valuing and practicing civility. Alex is now a different person and a contributor to Georgian life because of an alternative school grounded in the principles of Character Education and led by a staff of adults who have taken to heart what their parents said about some of the best lessons being caught, not just taught.

Neil Shorthouse is President of Communities in Schools of Georgia, a non-profit organization that seeks to link needed community resources with schools to help prevent drop-out and promote academic success.

Business Partners and Character Education

**Judy Burge ♦ President
Georgia Association of Partners in Education**

Partners in Education come in all shapes and sizes, just as schools also meet that description. Your school may be larger than some communities or very small. Partners in Education can be corporations, 'mom and pop operations,' churches, synagogues, civic clubs, or even a caring grand mom or grand pop. Where schools and Partners come together, regardless of their sizes or shapes, is that they care for children.

Schools can look to their Partners to help them implement school plans and help them meet the needs of their students. Most Partners don't know how to help schools unless the schools *COMMUNICATE* those specific plans and what students need. Then the Partners can match resources with needs and the two can *COORDINATE* their efforts.

Partners care about the education of our youth, but they also care about the personal development of students. Realizing students are future employees and neighbors, Partners want to help with developing good character in our youth.

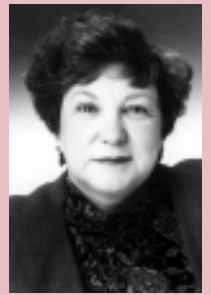
Partners can join in the Character Education effort through mentoring if they understand how you are conveying virtues to your students. During mentoring and tutoring sessions, Partners can reinforce virtues or point out examples of others demonstrating the virtue in real life or in books being read. Biographies illustrating character virtues

can be selected by Partners to be reading material for mentoring or tutoring sessions.

Partners can provide resources such as funds or in-kind services to print and publish materials on virtues. These can be calendars, posters, newsletters, and other items, where Partners have assisted school systems to publicize virtues being highlighted.

Having Partners invite students to job-shadow is an excellent way for good character traits to be caught as well as taught—when they are modeled. Junior Achievement annually has its Ground Hog Day Job-Shadow where on one day, workers invite students to visit. What an excellent opportunity to reinforce the virtues of honesty, promptness, responsibility, respect and many other valuable character lessons.

Partners are eager to participate with educators. Remember, however, that sometimes they don't know how or what is needed. One definition of a partner is, "one of two or more associated as joint principals in carrying on any business with a view to joint profit." In Partners in Education, the business is educating and developing students. We all will profit with an educated, ethical citizenry. Let's hear it for character!



Judy Burge

Ms. Burge is President of the Georgia Association of Partners in Education and Manager of Community Activities for the Kroger Company in Atlanta.

LEARNING TO CARE THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION

Marilyn E. Gootman ♦ Gootman Associates



Marilyn Gootman

Caring

Caring is the first essential ingredient of character—caring for oneself, for others, and for the community. If children care about themselves, they will behave with self-respect, self-control, and

compassion. If children care about others, they will behave with fairness, respect for others, and kindness. If children care about their community, they will behave with citizenship, patriotism and school pride. Without developing and nurturing caring, Character Education will exist in a vacuum, totally unrelated to reality.

Is it possible for one to teach caring and thus character? Absolutely. How? First, being a caring role model; second, by developing children's empathy; and, third, by providing opportunities for students to participate in caring activities.

Modeling

Children do as we do. If we treat them with kindness and respect and make them feel that they matter, they will learn to treat others that way as well. Research has proven that a teacher who cares unconditionally for his/her students, who accepts them for who they are with no strings attached, can have a lifelong positive impact on their character.

Feeling

It's not uncommon to hear children shriek with delight as blood splatters on the screen. The barrage of violent images

in television, movies, and video games has numbed the feelings of many of our children. Combine this with other problems intruding in altogether too many young lives—abuse, neglect, family disintegration, drugs, and alcohol—and it's no wonder that so many of our children are insensitive to the feelings of others and thus lack empathy.

Developing a vocabulary of feelings can arouse empathy. In the context of the classroom, we can guide children to recognize and label feelings and we can integrate discussions of feelings into the curriculum. "How do you think the character felt? How could you tell s/he felt that way? Have you ever had a similar feeling?" for example. We can also use role-play to help them put themselves in another's shoes.

Helping students express their anger constructively is another avenue for arousing empathy. If children are seething with rage, they will not behave with character and are likely to hurtfully lash out at others. If they learn how to collect themselves before they do something they regret and put their feelings into words, they will be capable of behaving responsibly. That's why teaching anger management is an essential component of Character Education.

Doing

Children will learn how to care and thus to behave with character if they are provided with classroom opportunities to care. Delegating responsibilities to students teaches them to care about their classroom. Opportunities to care for people through community service and

social action or to care for animals (e.g. class pet) build character. Feeling needed inspires us to care about what we do and for whom we do it.

Class meetings where students learn how to participate in community discussions and solve problems together nurture caring and thus build character. Citizenship, courtesy, cooperation are among numerous character traits developed during class meetings.

Discipline approaches which encourage students to problem solve and assume responsibility for changing their own behavior build character. If we help children identify the problem, reflect about why their behavior was inappropriate and what they can do to replace the inappropriate behavior with appropriate behavior, we are guiding them to care enough to be willing to change when they have erred. Honesty, diligence, and perseverance are among the character traits developed through this process. The same holds true when we use problem solving as a model for helping students deal with conflict.

When it comes to Character Education, what is our goal? For children to be able to define a list of character traits? I certainly hope not. Spouting back information is a cognitive exercise that can lack any correlation with the child's actual behavior. Isn't our ultimate goal that our students will actually behave with character? If so, we must develop and nurture the first essential ingredient of character—caring—caring enough to do the right thing.

Dr. Gootman is author of *The Caring Teacher's Guide to Discipline: Helping Young Students Learn Self Control, Responsibility, and Respect* (1997). She lives in Athens, Georgia.

Character Education: Bad News, Good News

Paul Weimer ♦ Director ♦ Georgia Center for Character Education, Georgia Humanities Council

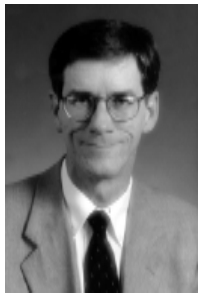
There is good news! But let's start with the bad news about HB 605, the Improved Student Learning Environment and Discipline Act of 1999. The bad news is that there is a law requiring local boards to adopt a Character Education (CE) curriculum by fall of 2000. The bad news is that there is no single "one-size-fits-all" approach to CE and that an out-of-the-box "add-on" curriculum is quite different than having a CE program. The bad news is that

Well, let's consider for a moment the most challenging of settings, the high school, where critical young minds pose a constant challenge to your goal of creating worthy citizens and a climate conducive to learning. The best starting point is to ask, "What are all the things we already do in our school and why do we *really* do them?" Athletics, for example. Do we have sports teams just because the kids (or parents) want them? Or band? Or drama club? Or what about membership groups and organizations? What are their purposes? Is it service, or academic honor, or career preparation, or perhaps just the opportunity for like-minded individuals to pursue common interests? In all of these activities and just about any other you might name, there is a potential character-building mission underlying its existence. I think we can all agree that band or sports foster a sense of discipline, hard work, cooperation, responsibility, and a variety of other positive traits: What about the other programs such as drama, debate, 4H, career prep, and so on? With a slight shift of mental gears, it is not hard to identify positive traits that are being cultivated or taught in every extracurricular enterprise in the school.

Extracurriculars are just one type of resource. There are also student councils and class officers, student mentoring, office assistants, and all the other "built in" accoutrements of school administration. There is also the Conduct Code that is all about expectations for behavior. And what is CE if not the effort to instill habits of mind and action that bring about positive behavior? You will be including products resulting from consultations with parents on expected goals and outcomes for the

discipline side of HB 605 and the CE side of 605—they should not be seen as separate processes and products, but linked in the realm of prevention.

At any grade level, k-12, the existing curriculum represents the richest resource for teaching character. The QCC calls for rich exposure to literature at every level. Literature is ideal for exploring, in an age appropriate fashion, all sorts of elements of character, good and bad. The same is true for history and the social studies cur-



Paul Weimer

"The best starting point is to ask, 'What are all the things we already do in our school and why do we really do them?'"

there are plenty of teachers and parents in your community who are skeptical about a plan to "teach values" in the schools and who are asking "who decided it is possible to *legislate* morality?" The bad news is that specific actions must be taken with respect to discipline plans and working with parents to identify objectives for the required discipline code and the CE plan! The bad news is that CE seems like just one more thing added to a plate that is already overflowing with "have to's" for educators.

The good news is that you are already doing Character Education in many ways. It might not be a comprehensive approach, and the bits and pieces may not be well organized and connected, but it is already happening in your school. There is more good news! You already have the resources at hand to support a comprehensive program in your school and your community.

How can this be, you might ask?

"With a slight shift of mental gears, it is not hard to identify positive traits that are being cultivated or taught in every extracurricular enterprise in the school."

riculum. And while it might seem difficult to tease a lesson in courage out of a mathematical exercise or a chemistry lab, the history of every subject area is full of stories of practitioners who had to practice some aspect of character in the application of their work.

In short, there is already a lot going on in your school that teaches character. One key is to recognize it and to be intentional and strategic about it. The other is to understand how it all fits (or can fit) together and to help your

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colleagues understand how these threads, extracurriculars, codes of conduct, the library, the core curriculum, textbooks, playgrounds, activities, etc. can be woven together in a comprehensive way.

“In short, there is already a lot going on in your school that teaches character. One key is to recognize it and to be intentional and strategic about it.”

So not only do you have resources, you also have partners. They are your entire school staff. Tell them the good news! They are already teaching character. Nevertheless, challenge them and your self to ask how it is being done—strategically, or

by default? Remember, all of our actions as educators take place under the implacable gaze of our students—our interactions with colleagues and students speak as loudly (and at the worst times even louder) than the messages and lessons we teach intentionally. Our primary resource for CE is human and includes educators, parents, and others in the community who relate to students in a manner that influences them in a positive way.

Parents with concerns about the new law should recognize that character instruction underlies existing activities of the school. They will be pleased to know that they are already partners in the school’s character building curriculum. Thank them and ask how else they can help out! Would your school’s business partner recognize an opportunity in your CE initiative to have a positive influence on their current con-

sumer base and future work force? You bet they will! Ask them to help shape a school-business partnership that has character building as the centerpiece of work-force preparation. They will leap at the chance!

“At any grade level, k-12, the existing curriculum represents the richest resource for teaching character.”

Just one more question: Can all of this be done over night? No! Of course not. But you can begin thinking about it tonight, and you can begin talking about it tomorrow. As you think and talk and share ideas, your pool of potential resources will grow. Write them down. Make a plan. Build a team and get started.

For Your Continued Professional Growth: **Recommended Readings in Character Education**

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Bennett, William. *The Book of Virtues*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

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Greer, Colin and Herbert Kohl (Editors). *A Call to Character: A Family Treasury*. New York: Harper Collins, 1995.

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Vessels, Gordon. *Character and Community Development: A School Planning and Teacher Training Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group/Praeger, 1998.

Vincent, Philip F. *Promising Practices in Character Education, Vol. 1 & 2*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Group, 1996.

Vincent, Philip F. *Developing Character in Students, 1st and 2nd Editions*. Chapel Hill, NC: New View Publications, 1994.

Vincent, Philip F. *Rules and Procedures for Character Education: The First Step Toward School Civility*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Group, 1998.

Wynne, Edward and Kevin Ryan. *Reclaiming Our Schools: Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline*. 2nd Edition. Columbus/Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall, 1997.

About the Georgia Humanities Council

Laura Thomson ♦ Director of Grants and Programs ♦ Georgia Humanities Council

The Georgia Humanities Council (GHC) has been involved in Character Education for the past decade; it welcomes the opportunity to continue serving the people of Georgia through its partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Georgia Department of Education, the Governor, and the Georgia Power Foundation.

Our mission is to build community, character, and citizenship in Georgia through humanities education. We see Character Education as related to our commitment to the humanities.

The humanities are story. History, literature, philosophy, poetry, ethics, our system of laws, the history of the world's great faith traditions are efforts to write the stories of humanity's existence. These stories help place each person in the wider context of what others have thought, said, believed, and done. Stories place us in the shoes of other peoples. Stories bear out the consequences of our behavior, for good and for ill, and they instruct us profoundly, for between the lines of stories we find the messages of life that cause us to think and grow.

Character Education is a call to the meaning and significance of things, and especially those things that inspire, strengthen, and connect us with others. Character Education, like much of the humanities, is founded on a faith that a life well lived remains a common human aspiration whoever you are and wherever you are.

The Georgia Humanities Council is the home of the **Georgia Center for Character Education**, a partnership with the Department of Education and Georgia Power. It is the producer of the *New Georgia Guide* (University of Georgia Press, 1996). Currently, the Council is developing a new, on-line encyclopedia of Georgia in partnership with the Governor of Georgia, the University of Georgia Press, and the University System of Georgia/GALILEO. The Council also sponsors National History Day in Georgia, an annual program that showcases the creative and outstanding work of Georgia's 6th through 12th graders. In February of each year, it hosts the Annual Governor's Awards in the Humanities and the Annual Humanities Lecture.

In addition to funding and conducting its own projects, the Georgia Humanities Council offers **grants** to support humanities-based

projects around the state.

After the successful conference, "Linking School and Community Through Character Education," the GHC began to receive requests from schools and community organizations for support for the development of local pilot Character Education initiatives. As the GHC is a grant-making organization, the GHC invited these organizations to seek funding through the Council's competitive process. Since then, GHC has funded over 20 grants totaling over \$200,000. These grants help support a range of activities, including curriculum development for a single school, PTA and community dialogues, conferences, and the development of a program for the Georgia Department of Children and Youth Services.

At the same time, the Council has not been able to support many applications. GHC also has not set aside a pool of funding within our grant program exclusively to support Character Education efforts. The applications that have been funded have gone through the competitive review process with applications for projects in other formats. What have been the characteristics of Character Education projects that have made them rise to the top and be funded?

First of all, the projects have been clearly **humanities-based**. They have approached Character Education through focusing on stories, history, citizenship activities, or ethical discussions. *This demonstrates that the applicant appreciates that the school curriculum is fertile ground for character instruction.* Simply presenting a project as "Character Education", without grounding it in the humanities, has been a weakness of some applications not funded.

Strong projects have also involved **collaboration**. Projects that have been funded have involved the participation of outside consultants and specialists in history, literature, ethics, or citizenship. They have also elicited the support and commitment of educational leaders. Collaboration between schools and historical societies, museums, libraries, or colleges and universities increases the chances of funding.

It is also important to see **Parent and Teacher organizations, and business partners** involved. GHC grants require matching support for projects, and these organizations are often key to raising or developing this cost-

share. However, beyond the financial, it is important to have parents and community members involved in order to have a successful Character Education initiative.

While a strong project is certainly the key to receiving a grant, a strong application is likewise necessary. What makes a strong grant application?

The most important key to writing a successful application is **being able to describe your project clearly, thoroughly, and succinctly**. You need to answer all the questions about your project: **who, what, when, where, why, and how?** You need to make a case for the need for your project and for what is unique about your organization's proposal. For the Georgia Humanities Council, it is crucial to emphasize the role of the humanities in the project and the involvement of partners.

Along with the narrative description of the project, **the budget** is often the make or break component of an application. You want to present a clear picture of what the project is going to cost, where the sources of support are going to come from for the project, and what you are asking the granting organization to pay for. Budget realistically; do not inflate budgets (reviewers examine budgets carefully). Make sure you understand the cost-share requirements and that you have a plan in place to cover it.

Preparing an application requires time, so you should **start early**. Obtain guidelines, review them carefully (and ideally with a team). Develop a draft proposal. Staff at the Georgia Humanities Council will read your draft and make suggestions for improvement. Whatever the situation, it is imperative to submit the proposal in the appropriate format before the deadline. A sloppy or incomplete application will not receive funding.

Care in preparation, presentation, planning and programming reflects a comprehensive understanding of needs, goals, and strategies for getting there. In addition, bringing in appropriate resources throughout this process, whether scholars or community partners, reflects a shared commitment to the project.



Laura Thomson

pears in a report (Vessels) about an elementary school program in Atlanta. Schools need not act alone: in every community, there are natural partners who have a stake in the success of Character Education (Burge). Does Character Education really work? In a concluding article, some of the scientific evidence about brain development and “emotional intelligence” is summarized (Weimer).

As Character Education is now a state mandate, we invited four public officials to share their own perspectives on the subject. Two of these officials, the Governor and State Superintendent of Schools, share a responsibility for education in Georgia. We also invited the perspectives of Representative Carl Von Epps who introduced the Character Education legislation of 1997, Representative Louise McBee who is Committee Vice Chair of the University System of Georgia, and Representative Kathy Ashe

who is a former classroom teacher now serving on the Education Committee.

As many of these essays will show, Character Education is a work-in-progress. The writers all recognize that we are learners bound together by a real commitment to doing well by every single child. Clearly, CE works best when taken seriously, not relegated to a “side dish.” It is not simply a special program: it is a way of being that helps children “know the good, love the good, and do the good.” It is the job of everyone in the school, and some would say, in the community too.

We would like to thank our contributors for taking time out of their busy schedules to write for this special issue. And to our readers, we hope that this sampling of opinion will assist you in your own work, the most important work in the Nation: educating tomorrow’s citizens.

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