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Character Education Instruction Integrated Through Literature in Elementary Classrooms

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CHARACTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTION
INTEGRATED THROUGH LITERATURE
IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

by

Jamie Marshall

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

Character Education Instruction

Integrated through Literature in Elementary Classrooms

This country is suffering from a values vacuum, clearly evidenced by the increase in youth violence, as revealed in this researcher's review of literature in Chapter 2. The purpose of this project was to facilitate elementary school educators in their critical need for the implementation of character education in their classrooms. To address the need for positive character education and development, this researcher developed a 6 week literature based curricular unit. The project was designed to provide Grades 1-3 educators with six introductory lessons and strategies for the integration of each of six core character traits throughout core curriculums. Further, to promote parental involvement, parent letters were provided which included specific examples for character reinforcement at home. The review of literature conducted by this researcher revealed that when students are taught in a supportive environment which promotes positive character traits, maximum teaching and learning can take place.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The idea of teaching character education in schools is not new. While it has changed names and focus throughout history, it is a crucial issue for students, educators, and members of communities nationwide. There are many challenges that surround character education today, especially as they relate to the effective teaching of core values and the establishment of good character traits in the students of this country, the leaders of tomorrow.

Because of the multifaceted nature of character education, many important issues and concerns have been raised, which are presented in this chapter. Some of the challenges of character education are the adverse effects that members of society, students, and classrooms experience from the lack of or ineffective character education. The remedies for this apparent values vacuum include: (a) the identification of which character traits to teach, (b) the integration of literature based instruction throughout the core curriculum, and (c) assessments of the effectiveness of character education programs. A section on the definitions of terms used throughout the research project is also included.

Statement of the Problem

With the increase in this country of incidents such as: (a) youth violence, (b) disrespect for authority, (c) dishonesty, and (d) the inability to distinguish right from wrong, it is apparent that there is a values vacuum in the United States that needs to be

addressed. Parents, educators, and members of communities are responsible for the teaching of fundamental values to youth which will enable them to become caring and considerate members of society. While educators acknowledge that students should be taught positive character traits during the school day, they are faced with the challenge of how to: (a) incorporate this instruction into the curriculum, (b) identify which character traits to teach, and (c) assess the effectiveness of character education programs.

Background of the Problem

According to McIntyre Wilber (2000), the support for character education in public schools has fluctuated over the course of history. Support waned in the unsettling 1960s. However, in the 1970s, it resurfaced through values clarification instruction. By the mid 1980s, the emphasis moved to drug resistance and sex education programs. Opposition to these programs arose when families claimed that the content jeopardized their parental rights. In the 1990s, the growing incidents of school violence brought back the demand for character education.

According to Lickona (n.d.), throughout history, three important societal structures have worked together to shape children's character and values: (a) school, (b) family, and (c) religion. Also, according to Lickona, during this century, many adverse societal changes have occurred in these areas: (a) the retreat of educators from their roles of character education instruction; (b) the breakdown of many families; (c) the lack of religious upbringing. Also contributing to the problem are the unsuitable peer culture influences through television and advertising. To counteract this societal values vacuum that has developed, Lickona postulated that there is currently a collaborative effort by

school staff, community members, and parents to build a decent society. According to Lickona, this can be achieved by teaching children right from wrong and instilling in them a core set of values. Further, according to Schaeffer (1998), the character education movement involves not only moral but democratic education, as well as character development. In addition, Anderson (2000) emphasized that, because of its multifaceted approach in the determination of what is important and what should be taught, it is difficult to address character education in the schools.

According to McIntyre Wilbur (2000), the incorporation of character education into U.S. schools is paramount. However, one of the challenges character education brings to the schools is the identification of which traits to teach. Otten (2000) emphasized that the challenge is not only which traits to teach but how to best implement those traits and core values within the realm of the public school system. For McIntyre Wilbur, there is no argument that integrity needs to be developed in children. This author noted that, since the students of today will be the leaders of tomorrow, not only do they need to excel academically, but they need to be cooperative, hardworking, and honest. Further, according to O'Sullivan (2004), it has long been postulated by educators that students need to learn core values and positive character traits to function well in society. To emphasize this point, Plato (n.d., as cited in O'Sullivan) stated: "Education in virtue is the only education which deserves the name" (p. 640).

In regard to whether character education in the schools can help solve the problem that the current values vacuum has created in this country, one educator (as cited in WCPSS, 2005) commented that a "character education program helps children learn to

think before they act, to understand fundamental differences between right and wrong, and to make good decisions” (p. 2). McIntyre Wilber (2000) postulated that this need has increased demands by community members and educators for the incorporation of effective character education programs in the schools nationwide. According to Anderson (2000), state education departments, politicians, schools, and parents are confronting these challenges head-on and examining how best to incorporate character education. Fortunately, Leming (1993) maintained, a wealth of research exists which can be utilized and expanded to establish and implement an effective and beneficial character education program in any school system.

Purpose of the Project

The goals and purpose of public education are to: (a) enable students to grow academically, and (b) provide them with the tools to become productive members of society. In order to achieve these goals, students must be able to exhibit core values such as respect, trustworthiness, and honesty. Character education can be used to help students become well-rounded individuals who are able to function and contribute to their communities. The purpose of this project will be to develop a literature based curricular unit that will provide elementary school teachers and students with authentic lesson plans on specific character traits. The integration of character education through literature will allow teachers to instruct and instill core values throughout the designated curriculum. Use of this unit will alleviate the challenge of how to: (a) incorporate this important instruction into the daily classroom schedule, (b) identify which traits to teach, and (c) assess the effectiveness of a character education program. In addition, the promotion of

positive character traits throughout the school day will help to establish a supportive environment where maximum teaching and learning can take place.

Definitions of Terms

The following list of words and phrases are terms that will be used throughout this proposal, and in Chapter 2 in particular:

American Creed: The four democratic values of this country, which are: (a) freedom, (b) equality, (c) justice, and (d) human dignity (Titus, 1997).

Behaviorism: A theory which is focused on the way specific behaviors are learned, in ways that can be described, analyzed, and predicted (Berger, 2001).

Character Education: Moral instruction in schools; instruction in basic human values, and morals, as part of a school curriculum (McIntyre Wilbur, 2000).

Character Traits: Distinctive qualities or attributes; intrinsic attitudes, or beliefs, that determine a person's behavior in relation to self and others (Bulach, 2002).

Cronbach Alpha: Measures the consistency and reliability of the instrument used in assessments, evaluations, and surveys (Bulach, 2002).

Conservatism: A belief which favors traditional views and values; tends to oppose change (MSN, Encarta Online Dictionary, 2006).

Cooperative Learning Concepts: A range of techniques for enhancing the value of student-to-student interaction. The teacher-centered objective of the peer interaction is to promote effective instruction of thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as creativity and teamwork (Biehler & Snowman, 1997).

Core Curriculum: Compulsory school subjects; the subjects that all students are required to study at school throughout the day (MSN, Encarta Online Dictionary, 2006).

Core Values: Basic ethics, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile and desirable (MSN, Encarta Online Dictionary, 2006).

Developmental Theory of Moral Reasoning: Kohlberg's (n.d., as cited in Berger) moral development theory in which morality is viewed as neither universal nor logical, but comes from the process of thinking and occurs in six stages (Berger, 2001).

Ego Development Theory: Erikson's (n.d., as cited in Berger) ego development theory is centered around the belief that the ego, the center of individuality, cannot be understood in isolation from others. It is based upon eight developmental stages that cover the entire life span, all of which emphasize the person's relationship to family and culture (Berger, 2001).

Ethics Ghetto: Character education taught as an add-on course in one corner of the curriculum, rather than the integration throughout the core curriculum (Kidder, 2000).

Flexible Groups: Groupings of students into pairs, small groups, large groups, or whole class; the instructor takes into consideration many variables (e.g., the lesson objectives, needs of each student, and type of activity involved). Another consideration is whether the groups should be homogeneous or heterogeneous. Students' levels of language proficiency and/or content knowledge should be considered as well as language backgrounds (e.g., students with mixed-language

backgrounds may promote the use of English, and students with same-language backgrounds may promote comprehension of content area concepts) (Irujo, 2006).

Holistically Taught: Instruction that is focused on the body, mind, and spirit (Lickona, 1993, as cited in Titus) (Titus, 1997).

Instrument: Method used for assessments, evaluations, and surveys (Bulach, 2002).

Integrational Instruction Strategy: Teaching character education which is integrated throughout the core curriculum (Singh, 2001).

Literature-Based Approach: A method of teaching which utilizes literature that depicts positive character traits and core values to help instill them in children (Singh, 2001).

Model or Quality Teacher: Interchangeable terms that describe teachers who are direct and nonjudgmental, as well as open minded with their students (Glasser, 1990, as cited in Williams). They establish classroom environments that are risk free and nurturing (Clark, 1990, as cited in Williams) (Williams, 1993).

Moral Codes: A complex system of principles or ethical rules of right and wrong, often based on religious or cultural beliefs (Berger, 2001).

Moral Dilemma Approach: An approach that originated from Kohlberg's (n.d., as cited in Berger) moral development theory. Currently, it is used in curricula to improve the quality of student reasoning about ethical dilemmas. The goal is for students to become less self-centered and conformist and more attuned to the rights of others and societal well being by effective, teacher led discussions about moral dilemmas.

These moral dilemmas can be drawn from history or from the experiences of students (Berger, 2001).

Reversibility: A child's ability to reverse methods and, therefore, recognize that the qualities of an object remain the same despite changes in appearance. This occurs in Piaget's (as cited in Berger) concrete operational stage of cognitive development (e.g., $1+2=3$ to $3-2=1$) (Berger, 2001).

Six Pillars of Character: Six character traits that were identified by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (n.d., as cited in Swick et al.) and are widely accepted in schools in the United States. The six traits are: (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) fairness, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness (Swick et al.).

Social Development Theory: Vygotsky's (n.d., as cited in Berger) social development theory, also known as sociocultural theory, is based on the belief that the lifetime development process is dependent on social interaction and social learning, which then leads to cognitive development. Central to this belief is that biological and cultural development occur together (Berger, 2001).

Values Clarification Theory: It is emphasized in this theory that teachers are not to moralize and that students clarify their own values by following a prescribed seven step valuing process, which the teacher facilitates. Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1966, as cited in Leming) co-authored *Values and Teaching*, the first statement of this theory (Leming, 1993).

Values Vacuum: An absence of basic ethics, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile and desirable (MSN, Encarta Online Dictionary, 2006).

Chapter Summary

There is an urgent need in society today for character education. Presented in this chapter were the challenges that face educators in regard to the many facets of successful implementation of character education in the elementary school system. Some of the challenges presented were: (a) the urgent need for character education in society today; (b) the need to incorporate the core values and selected traits of character education into schools across the nation; (c) the need to integrate character education through literature into core curriculums of elementary schools; and (d) the need to assess the effectiveness of character education programs.

All of these issues and concerns will be addressed in Chapter 2, including: (a) the importance of character education, (b) the theoretical and historical background of character education, (c) discussion of current character education programs, (d) assessments of several character education programs, and (e) the critical roles of schools and teachers in character education. Presented in Chapter 3 will be the applied method and procedures for integrating character education into the core curriculums of elementary classrooms through a literature based teaching approach.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Character education is vital in the effort to help students become ethical and productive members of society (O'Sullivan, 2004). Therefore, this author's goal will be to integrate character education through literature within the core curricula of elementary classrooms. In order to establish a supportive environment where maximum teaching and learning can take place, positive character traits should be promoted throughout the school day.

Currently, there is a general consensus among educators, politicians, parents, and communities that there is a critical need for character education in schools across the United States (Brynildssen, 2002). However, due to the complex nature of character education, many important issues and concerns have arisen. One of these issues is how to evaluate and determine which character traits to teach. After the traits are decided upon, it is critical to be able to effectively integrate the traits into the daily classroom schedule. The utilization of a literature based approach appears to be an effective method, and it is crucial for educators to gain the knowledge necessary to implement effective instructional strategies. These issues, concerns, and challenges are explored in this chapter.

Educators choose from the many types of existing character education programs, which can be replicated, modified, or expanded to meet their school and community needs. It is important to ensure that the chosen character education program has been properly

assessed and evaluated, initially, and continually for its use and effectiveness. For this purpose, several noteworthy character education programs are explored and described in this chapter, including several of a wide variety of assessments and surveys which have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of many of the current character education programs.

This author has attempted to shed light on the critical issues that surround character education which, because of its complex and multifaceted nature, is a challenging task. Also, to better the understanding of character education, in general, this author has explored the theoretical and historical background of character education, along with the importance of implementation for a better tomorrow. In addition, since schools and teachers are critical to successful character education programs, their roles are explored in this chapter as well.

The Importance of Character Education

The essence of character education was encapsulated in the following quote: “The character education program helps children learn to think before they act, to understand fundamental differences between right and wrong, and to make good decisions” (Wake County, 2005, p. 2). A clear illustration of the relevance of character education in society today was captured in the following quote:

Character education presents life with context, inviting students to listen, share, explore, and reflect. Cultivating knowledge for purposeful living, students learn through literature, art, humanities and throughout the existing school curriculum the benefits and consequences of behavior. They learn the power of choice. They learn to appreciate the qualities of being human and to share their appreciation at home, in school, and in the community. (University of Illinois Extension, n.d, p. 2)

The fastest growing school reform movement in the United States is character education (Edgington, 2002). In fact, according to Jones, Ryan, and Bohlin (1998, as cited in Edgington), recent surveys indicate that, nationally, character education is the highest priority in school restructuring programs, with no indications that this concern is merely temporary. This clearly verifies that the reliance in this country is on public schools to provide character education (Edgington). Ediger (1995, as cited in Ediger, 1998) agreed that character education should be an inherent part of the school curriculum. According to the National Conference of State Legislation (2002, as cited in Edgington), federal grants have been received by over half of the states to develop initiatives for character education, which further attests to the need and demand for character education in U.S. schools.

Collins and Henjum (1999) advised that the process for character education must be long term and ongoing. Also, they emphasized that it is essential to connect character education with every aspect of school life so that it acquires meaning for students. A strategies network for character education should be interwoven into several school elements, including: (a) the entire school curriculum, (b) the school mission, (c) discipline policies, (d) after-school activities, and (e) teacher professional development activities. Also, the staff of WCPSS (2005) emphasized that character education needs to be integrated into the entire curriculum throughout the day. This can be achieved easily through the utilization of literature based teaching methods. Further, Collins and Henjum (1999) admonished that, within the character education curriculum, it is crucial to engage learners in critical thinking and problem solving.

Theoretical Background

Piaget (n.d.), Kohlberg (n.d.), and Vygotsky (n.d., all cited in O'Sullivan, 2004), were among many developmental theorists who emphasized that the moral codes and character development of children continue during their formative years. These developmental theorists acknowledged that, through students' reading of literature, they will be subconsciously instilled with character traits, even without formal classroom instruction. However, according to O'Sullivan, by societal demand and throughout history, it is believed that character education needs to be consciously taught in public schools to intentionally shape students' core values throughout the existing curriculum.

Pearson and Nicholson (2000) reported that the knowledge base of noteworthy child developmental theorists serves as a valuable framework to establish character education programs. Piaget (1954) and Kohlberg (1968, both cited in Pearson & Nicholson), are possibly the most noted moral development and reasoning theorists. The authors cited other child development theorists who provided insight into character education, including: (a) Havighurst (1953) and his social development theory, and (b) Loevinger (1976) and her ego development theory. Similarities exist among these varying theorists, in that, all identified a pattern of moving to an other centered perspective from a more self-centered perspective.

It is interesting to note that, in 1966, the beginning of a new period of interest, Kohlberg (1966, as cited in Leming, 1993) linked the practice of moral education in schools with his developmental theory of moral reasoning. During this same period, Raths, Harmin, and Simon coauthored *Values and Teaching* (1966, as cited in Leming), which

was the first statement of the values clarification theory and techniques. Consequently, values clarification was extensively researched, as it was the main topic in the field of moral education until about 1986 (Leming).

In the values clarification method, it was emphasized that teachers were not to moralize and that each student should clarify his or her values following a prescribed seven step valuing process, in which the teacher was the facilitator, just as in Kohlberg's (1966, as cited in Leming, 1993) moral dilemma discussion approach. According to Kirschenbaum (1992, as cited in Leming), the values clarification approach was extremely popular with teachers. In fact, one handbook of values clarification strategies sold 600,000 copies, an extraordinary number for a textbook on educational methods (Leming).

Leming (1981, 1985, 1987, as cited in Leming, 1993) conducted research in which it was found that the evaluation results of schools, which utilized the values clarification and moral dilemma approaches in their curricula, were not insignificant for character education planning, with students' behavior as a main objective. According to Lickona (1991, as cited in Leming) and the National School Board Association (1987, as cited in Leming), the late 1980s and early 1990s, just like the 1920s had been, were a highly charged time for the character education movement. However, according to Leming, as in the 1920s, there is a need for additional systematic evaluation of these new character education programs and their effects on children.

Purpose and Role of Schools

Schools play an important role in the character education of future leaders, as demonstrated in this quote from Cali (1997):

All children can be winners. They need encouragement and support in all of their efforts to do their best and succeed. We must become active players in developing and promoting character education and take action to help our children. (p. 21)

Otten (2000) postulated that character education, when integrated into the school community, helps to: (a) keep students on task, (b) re-engage students, (c) deal with conflict, and (d) involve the community with civic and political life. Further, Otten emphasized that school staff, along with parents and members of the community, have an obligation to meet the needs of students and that the use of character education can establish civil and caring communities. Consequently, this enables teaching and learning to take place in schools. Also, it is important that core values be emphasized by all concerned: (a) teachers, (b) administrators, and (c) parents (Lickona, n.d.). The challenge to school staff is to provide students with: (a) support, (b) self-esteem, and (c) stamina. The presence of these factors will enable them to develop into caring, responsible, competent, and successful citizens (University of Illinois Extension, n.d.).

According to Collins and Henjum (1999), it is important that school staff define and agree upon several core values that will govern their student interactions and establish an environment where these values are clearly demonstrated. Further, the authors postulated that school staff should focus on the development of students' moral understandings and sensitivities, as well as their intellect. Also, Brooks and Kamn (1993) advised that, since schools are a community of their own, staff should foster such elements of good character as: (a) culture, (b) climate, and (c) language. This will have a positive influence on students who will acquire attributes such as: (a) behaviors, (b) concepts, (c) skills, and (d)

words. All of these attributes are needed for: (a) ethical decision making, (b) a fertile learning environment, and (c) good conduct.

According to Ryan and Bohlin (1999, as cited in O'Sullivan, 2004), there are several important reasons for school staff to engage in character education: (a) past great leaders, including those from other cultures, have postulated that the purpose of schools is not only to help students become smart, but also to become good; (b) the United States founders sustained this belief, that democracy was unworkable without morally responsible and educated citizens; and (c) character education has been endorsed by many states and by federal law. In fact, according to Vessels and Boyd (1996, as cited in O'Sullivan), the U.S. Department of Education established guidelines in 1995, with a legal mandate, that all schools were obligated to actively impart a unifying moral code and civic values. Also, teaching character education in schools is repeatedly being confirmed by societal desires (O'Sullivan).

As to whether character education belongs in schools, Wynne (1992, as cited in O'Sullivan, 2004) emphasized: "Schools are and must be concerned about pupils' morality. Any institution with custody of children or adolescents for long periods of time, such as a school, inevitably affects the character of its charges" (p. 641). Further, Singh (2001) cited Lickona (1991) and stated: "Schools cannot be ethical bystanders at a time when our society is in deep moral trouble" (p. 46). According to Collins and Henjum (1999), collaboration with the entire school community is the key to positive change, and it has far reaching impact with partnerships that are formed (e.g., home school partnerships).

It is imperative that the school staff work with the family to support and enhance core values in order to attain these goals.

Role of Teachers

The essence of the important role that teachers play in the character education of U.S. students was captured in this quote.

As educators we continue to plant seeds of integrity, honesty, respect, self-discipline, and responsibility. We work together as collaborators in creation, knowing that there will be a reciprocal return on our investment in current students, future generations, and society. (University of Illinois Extension, n.d., p. 2)

Titus (1997) emphasized that students can be taught character education through a literature based approach integrated to the core curricula, including: (a) social science, (b) mathematics, (c) history, and (d) science classes. This is beneficial because character formation should be embedded in all academic programs. Also, core values and character traits can be interwoven into celebrations of holidays, the Pledge of Allegiance, and through the teacher's expectations for students to: (a) respect others, (b) work hard, and (c) act responsibly. Further, since teachers are authority figures and role models, they convey ethical principles to their students throughout the day. In fact, values are central in schools, and students learn from both the visible and invisible realms of the curriculum. Consequently, teachers can apply core values lessons through: (a) reinforcement of student behavior, (b) selection of subject matter, (c) design of a morally right and fair classroom environment, and (d) personal example.

It has been demonstrated many times that teachers, individually, can make a difference. Often, teachers are cited as having had a profound impact on their students'

lives, by being an excellent moral role model (Kidder, 2000). Therefore, teachers are faced with the analysis of numerous character education research materials so that they can design effective lesson plans that effectively teach character traits and core values (Anderson 2000). According to O'Sullivan (2004), teaching core character traits, through literature interwoven into the core curriculum, is a plausible approach to achieve this goal. Leading discussions on character traits through literature helps to assure that students know and develop good, loving, and caring character traits, perhaps a teacher's most important role.

Any time a teacher shows respect for each student as an active, responsible learner, character education manifests itself. The fact that students require an environment of mutual respect and trust is understood by model teachers. Glasser (1990, as cited in Williams, 1993) advised that the terms, model teacher and quality teacher, are interchangeable. According to Glasser, these teachers establish classroom environments that are: (a) risk-free and (b) nurturing. Such model classrooms were proposed in Vygotsky's constructivist theory (Clark, 1990, as cited in Williams). Also, according to Williams, these exemplary teachers are: (a) direct, (b) nonjudgmental, and (c) open minded with their students. Further, according to Williams (1992, as cited in Williams), "respect is taught best through a hidden curriculum of modeling and quality teaching that creates a positive moral climate" (p. 22).

According to Ediger (1998), the teacher needs to facilitate a classroom environment that promotes positive social interaction for the development of a psychologically safe environment. A result is that students learn more about their peers as individuals when

they interact positively with them. They see one another as equals when there is an atmosphere of acceptance and respect in the classroom. Further, according to Burk (1996, as cited in Ediger), when a teacher recognizes and appreciates students' relationships in the classroom by enabling them to work with a variety of classmates, including their friends and acquaintances, they learn to respect their peers as members of the social world.

Titus (1997) recommended that teachers should engage students in the method of depth learning with critical reflection on values. This approach results in students' learning the following important skills: (a) how to stand up for ideals, (b) how to maintain self-respect, (c) how to resist peer pressure, and (d) how to resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways. In addition, Manning and Baruth (1996, as cited in Titus, 1997) pointed out the significance of teacher skills, knowledge, and attitudes in the classroom environment. They emphasized the importance of teachers' understanding of the implications of ethnicity, race, culture, and social class. It is only with this ability that they will be able to deliver instruction which is appropriate both culturally and developmentally.

Further, in order for students to develop essential citizenship skills and as reinforcement of positive social behavior, teachers must be professionals who emulate such positive character traits as: (a) compassion, (b) trustworthiness, (c) courage, and (d) integrity (Anderson, 2000). Finally, it is the responsibility of teachers to teach the connection between academic success and character, because in order to be successful, students need to develop: (a) a sense of responsibility, (b) a willingness to persevere, (c) an appreciation of the value of learning, and (d) a strong work ethic (Stone & Dyal, 1997).

Effects Within the Classroom

According to Lickona (n.d.), the need for character education is apparent in U.S. schools today, especially in light of the recent history and prevalence of youth violence. This need is clearly demonstrated by the long list of adverse effects the nation's values vacuum has created within the classroom, including: (a) illiteracy, (b) disrespect of school officials and peers, (c) defacing and stealing school property, (d) violence, (e) bullying, (f) teasing, (g) lack of self-discipline, (h) lack of caring for self, for others, for the environment, (i) dishonesty, (j) rudeness, (k) lack of patience, (l) bad manners, (m) substance abuse, and (n) gang memberships. According to Bulach (2002), students need character education in schools so that they can develop positive moral and civil behaviors and to help curb violence. They need to develop such character traits as kindness, forgiveness, and sympathy to curb the bullying behavior and teasing that causes so much humiliation, strife, and anger that consequently results in violence in U.S. schools.

Further, according to Bulach (2002), teachers have found positive connections within classrooms where character education is actively practiced. Some of the positive effects seen in schools with character education in place are: (a) higher attendance, (b) decreased discipline problems, (c) fewer student pregnancies, and (d) improvements in academic performance. Also, utilization of character education within the classroom would mean less turmoil and fewer disruptions. Consequently, the classroom would run smoother and be a more positive and safe learning environment for students. Also, according to Lickona (n.d.), with the presence of character education in classrooms, students develop positive character traits, such as: (a) self-discipline (e.g., to avoid hitting

a peer for name calling); and (b) perseverance (e.g., to stay on task and complete homework). With character education, students can: (a) concentrate on what the teacher is instructing and (b) score higher on tests. Finally, a quote from Theodore Roosevelt (n.d., as cited in Gilness, 2003) demonstrates the importance of character education in the classroom. “To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society” (p. 243).

Effects Outside the Classroom

According to Lickona (n.d.), children need good, positive character education. It does not matter where children live (e.g., suburbs, inner city, or rural settings), societal problems cut across all segments of society. Also, Lickona reported that some of the adverse effects outside the classroom that result from the lack of character education are: (a) rising youth violence, (b) youth crime, (c) drug and alcohol abuse, (d) increasing dishonesty, (e) family dysfunction, (f) sexual promiscuity, (g) youth pregnancy rates, and (h) increasing disrespect. This disrespect is directed toward: (a) authority, (b) property, and (c) environment. Further, Lickona emphasized that, to counteract the proliferation of these societal ills, students desperately need character education. In addition, according to Ediger (1998), the importance of character education and the lack of it, as shown by the adverse effects in society today, is emphasized frequently in educators’ speeches and articles, at teacher education conventions, and other places. This clearly demonstrates educators’ beliefs that students need character education in schools to develop both in moral and academic aspects.

Core Values

Lickona (1993, as cited in Titus, 1997) articulated an eloquent and strong argument for the teaching of core values when he stated:

Such values affirm our human dignity, promote the good of the individual and the common good, and protect our human rights. They meet the classic ethical tests of reversibility and universalizability. They define our responsibilities in a democracy, and they are recognized by all civilized people and taught by all enlightened creeds. Not to teach children these core ethical values is a grave moral failure. (p. 9)

Since it is widely recognized that values are learned at a very young age, character education should be provided at the elementary level. According to Goble and Brooks (1983, as cited in Titus, 1997), by the time most students reach junior high school age, the needed approach for values changes from prevention to rehabilitation if they have internalized negative values.

According to Titus (1997), values are taught both directly and indirectly in U.S. schools. However, Lickona (1993, as cited in Titus), maintained that character education needs to be taught holistically, focusing on the body, mind, and spirit. Lickona emphasized that the child's emotional character, as well as the child's intellectual character, should be addressed, because the emotional side of character "acts as a bridge between judgment and action" (p. 5). To further illustrate this point, Lickona stated that:

Good character consists of knowing what is right, wanting to do the right thing, and doing what is right. Effective character education must help children to understand values, adopt or commit to them, and act upon these values in their personal lives. (p. 5)

Also, Collins & Henjum (1999), described the methodologies used by proponents of character education to teach children core values are: (a) cooperative learning concepts,

(b) problem solving, and (c) experience based projects. However, in many schools, core values are taught with teacher led activities; instead, they should engage children in interactive learning activities to teach core values.

Leming (1993), as cited in Titus, 1997, noted that an essential element in effective moral education is discipline, which students may help to establish. Further, according to Lickona (n.d.), many children are not raised in home environments where core values are stressed. For example, they may not believe that honesty is important. Teachers, school administrators, and parents need to work together to emphasize these core values through character education. Consequently, ready-made kits and programs are available to facilitate school staff with the instruction of character education, including the teaching of core values. Edgington (2002) observed that character education has become an educational landscape state and national fixture.

Traits to Teach

London (1987, as cited in Pearson & Nicholson, 2000), emphasized that the traits associated with good character must be identified. This is more important than the fact that it appears as though no universal definition for character education exists. Similarly, Pearson and Nicholson reported that there are as many different lists of traits as there are definitions of character education; however, it is encouraging that many of the same traits were listed by various authors.

Pearson and Nicholson (2000) developed a unique list to aid educators in their quest to identify the character traits to emphasize in their character education programs. This list contains three areas that apply to students that seem to constitute good character.

For example, a focus on self could include a personal trait such as courage, and a focus on others could emphasize the student's relationship with friends and classmates, in which a trait such as kindness is critical. These focus areas and their critical character trait components are: (a) how students relate to self (e.g., courage, responsibility, self-respect, and self-discipline); (b) how students relate to others (e.g., honesty, respect, kindness, and empathy); and (c) how students relate to the entire school community (e.g., fairness, justice, and civic virtue).

Further, McBrien & Brandt (1997) emphasized that the vital goals for schools teaching character traits are for students to become self-disciplined and morally responsible citizens. Important elements of the development of moral character are: (a) decision making, (b) conflict resolution, and (c) problem solving. It is important to note that students can see that their decisions affect others through discussions and role playing. Also, according to Elam, Lowell, and Gallup (1993, as cited in Singh, 2001), it was found that more than 90% of respondents agreed that school staff should be involved in teaching such traits as: (a) caring, (b) honesty, (c) courage, and (d) acceptance.

Many character education programs, in U.S. schools, use a widely accepted character traits list, known as the Six Pillars of Character (Josephson Institute of Ethics, n.d., as cited in Swick et al., 2000). Swick et al. identified these six character traits as: (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) fairness, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness. Many other character traits have been identified by researchers, local and state school boards, and professional organizations. However, Swick et al. noted that the other traits

can be included under the Six Pillars of Character so that school staff and communities can develop their own unique list of traits.

Another traits list was composed by Gibbs and Earley (1994, as cited in Edgington, 2002). They identified 10 core character traits: (a) compassion, (b) courage, (c) courtesy, (d) fairness, (e) honesty, (f) kindness, (g) loyalty, (h) perseverance, (i) respect, and (j) responsibility. According to Titus (1997), these 10 attributes are the types of character traits that U.S. citizens seem to demand be present in schools. In addition, these 10 traits are compatible with the four democratic values that comprise the American Creed (as cited in Titus): (a) freedom, (b) equality, (c) justice, and (d) human dignity. Finally, according to Brynildssen (2002), there may be no universal answer to the question of which character traits to teach. This is apparent when one reviews the myriad numbers of character trait lists from which one can choose. Depending on the school and community, the right mix of character traits will vary most likely.

Integration with the Curriculum

According to Ediger (1998), today, the integration of character education into the classroom curriculum should be achieved with the use of activities and class meetings; both elements are recommended for planning, caring, sharing, and reflecting. This is contrary to the past when character education was based on three beliefs: (a) behaviorism, (b) conservatism, and (c) religion. Further, Davis (2006) purported that curriculum based teaching is popular in many character education programs in public schools because of its varied approaches. These approaches include: (a) the integration of character education through literature across the core curriculum by emphasis on certain character traits in

each lesson, (b) the holistic incorporation of character education through the school and in core curricula, and (c) the use of service projects, extracurricular activities, and conflict resolution programs.

For the issue of the integration of character education with the curriculum, Kidder (2000) stated,

Don't do a character education program off by itself; don't create an ethics ghetto over in one corner of the curriculum. Integrate it throughout the curriculum. Teachers don't have time to teach an add-on course about ethics, but you can get the ethical message into every single course. (p. 2)

Anderson (2000) agreed that character education must be integrated in all curricula, and it cannot be taught as a separate curriculum. Of note here is that all subject areas could easily be taught through a literature based approach to character education.

Collins and Henjum (1999) emphasized that, in the integration of character education into the curriculum, it is important to: (a) remain sensitive to the issues and circumstances that surround students' lives; and (b) foster a true sense of community in all aspects, including the home school partnership area. Also, according to Sell (1997, as cited in Collins & Henjum), in any situation that includes character education, students should be able to: (a) think critically about society and citizenship and (b) express their opinion. These abilities to understand and solve problems and to think critically are important in all learning situations. Fundamental to creating understanding, definition, and solutions for problems is the value of human interaction. Further, according to Titus (1997), if the school curriculum contains a positive portrayal of diverse groups of people, it can have a positive effect on students.

In regard to integration of character education into the curriculum, Bulach (2002) emphasized that students need to have periodic discussions on why a selected trait or behavior is important. Through the discussion of each character trait and its implications, the trait is reinforced. However, students need to see the behaviors modeled by people in their daily environment. In addition, instead of a focus on one trait of the month, the focus should be on one or two traits of the week. To reinforce character outside the school, parents and community members must be involved. Everyone is more likely to reinforce desired traits throughout the day when the focus is on character traits. The educational community needs to be involved as well, and student progress evaluated. In light of these ideas on the integration of traits into the curriculum and community, Bulach stated: “there are those who believe that character cannot be taught, but it can be caught” (p. 4). Finally, according to O’Sullivan (2004), when character education is integrated into the curricula, the teachers should: (a) consciously use the existing curriculum, and (b) intentionally shape character development toward the common good.

Character Education Programs

The implementation of character education programs within the schools is a worthy endeavor; however, their process and progress must be continually evaluated (Bulach, 2002). Currently, there are numerous programs for character education. They are flexible enough for local school communities to replicate or modify their wide variety of approaches. Some examples of these programs are described below:

Character Counts Coalition

The Character Counts Coalition is a voluntary partnership which: (a) supports character education nationally; and (b) offers training sessions, award recognition, and numerous resource materials (Otten, 2000). According to O’Sullivan (2004), in the Character Counts Coalition, there are six character traits identified as enduring core values to live by, are widely accepted, and used in a multitude of character education programs in this country: (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) justice, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness. It is interesting to note that the Character Counts list is almost identical to the Josephson Institute of Ethics’ Six Pillars of Character traits (n.d., as cited in Swick et al., 2000), with one exception; Six Pillars of Character uses the trait of fairness in place of justice, which Character Count uses. Both lists are widely accepted among schools.

Creatures of Character: Winning with Character Education

The Creatures of Character: Winning with Character Education is a unique character education program, designed for use in any K-5 school in the country. The program enables students to: (a) develop a knowledge of character traits through association of animals; and (b) demonstrate an understanding of these traits through hands-on activities and personal examples. Further, literature and hands-on activities are utilized throughout the curriculum. Since children learn by association, animals are used as a method to reinforce the importance of specific character traits. In this way, children can relate their everyday lives to ways the animals’ characteristics benefit them in nature. This program has been successful in the promotion of students’ social, emotional, and personal growth and to prepare them for their future challenges (Cali,1997).

The Character Education Partnership

The Character Education Partnership is a national, nonpartisan coalition (1993, as cited in Otten, 2000) for character education. It recognizes “National Schools of Character,” those schools which are models of exemplary character education practice nationwide (Otten). The members of the coalition believe that effective character education is important to build a more compassionate and responsible society. To achieve effective character education, there are some important basic principles to follow, even though there is no single script. Therefore, the Coalition has released a publication titled, *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education*. A point of notable importance is that character education is not viewed as an *add-on* program disengaged from the core curriculum. Rather, the coalition members purport that there is a wealth of opportunities that exist throughout the day to develop students’ character (Schaeffer, 1998).

The Josephson Institute of Ethics

The Josephson Institute of Ethics (n.d., as cited in Swick et al., 2000) identified a set of crucial character traits which are widely accepted and used in character education programs at schools across the U.S. These traits are known as the Six Pillars of Character. These six character traits are: (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) fairness, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness. It is interesting to note that the Josephson Institute of Ethics’ Six Pillars of Character list is almost identical to that of the Character Counts Coalition (n.d., as cited in Otten, 2000), with one exception. In the Character Counts list, the trait of justice is used in place of fairness, which the Six Pillars of Character uses. Both lists are widely accepted among U.S. schools.

The character education programs described above are just samples of the many character education programs nationwide which can be replicated, modified, or expanded to fit any school. The programs provide resources which can be utilized and implemented, through a literature based approach, in every subject area of a school's curriculum throughout the day.

Literature

According to Davis (2000), a literature based approach to teaching character education throughout core curricula can be effective because such an approach: (a) practically illustrates ways to become a moral person by a focus on a good person's particular characteristics, such as honesty, or self control; and (b) is not beyond students' abilities. Whether fiction or nonfiction, character education books that present models of good behavior should be required reading in character education courses.

According to O'Sullivan (2004), in order to integrate character education with curriculums through literature, one should: (a) choose worthwhile books; (b) look for books that are purposeful in the focus of character development during all lesson plans; and (c) move beyond literal to critical understanding of these books. Some examples are: (a) books that contain moral dilemmas, such as *Princess Furball* (Huck, 1989, as cited in O'Sullivan); (b) books with enough depth to move beyond literal comprehension, such as the picture book, *Knots on a Counting Rope* (Martin & Archambault, 1987, as cited in O'Sullivan) or the chapter book, *The Giver* (Lowry, 2002, as cited in O'Sullivan); (c) books with admirable but believable characters about the same age as students, such as *Thundercake* (Polacco, 1990, as cited in O'Sullivan), for younger students, and *The*

Moorchild (McGraw, 1996, as cited in O’Sullivan), for older students; and (d) books across a wide range of cultures and with both boys and girls as lead characters, such as the picture book, *The Rough-Face Girl* (Martin, 1992, as cited in O’Sullivan) or the chapter book, *Esperanza Rising* (Munoz Ryan, 2000, as cited in O’Sullivan).

In regard to the importance of teaching literature based character education, one school principal (as cited in Lickona, n.d.) summed it up very simply and stated:

When schools decide to do something about character education, they often look everywhere for solutions. They buy special materials, they put up signs and they’re missing what is really the great treasure here—the mine of our moral heritage, and that’s our great stories, our human history, the personalities of our leaders, the men and women who have made a contribution to the society. It’s also exploring the lives of people who have let us down—the Benedict Arnolds, the Aldrich Ames. These people and these stories really carry what we think is the right way to behave. And what schools should do is start using this not just to develop children’s intellect, but also to develop their moral sensibilities, their moral understandings. (p. 2)

Also, according to Kohn (1997, as cited in Ediger, 1998), opportunities through literature abound for students to look at a diverse perceptions of ideas. It is beneficial for students to decide what is heroic instead of telling them who the hero(s) is. Further, according to Kilpatrick, Wolfe, and Wolfe (1994, as cited in O’Sullivan, 2004), literature stories can be used to provide rules to live by as well as good role models for behavior. Consequently, literature is an excellent method with which to teach character education in the core curriculum. In addition, according to Guroian (1998, as cited in O’Sullivan), literature stories awaken what the author called the moral imagination, and therefore are much more effective than mere instruction in character.

Further, Singh (2001) claimed there are a multitude of literature books that a teacher can utilize to integrate character education into the core curriculum. Rather than a new topic, the infusion of literature study with character education is only a matter of a slight change of emphasis. Teachers can examine character traits critically in relation to ethics instead of examine characters in relation to plot and setting as a literal concept. For example, many stories in children's literature reflect lessons in ethics and morals. These moral lessons can be read and discussed without taking time from core subjects. In addition, literature is a method that enables a teacher to incorporate character education into all the core subjects, including social studies and health. With a literature based approach to character education, all that is necessary is for teachers to shift the focus of their teaching to emphasize the specifically chosen character traits.

Brynildssen (2002) emphasized that literature can be a very powerful tool for teachers. However, the choice of which books to utilize can be a daunting task, because there are so many, and they include contemporary writings and classics, as well as fiction and nonfiction. Also, according to Otten (2002, as cited in Brynildssen, 2002), it is best if students are exposed to a wide variety of literature. The Heartwood Institute (as cited in Brynildssen, 2002), which is a provider of resources and character education curricula, recommends the incorporation of books from various cultures in the form of: (a) legends, (b) folk literature, and (c) classical stories. Students can discover similarities in values across culture, time, and geography by use of this type of diversity.

Instructional Strategies

Ediger (1998) noted that the character education objectives of a school should be emphasized and that learning opportunities should be carefully chosen to guide students. These objectives and learning opportunities should: (a) entail active learner involvement, (b) be interesting for students, (c) be geared toward individual differences, and (d) be tailored for students to experience diversity. Progress, student motivation, and evaluation procedures for achievement are paramount. After students are evaluated, their character deficiencies will become part of their new objectives. For optimal achievement, students could be placed in flexible and diverse groups and follow criteria selected cooperatively by students with teacher guidance. An example of an objective would be that each student must respect the thinking of the others. Also, according to Ediger (1998), a helpful instructional strategy is for the teacher to help students point out their peers' unique traits and talents. This could have a positive effect on how students see others during their formative years and, at the same time, help stop the negative behaviors that dominate the U.S. schools from fifth grade through high school. Further, Ediger (1998) suggested that character education be taught in class meetings which will encourage students to: (a) plan, (b) reflect, (c) care, and (d) share. Activities should be used to help students explore one another's different perceptions in various situations. Ediger emphasized that students need to be motivated and involved in every aspect of curricular development.

According to Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, and Skon (1981) and Slavin (1990, both cited in Titus, 1997), student prosocial values can be positively affected by their classroom environment. Greater mutual concern for one another is shown among

students who work in cooperative learning groups. With cooperative learning activities, students learn to interact better with students of other ethnic or racial groups, and they are more accepting of students with disabilities (Titus).

According to staff of the Developmental Studies Center (1996, as cited in Singh, 2001), an integrated instructional strategy could be used to teach character education lessons while a successful primary classroom is established with students. The students could: (a) discuss good character traits while they develop a constitution for how the class would be run, and (b) discuss responsibility and respect in the context of the new constitution. An example for character education to be integrated into the core curriculum would be to discuss fairness and cooperation when games are introduced in mathematics.

Singh (2001) reported that there are many ways to integrate character education lessons with core subjects. Since elementary children are just beginning to understand character, some lessons should be designed specifically for character education. Also, an age appropriate year long character education program could be effective. Further, according to Singh (2001), there are excellent strategies that can be designed into character education lessons to introduce traits and incorporate character education into the core subject areas. Young students will be engaged, consistently, in the learning process when these strategies are utilized: (a) create a strong sense of classroom community at the beginning of the year; (b) introduce games, role playing, and activities to help students become acquainted and to help them understand each character trait, (c) emphasize the value of each student as a class team member; and (d) throughout the year, implement additional community and team building activities. Use of these strategies will

enable students to develop a high level of comradeship and trust. Helping the team will motivate them toward positive behavior.

According to Jensen (1996, as cited in Singh, 2001), character education is geared toward small group and partner learning activities, where students can practice: (a) teamwork, (b) responsibility, and (c) respect. Usually, cooperative activities are enjoyed by students and enhance their learning. Further, according to Lickona (1993, as cited in Brynildssen, 2002), character education must be comprehensive in its design and help students to “understand the core values, adopt or commit to them, and then act upon them in their own lives” (p. 2). Reflection and response are the first two stages in this approach and a wide variety are included: (a) discussion, (b) research, (c) debate, (d) essay or journal writing, and (e) role playing. The third stage is for students to act on the values or traits they have learned; it includes real world interaction outside the classroom and must involve the entire school.

Otten (2002, as cited in Brynildssen, 2002) emphasized the importance of parental involvement in teaching character, since students learn not only at school but also at home. The author recommended take-home sheets to explain the character education activities being taught at school and suggested ways for parents to reinforce at home the traits the child learns at school.

Assessment of Effectiveness

Beneficial information on character education programs was published in an article of *Business Week* (1997, as cited in Bulach, 2002) . The author posed two questions: (a) Whose values should be taught? and (b) How can character be measured accurately?

According to Bulach, these are concerns which need to be addressed through research that entails: (a) a process to determine the traits to teach, and (b) development of “a survey instrument to measure the degree to which behaviors associated with the identified traits are present or absent” (p. 2). Over the years, many character education programs have been evaluated and surveys conducted to assess the effectiveness of character education programs. A brief summary of several of these follows.

In a pilot study by Bulach (2002), in regard to how character education can be measured, a survey instrument was developed to measure the degree of absence or presence pertaining to 96 behaviors and 16 traits. A total of 130 teachers (K-12) and 46 students (K-12) described their perceptions of the survey statements, with the use of a 5 point Likert scale from 1, Never, to 5, Always (e.g., “They think it is okay to do something as long as they don’t get caught,”p. 80). A Cronbach alpha was used to measure the internal consistency/reliability of the instrument used. In the pilot study, data were collected from teachers and students about students’ behavior, and it was found that: (a) students in elementary schools were slightly more positive than teachers, and (b) students in middle and high schools were slightly more negative than teachers. Since the differences were not notable, these student data were considered a more valid measure of student behavior. According to Brendtro (2001, as cited in Bulach), over 220 elementary, middle, and high schools have used this survey. Its drawback is that it discriminates between students exposed to character education and those who are not. Those who have exposure have more positive scores. However, according to Williams (2000, as cited in

Bulach), everyone must model the desired behavior if character education is to be effective.

In the evaluation of a character education program conducted by Singh (2001), the findings were notable. Five months after initiation of the program in her classroom, Singh administered a survey to her students, 90% of her students showed an increased understanding of the six character traits. In addition, their classroom behavior improved. The character education program had several positive effects: (a) the classroom was a calmer, more positive place; (b) misbehavior occurred less frequently and was less likely to escalate when the new character vocabulary was used to discuss a problem; (c) students began to use character words to resolve conflicts and began to hold themselves and their peers to higher standards; and (d) students communicated with less tattling and more conversations. In addition, it was found that parents were enthusiastic about the program because its positive effects transferred to the home environment. Singh emphasized that: “Teaching about character is just as important as teaching the basics of writing, math, and reading” (p. 49). Also, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1947, as cited in Singh), stated: “Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” (p 49). To counteract the potentially negative effects of society, families and communities need to form a partnership, so that students can grow into good citizens (Singh).

Further, Leming (2000) conducted an evaluation study of the curriculum of a character education program, the Heartwood Institute’s *An Ethics Curriculum for Children* (1992, as cited in Leming, 2000). The curriculum is a multicultural, read aloud, literature based approach to teach children the core values and character traits in Grades

1-6. As noted by Leming, the study was conducted in two school districts: (a) in Pennsylvania, with two elementary schools and a total of 602 students in the program and comparison schools; and (b) in Illinois, with two elementary schools and a total of 361 students in the program and comparison schools. The primary focus of the study was to help students develop core values based on cultural understanding; the goal was to help students learn the character traits that enable them to become caring and responsible adults. As reported by Leming, the findings from the data on the teachers' ratings of student conduct provided differing perspectives on the impact of the program on student behavior. Both the program teachers and comparison teachers noted improved student conduct on the posttest measure. On the deceit task, no differences were detected between program and comparison students, except in the Illinois schools, where the Grades 1-3 program students cheated less than comparison students.

Leming (2000) assessed the effects of the program on four variables: (a) curriculum emphasis, (b) curricular substructure, (c) teacher characteristics, and (d) interpersonal relations which supported the goals of character education. In all four areas, the findings showed a notable difference in favor of the program schools over the comparison schools. The positive results from the Leming study on the effects of a pervasive, literature based, multicultural character education approach which encompassed all core curriculum, were very encouraging. The findings suggested that a character education program with a multicultural literature-based curriculum approach can be an effective tool for teachers in their quest for an effective character education program.

Staff of the Jefferson Center for Character Education (n.d., as cited in Brooks & Kann, 1993) developed a proven character education program curriculum. They conducted a pilot study of their program to prove its effectiveness in 25 schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The program included the following 11 elements: (a) direct instruction, (b) language-based curriculum, (c) positive language, (d) content and process, (e) visual reinforcement, (f) school climate approach, (g) teacher friendly materials, (h) teacher flexibility and creativity, (i) student participation, (j) parental involvement, and (k) evaluation. The goal of the study was to demonstrate improved student conduct and an enriched school environment (Brooks & Kann, 1993).

Following the study, one of the participating schools, Limerick Elementary, was examined and evaluated by Brooks and Kann (1993). Within 3 months, the Limerick teachers reported positive changes in classroom behavior. In addition, the principal noted that the lunchtime line outside her office was shorter. Prior to the program implementation, an extremely long line of disruptive students remained outside her office, long after lunchtime ended. Amazingly, toward the end of the school year, the line was nonexistent, as only a few students per day, the ones that really needed her attention, were having to be referred to her. She was pleased with the positive results of the program, for now she had the time to work with the few students with whom she really needed to work. Previously, she had time only to ask them what they did, tell them not to do it again, and dole out discipline.

According to Brooks and Kann (1993), the results of the character education program at Limerick were not unique. The findings from all 25 elementary and middle

schools that completed the pilot study during the 1990-1991 school year were notable: (a) major discipline problems decreased by 25%, (b) minor discipline problems decreased by 39%, (c) suspensions diminished by 16%, (d) tardiness dropped by 40%, and (e) unexcused absences declined by 18%. A survey was conducted with the teachers and principals at the 25 schools. The findings were positive: (a) there was a noticeable increase in honor roll students; and (b) students learned to take more responsibility for their schoolwork and behavior.

Further, according to Satnick (1991, as cited in Leming, 1993), beginning in 1990, there were 31 additional elementary and middle schools in the Los Angeles area that implemented the same Jefferson Center for Character Education program. In the Spring of 1991, 20 elementary and 5 middle school administrators were asked to assess the effectiveness of the program. A survey was conducted in 1991 of the majority of those schools. School administrators were asked by phone to assess program effectiveness. The findings from the program evaluation were all positive: (a) all types of student discipline problems decreased; (b) parental involvement increased; (c) students showed an increase in responsible behavior; and (d) student morale increased.

Leming (1993) examined another recent character education program in which its effectiveness was assessed through controlled research, The Weber County Character Education Project. This program, based on a five step teaching model and located in Utah, involved 3,000 students and 109 teachers in the Weber County K-6 school district. According to Weed (1993, as cited in Leming), a grant from the Thrasher Foundation was received which enabled the Institute for Research and Evaluation, located in Utah, to

implement a study to assess the effectiveness of the Weber County Project character education program. According to Leming, over a 2 year period, the findings from the teachers in the program were very impressive. Problem behaviors in program students decreased notably, while problem behaviors increased in the control school students. Also, the results revealed that the students who had been in the program for 2 years prior to starting seventh grade improved notably over the control group students; there was more positive school conduct as well as better attitudes against substance abuse.

According to Swick et al. (2000), a common effect of character education programs was academic improvement. However, the first noticeable improvement was improved student behavior. In a national study by the Child Development Center in California (n.d., as cited in Swick et al.), it was found that schools with effective character education programs had improved and had higher student achievement than those in non program schools.

According to Swick et al. (2000), educators nationwide, who have character education programs in place, have reported dramatic results in their schools, with improved student behavior and decreased discipline problems. The results have shown that the first year program effects were: (a) improved behavior, (b) decreased violence, (c) diminished disruptions, (d) decreased bullying, (e) respect among students, peers, and administrators, and (f) improvement in school climate. The results for more long range impacts, that is, 3-5 years, have demonstrated: (a) a quest for excellence, (b) homework completion, and (c) improved class attendance. Also, these findings were correlated with: (a) a reduction in dropouts, (b) improved test scores, and (c) improved attendance.

Schaefer (1998), postulated that there are correlations between character education and: (a) higher attendance, (b) decreased discipline problems, (c) improved academic performance, and (d) fewer student pregnancies. Wynne and Ryan (1997, as cited in Otten, 2000) maintained that many faculty, at schools with successful character education programs, observed: (a) higher performance scores on achievement tests, (b) improved school attendance, (c) fewer student dropouts, and (d) fewer disciplinary referrals for misbehavior. Otten (2000) postulated that students are more likely to: (a) attend school, (b) stay on task, and (c) improve academically if schools are welcoming, supportive places for students, as has been demonstrated with character education programs.

Chapter Summary

After this author's review of some of the many assessments and surveys that have been done to determine the effectiveness of character education programs in U.S. schools, the results demonstrated how effective character education can be in the moral and ethical development of U.S. students. Many crucial concerns and issues surrounding character education were explored in this chapter, including: (a) the critical roles of schools and teachers; (b) a better understanding of core values, the methods used to determine which traits to teach, and the importance of character education nationwide; (c) the theoretical and historical background of character education; and (d) instructional strategies for the integration of character education into core curricula of elementary classrooms through a literature based teaching method. In Chapter 3, this author will address the applied

method and procedures for teaching character education through literature into the core curriculums of elementary classrooms.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Parents, educators, and members of communities recognize the need for character education in the public school systems today. With the increase in youth violence and other societal disorders (e.g., disrespect and dishonesty) in the U.S., there is an immediate need to: (a) teach, (b) model, and (c) reinforce positive character traits. Character education is important in order to guide youth to become ethical and productive members of society. According to Ryan (1986, as cited in Pearson & Nicholson, 2000), the role of the school is not only to teach academics but also to help them “acquire the skills, attitudes, and dispositions that will help them live well and that will enable the common good to flourish” (p. 233). The purpose of this applied project was to provide elementary school teachers and students with lesson plans on specific character traits through the development of a literature based curricular unit. With character education taught and integrated throughout the core curriculum, with the use of a literature based approach, teachers are able to reinforce the development of students’ positive character traits throughout the school day. According to Edgington (2002), literature based instruction of character education is a productive strategy for all core subjects. To emphasize this point, Edgington stated:

If the goal of character education is to help students know the good, desire the good, and ultimately do the good, we must find ways to achieve that end that are authentic, meaningful, and relevant for our students. One way is to use literature to cultivate character education. (p. 116)

This researcher developed a 6 week literature based character education unit to actively engage students in learning the important core values throughout the school day. The six character traits, which are the focus, are from a widely accepted and utilized character traits list identified by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, the Six Pillars of Character (Swick, et al., 2000) described in Chapter 2. The traits are: (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) fairness, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness. This unit was designed to help teachers establish a responsible and caring classroom community where maximum teaching and learning can take place.

Target Population

Elementary teachers in Grades 1-3, along with their students, will be interested in the use of this applied project. It was designed for teachers to utilize and implement the unit to introduce the six core character traits through literature. Also, each lesson can be integrated throughout the core curriculum so as not to detract from core subject learning, but, rather, enhance it with character education. This method enables teachers to continuously reinforce each character trait throughout their full daily schedule.

Procedures

This researcher began the 6 week unit with the creation and development of one introductory lesson plan for each of the six core traits in the Six Pillars of Character traits list (Swick et al., 2000): (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) fairness, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness. Each of the six traits are introduced in a lesson plan on a Monday and remain the focus throughout the week, with the emphasis on a new trait from the list and a new lesson plan each week.

Before the unit begins, teachers are encouraged to inform parents and other school staff of the traits which are incorporated each week. This can be achieved through either: (a) letters sent home, or (b) verbal communication. Parent and staff communication allows students to further internalize each of the six traits as they are reinforced throughout the school day and at home.

Each introductory lesson was designed to be taught through literature and contains ideas and examples of how to integrate a trait into each core curricular subject. The literature chosen is age appropriate and focuses on a character who deeply exemplifies the specific trait of the week. The designed curricular unit is based on a cooperative learning approach, with real life situations, in order to ensure that students: (a) understand the trait and (b) are committed to learn the trait.

After the lesson is introduced on the first day, teachers are to focus and reinforce the character trait throughout the week. This is accomplished through: (a) class discussions on each trait, (b) students' reflection on each trait in their journals, and (c) class meetings to assess how they have demonstrated each trait and what improvements can be made. Throughout the week, students are asked to point out demonstrations of positive character traits by a character in a book or by someone they know.

After the students have completed the 6 week unit, they continue to reflect in their journals and hold class meetings about the character traits learned. This allows students to continue to display and model each trait. In addition, to maximize learning, a classroom community is established that consists of: (a) responsible, (b) respectful, and (c) caring citizens.

Goals of the Applied Project

There were three major goals of this researcher's applied project. The first goal was to provide elementary teachers, Grades 1-3, with a literature based introductory unit on six specific character traits which are integrated within the core curriculum. The use of literature simultaneously: (a) allows teachers to emphasize and focus on certain traits; and (b) adheres to the core curriculum (e.g., reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science).

The second goal of this project was to provide students with meaningful character education lessons. These lessons enable students to gain a deeper understanding of each of the six traits and their importance in the students' daily lives. With this approach, students are provided with the tools to: (a) make positive choices and (b) become productive members of society.

The third and final goal of this project was to establish a supportive classroom community of learners, one in which students practice and model what it means to possess each of the six character traits. This promotes students: (a) to treat one another with respect and (b) to treat one another with fairness. Also, it encourages students: (a) to take responsibility for their behaviors and (b) to always do their personal best on class assignments. In addition, this allows the teacher to evaluate and determine the effectiveness of the unit.

Peer Assessment

This researcher submitted the complete unit to a panel of three peers. These three individuals were requested to review the unit and offer informal feedback in regard to their

thoughts and opinions on the effectiveness of the unit. Their feedback and contributions for the assessment of this unit were valued and respected.

Chapter Summary

The information in this chapter that this researcher presented was to prepare teachers to implement a 6 week literature based character education unit. This unit is based on the Six Pillars of Character (Swick et al, 2000) and is integrated within the core curriculum. It was the goal of this researcher that teachers of Grades 1-3 be provided with an introductory unit which contains 6 lesson plans, one for each of the six specified character traits. The intention was for each trait to be the focus for 1 week as it is integrated within the core curriculum. Consequently, students gain a deeper understanding of all six traits as they reflect and model them in their daily behavior. In addition, improvements can be expected in the areas of: (a) classroom community, (b) student achievement, and (c) behavior. In Chapter 4, the six integrated lesson plans for the character education curricular unit are presented, along with graphic organizers, parent communications, and instructional strategies for reinforcement of the six character traits throughout the year. The feedback obtained through the assessment is included in the Discussion section of Chapter 5 as well as limitations to the project and recommendations for future study.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This researcher designed this curricular unit to provide elementary teachers, Grades 1-3, and their students with an introductory lesson plan on each of six positive core character traits. This author utilized the Six Pillars of Character, as identified by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (n.d., as cited in Swick et al., 2000). The six character traits include: (a) caring, (b) citizenship, (c) fairness, (d) respect, (e) responsibility, and (f) trustworthiness. These 6 lesson plans are intended to actively engage children in learning the importance and meaning of each trait. Integrated within each lesson plan are instructional strategies to reinforce the trait throughout the week. Following each lesson plan are ideas and examples on how to integrate each trait into core curricular subjects. This will provide teachers with a foundation for positive behavior at the beginning of the year and will enable the focus on each trait to continue daily throughout the year. Also included are parent letters for teachers to send home with students on the first day the trait is introduced. This will allow for parental involvement and reinforcement at home. This researcher's objective is to assist teachers in the establishment of: (a) a classroom community of responsible, caring, and respectful students, and (b) a classroom where all students can learn and grow to their full potentials. Based on research in Chapter 2, the integration of these character traits within the core curriculum will allow students to acquire positive traits and become caring, productive citizens, and leaders of tomorrow.

The Giving Tree Really Cares

Learner Outcomes / Benchmarks:

Students will activate schema of how to be *caring*.

Students will understand the definition of *caring* and what it looks like and sounds like to possess this character trait.

Students will acknowledge others' caring behavior and see how it grows.

Colorado State Standards:

Reading & Writing

- Standard 4 – Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Daily Materials Needed:

The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein, ISBN: 0-06-025665-6

Chart paper and markers

Small plastic cups

Marbles

Anticipatory Set:

Begin by walking around the classroom and giving each student a caring gesture.

Examples are: pat on the back, compliment, words of praise.

Ask the students what emotion or behavior you are demonstrating. Call on a few students; if no one answers with the word *caring* (or when they do), display it on chart paper written in red.

Ask students how they would define the word *caring* and write their ideas on the chart paper. Guide the discussion to achieve definitions such as: be kind and generous, say please and thank you, help people in need, be sensitive to others' feelings, and think about how their actions will affect others.

Call on students to describe how someone shows they care.

Teaching the Lesson:

Have the students join you on the floor as they show their neighbor a caring gesture.

Tell your students that you are going to read a story entitled *The Giving Tree* and show them the cover.

Ask for students' ideas about this story. What does the title tell them about the tree on the cover? Is this tree showing an act of caring?

Explain to students that acts of caring can continue growing and helping everyone to feel good about themselves.

Instruct students to listen for acts of caring, and every time they hear an act of caring to silently put their finger on their nose.

Read the entire story to the class. Every time you see children place their finger on their nose, place a marble in a small plastic cup.

When you are finished reading, have students share the examples of caring they noticed in the story. Guide the discussion to demonstrate that the giving tree loves the little boy and is always generous and helping him.

Talk about all of the marbles that were placed in the cup throughout the story.

Point out how good all of these acts of caring made the tree and the boy feel.

Have the students return to their seats and direct their attention to the chart paper from the beginning of the lesson. Go over the examples the class came up with for what it means to be caring.

Explain that you chose to write the word in red because it helps you remember what being caring means. You think of caring as a red heart to symbolize love.

Hang a blank piece of chart paper next to the original. Draw a large t-chart and label the top *Caring*.

Ask children to think about what they have learned about caring so far, and how they would describe what caring looks like. Draw an eye on the left side of the t-chart. Guide the discussion so that children think of ideas such as, hugs, smiles, pats on the back, etc.

After students seem to grasp what caring looks like, ask them to think about what caring might sound like. Draw an ear on the right side of the t-chart. Guide discussion to include ideas such as warm voice, compliments, asking questions, etc.

After the t-chart is finished, remind children of how acts of caring grow and make everyone feel good about themselves. Hand out a plastic cup to each student and show them a container of marbles at your desk. Let them know that they will be able to put a marble into a classmate's cup when they 'Catch them Caring.' In order to get a marble, a child must tell you to whom they are giving a marble and why.

Explain to the children that the class will be focusing on this important character trait throughout the week and that there will be a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss how they are being caring.

Post Assessment:

Listen to students' comments throughout the t-chart discussion to assess for understanding.

Extension Activities throughout the Week:

Instruct students to point out demonstrations of caring they notice in a book or by someone at school as well as filling one another's cups with marbles.

Reflect in student journals about how they are being caring to others.

Hold a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss the importance of showing caring to everyone. Allow time for students to discuss positive caring behaviors they have noticed and areas of improvement.

Integration of Caring within the Curriculum

Throughout the year, it is important to continue to discuss and point out demonstrations of *caring*. This can be achieved during literacy when a story exhibits this character trait. Also, pay attention to “teachable moments.” Discussions on character traits can take place in the lunchroom, as students line up, or when they return from recess. The promotion of caring behavior can be integrated throughout the curriculum. Following are some examples and suggestions:

Reading/Writing:

Have students take a picture walk through their favorite story and make inferences about the caring characters based on the pictures.

Write this prompt on the board for students’ response: Describe the most caring thing a person has done for you. How did this make you feel?

Have students interview a family member about how they know someone cares for them.

Science:

During an animal unit, the class could go on a field trip to the zoo. Students could visit the nursery to see how mother animals and also people at the zoo care for the baby animals.

During a unit on butterflies, the class could care for caterpillars through their entire life cycle toward becoming butterflies.

Social Studies:

Caring can be demonstrated in many different social studies units. Depending on the unit children are learning about, you may want to incorporate one of the following activities to reinforce this trait.

Have students read different issues of the Mini Page from the newspaper to see if they can find an example of a current situation which displays caring behaviors.

Have students create a ‘Bill of Rights’ for a caring community.

Students watch a short video which covers their specific unit of study. Then they pick out a character they think displays caring behavior and, finally, they give the class a news report.

Mathematics:

Caring involves helping people in need and treating them with kindness. During a math lesson which involves group work, you may ask students how they are going to help each other when they encounter a difficult math problem. Discuss how it is important to let everyone solve the problem and to offer one another words of encouragement.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At school today, your child learned about caring. As a class, we read a story entitled *The Giving Tree* and discussed what caring behavior might look and sound like. This book helped us learn about what it means to be caring. We came up with the following descriptions together.

Caring:

Be kind and generous.

Help people in need.

Say 'please' and 'thank you'.

Be sensitive to others' feelings.

Think about how our actions will affect others.

Here are some things you can do at home to reinforce the importance of caring.

Ask your child to tell you about the story and what he or she learned from it.

Talk with your child about the importance of being a caring person.

Catch your child being caring, and tell him or her how proud you are of your child.

Let your child know that being caring is very important to you.

Thank you,

It Takes a Village for Citizenship

Learner Outcomes / Benchmarks:

Students will activate schema of how to show *citizenship*.

Students will understand the definition of *citizenship* and what it looks like to possess this character trait.

Students will create a “do’s” and “don’ts” poster for good citizenship and share it with the class.

Colorado State Standards:

Reading & Writing

- Standard 2 – Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Standard 4 – Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Daily Materials Needed:

It Takes A Village, by Jane Cowen-Fletcher, ISBN:0-590-46573-2

Four large pieces of butcher paper (one for each group)

Markers

Chart paper

Anticipatory Set:

Begin by asking students what the school would be like without teachers. Then ask questions such as: What if the custodian didn’t help keep our room clean? What if all of the students didn’t come to school? Listen to student responses and then ask if they would still like to be a part of the school community. Point out that, if those things happened, the school environment would be a very messy, noisy, and difficult place to learn.

Ask if anyone can think of a word that describes all the people in a community.

Call on a few students; if no one answers with the word citizen (or when they do), display it on chart paper written in purple, along with the word citizenship.

Ask students how they would define the word citizenship and write their ideas on the chart paper. Guide the discussion to achieve definitions such as: Do your share to make your school and community better, cooperate, be a good neighbor, obey laws and rules, and help others.

Give students a moment to think about a time they displayed good citizenship.

Have students share with their neighbor.

Teaching the Lesson:

Ask students to think about something they would or wouldn’t like citizens in their community to do. As they respond, call them over to have a seat at the reading area.

Tell your students that you are going to read a story entitled *It Takes a Village* and show them the cover.

Ask for students' ideas about the village, or community, in the story and how the citizens may help one another.

Instruct students to pay attention to how the community in the story displays good citizenship.

Then read the entire story to the class.

When you are finished reading, have students share examples of good citizenship that they noticed. Also, point out how the community in the story works together and always makes sure everyone is doing well.

Tell students that they are going to be put into groups to create a poster of the "do's" and "don'ts" for a community of good citizens.

Show one or two examples you have written on the board. You may want to write 'hard working' on the 'do' side, and 'lazy' on the 'don't' side' as examples. Do not give more than a few examples.

Split the class into four groups and give each group a large piece of butcher paper and markers.

Frequently visit each group to assess progress and answer any questions.

After everyone is finished, have each group share their poster with the class and explain their reasoning.

After the presentations, have everyone return to their seats and direct their attention to the chart paper from the beginning of the lesson. Write the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of good citizenship on the chart paper, based on the students' ideas, along with any other good examples.

Explain that you chose to write the word *citizenship* in purple because it helps you remember what being a good citizen means. You think of purple as symbolizing royalty and always doing what is best for everyone.

Explain to children that the class will be focusing on this important character trait throughout the week and that there will be a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss how they are being good citizens.

Post Assessment:

Collect students' posters and assess for understanding of how good citizens contribute to their society.

Extension Activities throughout the Week:

Instruct students to point out demonstrations of good citizenship they notice in a book or by someone at school.

Have students reflect in their journals about how they are being good citizens.

Hold a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss the importance of being good citizens in their own community. Allow time for students to discuss positive citizenship behaviors and areas of improvement.

Allow time for students to role-play scenarios containing good citizenship behavior and discuss how they might act in the situation. A possible scenario is: The student sees another student running in the hallway. What should be done by a good citizen?

Integration of Citizenship within the Curriculum

Throughout the year it is important to continue to discuss and point out demonstrations of good *citizenship*. This can be achieved during literacy when a story exhibits this character trait. Also, pay attention to “teachable moments.” Discussions on character traits can take place in the lunchroom, as students line up, or when they return from recess. The promotion of good citizenship can also be integrated throughout the curriculum. Following are some examples and suggestions.

Reading/Writing:

Re-read your favorite story. Do any of the characters in this story show good citizenship? Explain.

Hang the *Citizenship* chart paper the class created and have students reflect in their journals on two ways they have demonstrated good citizenship recently.

Write this prompt on the board for students’ response: Two ways I make my community a better place are...

Create a poster to hang in the hallway showing other students how to be good citizens.

Science:

Good citizenship involves taking care of the environment. During a pond or insects unit, for example, you could have students do a service learning project and clean up an area around the school to improve the environment.

Social Studies:

Good citizenship is exemplified in many different social studies units. Depending on the unit children are learning about, you may want to incorporate one of these activities to reinforce this trait:

Have students read a clipping from the newspaper to see if they can find an example of good citizenship.

Have students brainstorm jobs in a specific community and illustrate how all of those people work together to form a better community for all citizens.

Students may want to write a short play about how they could improve their own community. You could give settings, such as school, the grocery store, or a restaurant.

Mathematics:

Good citizenship involves taking responsibility for what goes on around you. During a math lesson which involves using manipulatives, you may ask students how they would use them wisely and what they would do if they were to see another student misusing the manipulatives.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At school today, your child learned about citizenship. As a class, we read a story entitled *It Takes a Village* and created a "do's" and "don'ts" poster for good citizenship. This book helped us learn about what it means to be a good citizen. We came up with the following descriptions together.

Citizenship:

Do your share to make your school and community a better place.

Cooperate.

Be a good neighbor.

Obey laws and rules.

Help others.

Here are some things you can do at home to reinforce the importance of being a good citizen:

Ask your child to tell you about the story, *It Takes a Village*, and what he or she learned from it.

Talk with your child about the importance of being a good citizen.

Discuss the ways your family acts as good citizens. Do you ride your bikes, use less water, are considerate of your neighbors?

Let your child know that being responsible is very important to you.

Thank you,

Be Fair: Share Chicken Sunday

Learner Outcomes / Benchmarks:

Students will activate schema of how to be fair.

Students will understand the definition of *fairness* and what it looks like to possess this character trait.

Students will create and role-play a scenario demonstrating a fair or unfair situation and then problem solve a solution if necessary.

Colorado State Standards:

Reading & Writing

- Standard 2 – Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Standard 4 – Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Daily Materials Needed:

Chicken Sunday, by Patricia Polacco, ISBN: 0-399-22133-6

Chart paper and Markers

Anticipatory Set:

Begin by privately asking a student if you can give him or her a piece of candy in front of the class to show unfair treatment, and then he or she will return it to you. As the whole class is paying attention, walk by the student and give him or her a candy bar as you tell him or her it is because you like the color of his or her hair. Other students with the same color hair will say that is not fair and they should get a piece of candy too.

Explain that this is not fair and that was exactly the point. Collect the piece of candy from the student and say thank you for demonstrating the very important character trait of *fairness*.

Ask the students: Has anyone else ever said something was unfair? How do you know when something is unfair?

Call on a few students to describe a time when they felt something was unfair.

Display the word *Fairness* on chart paper written in orange.

Ask students how they would define this word and write their ideas on the chart paper. Guide the discussion to achieve definitions such as: Play by the rules, take turns and share, tell the truth, listen to others ideas, and don't blame others for your mistakes

Call on students to describe a time when they were fair at school.

Teaching the Lesson:

Call students over to have a seat at the reading area by table groups.

Tell your students that you are going to read a story entitled *Chicken Sunday* and show them the cover.

Ask for students' predictions about the story.

Tell students to pay attention to all the characters actions and how people are being treated fairly and unfairly.

Read the entire story to the class.

When you are finished reading, have students share examples of unfairness that they noticed. Refer to the chart paper and ask: Did everyone tell the truth in this story? Did everyone play by the rules? Did characters blame others for their mistakes? Did anyone play favorites? Point out that the children in this story did tell the truth about not throwing the eggs, but the shopkeeper did not believe them.

Does everyone think this was fair, how did the children solve this problem?

Inform children that they are going to be split into groups and will be given a scenario to role-play for the class. The class will then decide on a fair way to solve the problem.

After students are in their groups, give each group a scenario. Some examples are: (1) Three children want the same swing at recess; (2) Your little brother blames you for a mess he made and, when your parents see it, they believe him; and (3) Four students get into a fight, they all realize they have done something wrong, but they all have different versions of the story.

Give students 10 minutes to decide how they want to role-play the scenario and practice.

Have the groups present one at a time. After each group is finished lead a class discussion about a fair way to solve the problem. Help students come to the conclusion that everyone is not always going to agree on how to solve a problem fairly.

After the presentations, have everyone return to their seats and direct their attention to the chart paper from the beginning of the lesson. Explain that you chose to write the word in orange because it helps you remember what being fair means. You think of fairness and dividing an orange into equal pieces with your friends.

Explain to children that the class will be focusing on this important character trait throughout the week and that there will be a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss how they are being fair.

Post Assessment:

Evaluate the presentations and the class to discussion to see if everyone understands what it means to be fair.

Extension Activities throughout the Week:

Instruct students to point out demonstrations of fairness they notice in a book or by someone at school.

Reflect in student journals about how they are being fair to others.

Hold a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss the importance of showing fairness to everyone. Allow time for students to discuss positive fairness behaviors they have noticed and areas of improvement.

Integration of Fairness within the Curriculum

Throughout the year, it is important to continue to discuss and point out demonstrations of *fairness*. This can be achieved during literacy when a story exhibits this character trait. Also, pay attention to “teachable moments.” Discussions on character traits can take place in the lunchroom, as students line up, or when they return from recess. The promotion of fair behavior can also be integrated throughout the curriculum. Following are some examples and suggestions.

Reading/Writing:

Have students choose one of their favorite books and put a sticky note on each page that they make a text–self connection about fair and unfair behavior.

Write this prompt on the board for students’ response: How does fairness affect your relationships with your friends and family?

Have the students interview a classmate about how they think they play fairly on the playground.

Have the students write an acrostic poem for the word *fair*.

Science:

Being fair involves not only other people, but animals and the environment as well.

During an environmental unit, the class could focus on recycling and being aware that their actions affect how others live. Explain that everyone must conserve water, energy, paper, etc. to be fair to others and future generations.

Social Studies:

Fairness can be demonstrated in many different social studies units. Depending on the unit children are learning about, you may want to incorporate one of the following activities to reinforce this trait.

Have students read a current magazine article to see if they can find an example of a fair or unfair situation and write about how the problem was solved.

Have students research a famous historical figure (like a president) and write a short biography about how that person made fair decisions.

Have students watch a short video covering the specific unit of their study and pick out a character they think acts fairly or unfairly.

Mathematics:

Fairness involves taking turns and sharing. During a math lesson which involves group work, you may ask students how they are going to decide who goes first in a fair way. Ask two or three students to role-play what this might look like when they work together.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At school today, your child learned about fairness. As a class, we read a story entitled *Chicken Sunday* and acted out different fair and unfair situations. This book helped us learn about what it means to be fair. We came up with the following descriptions together.

Fairness:

Play by the rules.

Take turns and share.

Tell the truth.

Listen to others' ideas.

Don't blame others for your mistakes.

Here are some things you can do at home to reinforce the importance of being fair:

Ask your child to tell you about the story, *Chicken Sunday*, and what he or she learned from it.

Talk with your child about the importance of being fair.

Watch a favorite television program together. Discuss how the characters act fairly and unfairly to one another.

Let your child know that being fair is very important to you.

Thank you,

Chrysanthemum Grows Respect

Learner Outcomes / Benchmarks:

Students will activate schema of how to be respectful.

Students will understand the definition of *respect* and what it looks like to possess this character trait.

Students will create a wanted poster for a respectful character and use descriptive words to show understanding.

Colorado State Standards:

Reading & Writing

- Standard 1 – Students read and understand a variety of materials.
- Standard 2 – Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Standard 4 – Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Visual Arts

- Standard 1 - Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication

Daily Materials Needed:

Chrysanthemum, by Kevin Henkes, ISBN: 0-668-09699-9

Chart paper and markers

'Wanted' graphic organizers

Anticipatory Set:

Begin by walking around the room and asking students if they are comfortable, if they need supplies, and say 'please' and 'thank you.' Continue to show courtesy and ask the students if they know what character trait you are demonstrating. You may have a student say 'good manners;' if so, explain that good manners are also called being courteous which is part of being respectful.

Display the word *Respect* on chart paper written in yellow/gold.

Ask students how they would define this word, or what other behaviors show respect, and write their ideas on the chart paper. Guide the discussion to achieve definitions such as: Treat other people the way you want to be treated, be courteous and polite, listen to others, don't make fun of others or call them names, and don't judge someone before you get to know them.

Give students a moment to think about a time they didn't feel respected and how this made them feel.

Call on a few students to explain their feelings.

Teaching the Lesson:

Call students over to have a seat at the reading area.

Tell your students that you are going to read a story entitled *Chrysanthemum* and show them the cover.

Ask for students' ideas about the character on the cover. What do they think she is like? Does she hurt other people's feelings? Do other people hurt her feelings? Tell students to pay attention to all the characters' behaviors and how some are respectful and some are not respectful.

Read the entire story to the class.

When you are finished reading, have students share examples of disrespect they noticed. Guide the discussion to demonstrate that Chrysanthemum's classmates were not being respectful to her when they made fun of her name. Ask if this is how anyone else feels when people make fun of them because they are different in some way.

Have students discuss which character (Mrs. Twinkle) showed respect to Chrysanthemum and how she did this. Explain how this helped the other students see how this was making Chrysanthemum feel and how they changed their behaviors.

Dismiss students back to their seats.

Display a 'Wanted' graphic organizer for all students to see.

Explain that everyone is going to make a 'Wanted' poster for a respectful character.

Read over the poster and create one with the class. You may want to write 'Respectful Word Bank' on the chart paper to give students ideas. Examples could include: patient, courteous, friendly, thoughtful, kind, etc.

After the class has created a poster together, you may either split the class into groups or have them each create a poster independently.

Frequently walk around the room to assess progress and answer any questions.

After everyone is finished, call on a few volunteers to share their poster with the class and explain their character.

After the presentations, have everyone return to their seats and direct their attention to the chart paper from the beginning of the lesson. Explain that you chose to write the word in yellow/gold because it helps you remember what being a respectful means. You think of respect as gold like the golden rule for everyone to follow.

Explain to children that the class will be focusing on this important character trait throughout the week and that there will be a class meeting at the end of the week where everyone can discuss how the class is being respectful.

Post Assessment:

Collect each poster and assess the descriptive words chosen for understanding of respectful behavior. Hang the posters around the room to act as reminders for students.

Extension Activities throughout the Week:

Instruct students to point out demonstrations of respect they notice in a book or by someone at school.

Reflect in student journals about how they are being respectful to others.

Hold a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss the importance of showing respect to everyone. Allow time for students to discuss positive respectful behaviors they have noticed and areas of improvement.

Allow time for students to role-play scenarios containing respectful behavior and discuss how they might act in the situation. A possible scenario could be: A new student joins their classroom. How should everyone treat this person.

Integration of Respect within the Curriculum

Throughout the year, it is important to continue to discuss and point out demonstrations of *respect*. This can be achieved during literacy when a story exhibits this character trait. Also, pay attention to “teachable moments.” Discussions on character traits can take place in the lunchroom, as students line up, or when they return from recess. The promotion of respectful behavior can also be integrated throughout the curriculum. Following are some examples and suggestions:

Reading/Writing:

Choose one of your favorite books and put a sticky note on each page that you make a text–self connection about how you feel when others treat you with respect.

Hang the Respect chart paper the class created and have students write a short story about how they have treated a classmate with respect recently.

Write this prompt on the board for students’ response: What do you like most about how people treat one another here at school? Does this have anything to do with showing respect?

Science:

Being respectful involves not only other people, but animals and the environment as well.

During an environmental unit the class could take a field trip to a wetland area and demonstrate respect for the environment by cleaning up the area.

During a habitat unit the class might discuss how respecting our environment also effects how the animals around us live.

Social Studies:

Respect can be demonstrated in many different social studies units. Depending on the unit children are learning about, you may want to incorporate one of the following activities to reinforce this trait.

Have students read a comic from the newspaper to see if they can find an example of respect or disrespect and how it makes the characters feel.

Have students research their hero to see how that person has demonstrated respect.

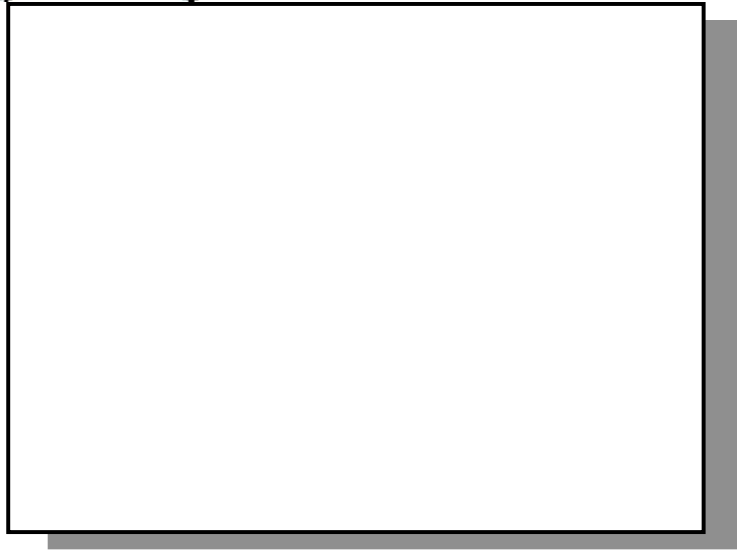
During a community unit, students may want to write a short play about how they could improve respectful behavior on the playground.

Mathematics:

Respect involves being patient and courteous. During a math lesson which involves group work, you may ask students how they will treat each other with respect. Ask two or three students to role-play what this might look like when they work together.

WANTED

Respectful Characters



Name of Character _____

This character is wanted for _____

because _____

This character also shows _____

by _____

This is very respectful behavior and makes everyone around
this character feel _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At school today, your child learned about respect. As a class, we read a story entitled *Chrysanthemum* and created a 'Wanted' Poster for a respectful character. This book helped us learn about what it means to be respectful. We came up with the following descriptions together.

Respect:

Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Be courteous and polite.

Listen to others.

Don't make fun of others or call them names.

Don't judge someone before you get to know him or her.

Here are some things you can do at home to reinforce the importance of acting respectfully:

Ask your child to tell you about the story and what he or she learned from it.

Talk with your child about the importance of treating others with respect.

Help your child become aware of his or her actions that may be disrespectful as your child plays with friends or siblings.

Let your child know that being respectful is very important to you.

Thank you,

Miss Rumphius Teaches Responsibility

Learner Outcomes / Benchmarks:

Students will activate schema of how to act responsibly.

Students will understand the definition of *responsibility* and what it looks like to possess this character trait.

Students will write a goal of their own for how they will act more responsibly and how they plan to attain this goal.

Colorado State Standards:

Reading & Writing

- Standard 2 – Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Standard 3 – Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
- Standard 4 – Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Daily Materials Needed:

Miss Rumphius, by Barbara Cooney, ISBN: 0-670-47958-6

Student journal writing paper and pencils

Chart paper, colored markers

Anticipatory Set:

Begin by asking the students what their jobs are in the classroom. They may respond with ideas such as: To learn, to bring their homework back to school, to work hard, or to push in their chairs.

Ask if anyone can think of another word for ‘job.’ Call on a few students; if no one answers with the word *responsibility* (or when they do), display it on chart paper written in green.

Ask students how they would define this word and write their ideas on the chart paper. Guide the discussion to achieve definitions such as: Do what you are supposed to do, always do your best, practice self-control, think before you act, and be accountable for your choices.

Call on students to describe a time when they acted responsibly.

Have two or three students role play a situation that was described so that the class can see what responsible behavior looks like in action.

Teaching the Lesson:

Call students over to have a seat in the reading area.

Tell your students that you are going to read them a story about a very responsible lady called Miss Rumphius.

Instruct students to “turn on their listening ears” (you may want to teach/model this skill) and listen for examples of how Miss Rumphius shows responsible behavior.

Read the entire story to the class.

When you are finished reading, have students share a quick example of responsibility from the story with their neighbor.

Discuss how you noticed that Miss Rumphius shows responsibility not only for herself for others and even our planet. Also, point out how she set a goal for herself about how she could help the world and be more responsible.

Instruct students to think quietly for a minute about a goal they would like to set for themselves to become more responsible at school or at home.

As each student explains his or her goal, dismiss the student back to his or her seat where the student will write this goal down on a piece of journal paper.

Instruct students to write a short description of how they will attain this goal.

After everyone is at their seat, direct their attention to the chart paper with the word *Responsibility* written in green. Explain that you chose to write the word in green because it helps you remember what responsibility means. You think of: being responsible for a garden or for money.

Have students come up with three class goals for how the class is going to be more responsible at school. Write these goals on the chart paper. Examples would be: To listen carefully to directions and to always be prepared.

Explain to children that the class will be focusing on this important character trait throughout the week and that there will be a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss how they are being responsible.

Post Assessment:

Collect students’ journal pages and assess for understanding of how to act responsibly in their own lives.

Extension Activities throughout the Week:

Instruct students to point out demonstrations of responsibility they notice in a book or by someone at school.

Reflect in student journals about responsible behavior and how they are attaining their set goals.

Hold a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss the progress they are making with their individual goals, the class goals, and positive changes they have noticed within the classroom. Also, discuss areas of needed improvement.

Allow time for students to role-play scenarios containing responsible behavior and discuss how they might act in the situation.

Integration of Responsibility within the Curriculum

Throughout the year it is important to continue to discuss and point out demonstrations of *responsibility*. This can be achieved during literacy when a story exhibits this character trait. Also, pay attention to “teachable moments.” Discussions on character traits can take place in the lunchroom, as students line up, or when they return from recess. The promotion of responsible behavior can also be integrated throughout the curriculum. Following are some examples and suggestions.

Reading/Writing:

Focus on responsibility for an entire week during student writing time.

Hang the responsibility chart paper that the class created and have students reflect in their journals on three responsible choices they have made recently.

Write this prompt on the board for students’ response: ‘I was walking down the sidewalk and I noticed a Pokemon card drop out of a friend’s pocket.’ Write at least five sentences about what you would do in this situation.

Have students create a ‘Five W’s’ Poem about responsibility. This is created by writing ‘who’ on one line, ‘what’ on the next line, ‘where’ on the next line, ‘when’ below that line, and finishing with ‘why’ on the last line. For example:

My brother
Listens
In class
Everyday
To be a responsible learner

Science:

This particular story, *Miss Rumphius*, may be re-visited during a plant unit, as it demonstrates how seeds can be blown in the wind to further the process of pollination.

The class may want to adopt a class pet to discover what it means to be responsible for another living creature.

Students could visit an animal sanctuary to discuss everyone’s responsibility for taking care of endangered animals and then do a class fund raiser and donate the money to an animal sanctuary.

Social Studies:

Responsible behavior is exemplified in many different social studies units. Depending on the unit children are learning about, you may want to incorporate one of these activities to reinforce *responsibility*.

Have students read *The Mini Page* from the newspaper to see if they can find a historical figure that makes responsible choices.

Have students research someone from the past, such as Abraham Lincoln, and write a research paper about that person’s responsible behavior.

Mathematics:

Discuss the importance of making responsible choices during math, such as:

Always giving your best effort. Doing your best on each test and the importance of keeping your eyes on your own paper.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At school today, your child learned about responsibility. As a class, we read a story entitled *Miss Rumphius* and each student wrote a personal goal for being more responsible. This book helped us learn about what it means to be responsible. We came up with the following descriptions together.

Responsible:

Do what you are supposed to do.

Always do your best.

Practice self-control.

Think before you act.

Be accountable for your actions.

Here are some things you can do at home to reinforce the importance of acting responsibly:

Ask your child to tell you about the story and what he or she learned from it.

Talk with your child about the importance of making responsible choices.

Have a family discussion about responsibility. What are each family members' responsibilities? What happens if someone is irresponsible?

Let your child know that being responsible is very important to you.

Thank you,

Frances Teaches Trustworthiness

Learner Outcomes / Benchmarks:

Students will activate schema of how to be trustworthy.

Students will understand the definition of *trustworthiness* and develop examples and non-examples of this character trait.

Colorado State Standards:

Reading & Writing

- Standard 4 – Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Daily Materials Needed:

A Bargain For Frances, by Russell Hoban, ISBN: 0-7607-6517-0

Chart paper and markers

Anticipatory Set:

Begin by asking students to think of a time when a friend did not tell them the truth. How did this make them feel? Has there ever been a time that they did not tell the truth? What happened?

Ask the students how a lie can affect a friendship.

Display the word *trustworthiness* on chart paper written in blue.

Ask students how they would define the word *trustworthiness* and have the students write their ideas on the chart paper. Guide the discussion to achieve definitions such as: Be honest, don't deceive, don't cheat, don't steal, do what you say you will do, have the courage to do the right thing, and be loyal (e.g., stand by family and friends).

Call on students to describe how someone shows they are trustworthy.

Teaching the Lesson:

Have the students join you on the floor in the reading area.

Tell your students that you are going to read a story entitled *A Bargain for Frances* and show them the cover.

Ask for students' ideas about this story. What might this story have to do with being trustworthy? Can a person tell if someone else is trustworthy by how they look?

Instruct students to pay attention to how Frances is trustworthy and what she does if a friend is not being honest with her.

Read the story through to the part where Frances discovers Thelma is not being honest with her and has bought the new tea set for herself. At this point in the story, ask children if they trust Thelma and what they would do in Frances' situation.

When you are finished reading, have students share the examples of trustworthy behavior they noticed in the story. Guide the discussion to demonstrate that friends should always tell one another the truth. Have students discuss the ending of the story.

Have the students return to their seats and direct their attention to the chart paper from the beginning of the lesson. Go over the examples the class came up with for what it means to be trustworthy.

Talk about how Frances and Thelma did or didn't do these examples of trustworthiness.

Explain that you chose to write the word in blue because it helps you remember what being trustworthy means. You think of the saying to be "true blue" is to be trustworthy.

Hang a blank piece of chart paper next to the original. Draw a large t-chart and label the chart *Trustworthiness*.

Ask children to think about what they have learned about trust so far, and how they would describe examples of trustworthy behavior. Write the word *Examples* on the left side of the t-chart. Guide the discussion so that children think of ideas, such as *tell the truth* or *be reliable*. As students share their ideas, discuss situations where the students have experienced these examples.

After students seem to grasp examples of trustworthiness, ask them to think about non-examples of this trait. Write the word *Non-examples* on the right side of the t-chart. Guide discussion to include ideas such as lying, cheating, and taking advantage of a friend. Again, discuss situations when students have experienced this behavior and how it made them feel.

After the t-chart is finished, explain to the children that the class will be focusing on the important character trait of *trustworthiness* throughout the week and that there will be a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss how they are being trustworthy.

Post Assessment:

Listen to students' comments throughout the t-chart discussion to assess for understanding of trustworthy and untrustworthy behaviors.

Extension Activities throughout the Week:

Instruct students to point out demonstrations of trustworthiness they notice in a book or by someone at school.

Reflect in student journals about how they are being trustworthy to others. Hold a class meeting at the end of the week where students can discuss the importance of being trustworthy. Allow time for students to discuss positive trustworthy behaviors they have noticed and areas of improvement.

Integration of Trustworthiness within the Curriculum

Throughout the year, it is important to continue to discuss and point out demonstrations of trust. This can be achieved during literacy when a story exhibits the character trait of *trustworthiness*. Also, pay attention to “teachable moments.” Discussions on character traits can take place in the lunchroom, as students line up, or when they return from recess. The promotion of trustworthy behaviors can be integrated throughout the curriculum. Following are some examples and suggestions:

Reading/Writing:

Have students read a story of their choice and write down their favorite quotes that exemplify trustworthiness.

Write this prompt on the board for students’ response: Write about someone you trust. Why do you trust this person?

Have students create a ‘choose your own adventure’ story where the reader can pick different solutions to a problem of trust.

Students may create a ‘word search’ using trustworthy words.

Science:

During a plant unit, you could discuss how other living things depend on us, or trust us, to take care of them. Have the students demonstrate trustworthiness as they grow and take care of a plant.

Social Studies:

Trustworthiness can be demonstrated in many different social studies units. Depending on the unit children are learning about, you may want to incorporate one of the following activities to reinforce this trait:

Have students read and look through different magazines and then create a collage of trustworthy people and phrases.

Students may research a president or historical figure and then write a song about how that person is trustworthy.

Mathematics:

Trust involves telling the truth and being reliable. During a math test, you may want to remind students what it means to be trustworthy. Discuss how it is important to demonstrate what you have learned and to keep your eyes on your own paper. A friend would not like to see someone looking at their paper and taking their answers.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

At school today, your child learned about trustworthiness. As a class, we read a story entitled *A Bargain for Frances* and discussed examples of trustworthy and untrustworthy behaviors. This book helped us learn about what it means to be trustworthy. We came up with the following descriptions together.

Trustworthiness:

Be honest.

Don't deceive, cheat, or steal.

Do what you say you will do.

Have the courage to do the right thing.

Be loyal - stand by your family and friends.

Here are some things you can do at home to reinforce the importance of trustworthiness:

Ask your child to tell you about the story and what he or she learned from it.

Talk with your child about the importance of being an honest and trustworthy person.

Watch a movie together and talk about the ways in which the characters acted trustworthy and untrustworthy.

Let your child know that being trustworthy is very important to you.

Thank you,

Chapter Summary

The curricular unit developed by this researcher in this chapter was to provide elementary teachers, Grades 1-3, and their students with an introductory lesson plan on each of six positive core character traits. The importance and meaning of these traits are to be introduced through literature and focused upon for one week. Also presented in this chapter by this researcher were instructional strategies for reinforcement through literature of the six core traits throughout the year. Students will continue to attain, apply, and display the six positive core traits, as they are integrated through literature by the teacher within each core curricular subject. Concepts and illustrations were presented in this chapter on how to integrate the traits through literature into core curricular units of study. Also, parent letters were provided to establish parental involvement and reinforcement. This researcher will present peer participation through assessment and feedback on this curricular unit in Chapter 5. In addition, this researcher will present project limitations and suggestions for further study.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The intent of this project is to provide elementary school teachers, in Grades 1-3, with a 6 week curricular unit. This unit contains useful strategies to implement and integrate character education throughout the core curriculum and utilizes a literature based approach. This is accomplished with the application of six major character traits known as the Six Pillars of Character (Swick et al, 2000). The introductory unit incorporates six lesson plans, one for each of the six specified character traits. Each trait is the focus for 1 week and is integrated throughout the school day.

This curricular unit project was presented to three peer professional educators. All three of the individuals reviewing this project are experienced elementary school teachers in the primary grades. One of the reviewers has two years experience as a Grade 2 teacher in a diverse rural public elementary school. Another reviewer has been a teacher of Grades 1 and 3 for 6 years in a diverse urban public elementary school, and the third individual has been a teacher of Grades K-2 for the past 17 years in urban and rural public elementary schools. This researcher utilized the reviewers' constructive assessment and feedback to establish the groundwork for a critical analysis of this project.

Objectives Achieved

This researcher's primary objective of this project was to facilitate primary grade educators with the implementation of a purposeful character education program in their

classrooms. This project demonstrates that this objective can be readily accomplished through a literature-based introductory curricular unit which utilizes core character traits integrated throughout the core curriculum. Upon completion of their review, all three educators expressed that this researcher's objective appears attainable through this comprehensive curricular unit project. Providing further indication of the success of this project, one individual reviewer stated, "The curricular unit is succinct, creative, and provides practical and effective strategies for use in the classroom." This reviewer also expressed that the literature based approach and inclusion of specific examples to integrate the six character traits throughout the curriculum is an effective method for reinforcing positive character traits. Further indicating objective success, an educator reviewer conveyed her belief that character education is crucial. She further stated, "This curricular unit is easily adaptable. It can be used in and of itself or as a model for expansion upon all other traits related to the six core character traits." One individual felt the lesson plans and integrational concepts and examples were easy to follow and understand, and another commented that "the unit provides examples of how to take advantage of the 'teachable moments' which are a part of each day in the classroom." These reviewers' comments indicate that this project was both instructive and valuable. In addition to the six introductory lesson plans to be implemented over a 6 week period, the three individuals found the integrational concepts, parent letters, and graphic organizers to be useful. One educator stated: "The literature chosen is age appropriate. My students would relate well with the characters; this would help them build upon their background knowledge for each character trait." She also stated, "The ideas presented for integrating

each trait throughout the year are easily adapted to fit my curriculum.” Each of the three educators commented that parental involvement is key. They liked the fact that this curricular unit includes parental communication and specific ideas for reinforcement at home. All three educators commented that they were hopeful of implementing this 6 week unit in their own classrooms. These comments clearly indicate that this researcher’s goals were achieved, that the integration of character traits throughout the core curriculum can be readily accomplished through a literature based approach on a daily basis to create positive behavioral reinforcement.

Limitations to the Project

This researcher did have some limitations to this project. This curricular unit was developed following this researcher’s thorough research and professional input. However, this researcher was not afforded the opportunity to actually teach the curricular unit. Also, this researcher did not have the necessary funding nor opportunity to involve an entire school community, which would be ideal for a comprehensive and thorough character education program.

In regard to the limitations of this researcher’s curricular unit, all three reviewers suggested the involvement of school staff members for further reinforcement of positive character behavior. The veteran educator suggested it would be beneficial to include additional graphic organizers within the project as well as ideas on how to run the weekly class meetings effectively. Another reviewer suggested the provision of different ideas for class definition discussion such as word webs or a K-W-L chart. Two educators commented that, even though the introductory lessons are clear, worthwhile, and

important, it may be difficult to find the time every Monday for six weeks to fit in an introductory lesson with their already full standards-based curriculums.

Recommendations for Future Research

This researcher values and respects the input of the three educators who reviewed this project and will take into consideration their comments and recommendations for improvement prior to actually teaching the curricular unit in the classroom. Since this researcher and these reviewers are hopeful of teaching this unit in the near future, this researcher will attempt to acquire follow up research as to its effectiveness upon classroom instruction completion. At that time, this researcher hopes to obtain and apply past research and any recommendations for future integrated literature based curricular units that pertain to character education.

Project Summary

The purpose of this project was to facilitate elementary school educators in their critical need for the implementation and development of character education in their classrooms. This researcher's review of literature in Chapter 2 revealed that this country is suffering from a values vacuum, clearly evidenced by the increase in youth violence. To address the need for positive character education and development, a 6 week literature based curricular unit was developed. It was designed to provide Grades 1-3 educators with introductory lessons and strategies for the integration of each of six core character traits throughout the core curriculum. Parent letters were provided to promote parental involvement. These included specific examples for character reinforcement at home.

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APPENDIX

Assessment of Project by Peer Reviewers



Assessment of Project

What are the *strengths* of this project?

Clear, outlined lesson plans.

Age appropriate.

Integrates literature.

Gives ideas for integration in other subject areas that meet standards-based criteria.

Nice to have parent letters that are straight forward and that give parents ideas for reinforcement at home. Also, this builds a sense of community outside the classroom because parents are involved and able to participate.

What are your *suggestions* for improvement?

Provide different ideas for class definition discussion such as word webs or a K-W-L chart.

Involve other teachers for further reinforcement.

May be hard to find time to fit each introductory lesson into the standards based curriculum.

Thank you for your time!
Please be honest in your responses.
Your feedback is extremely valuable.



Assessment of Project

What are the *strengths* of this project?

I found the lesson plans very easy to follow and understand.

The literature chosen is age appropriate. My students would relate well with the characters; this would help them to build upon their background knowledge for each character trait.

The ideas presented for integrating each trait throughout the year are easily adapted to fit my curriculum.

Parent communication and reinforcement are essential with character education. The letters provided are easy to read and give specific ideas the parents can use at home with their child.

What are your *suggestions* for improvement?

The introductory lessons are clear and important, but it may be difficult to find the time every Monday for six weeks.

Could include other staff members of the school for further reinforcement.

*Thank you for
your time!
Please be honest
in your
responses. Your
feedback is
extremely
valuable.*



Assessment of Project

What are the strengths of this project?

Character education is crucial. This curricular unit is succinct and creative. It provides practical and effective strategies for use in the classroom.

This curricular unit is easily adaptable. It can be used in and of itself, or as a model for expansion upon all other traits related to the six core character traits.

Provides examples of how to take advantage of the ‘teachable moments’ which are a part of each day in the classroom.

Parent communication is provided and the letters give parents ideas to use at home.

Examples for how to integrate throughout the year are easy to adapt to my personal style and curriculum.

What are your suggestions for improvement?

Could include more graphic organizers.

Include other teachers and staff in the school to reinforce and praise students who demonstrate positive character behavior.

Could include ideas for how to run the weekly class meetings effectively.

*Thank you for your time!
Please be honest in your responses.
Your feedback is extremely valuable.*