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ABSTRACT

The importance of teaching moral education in the public schools is emphasized in this report. Three topics are discussed. The first section includes a sketch of the present moral climate of the United States, including evidence drawn from a recent Gallup Poll of public attitudes toward education, recent magazine articles, results of educational research, and pronouncements from several state departments of education. The second section presents background information on the morals and values upon which the United States was founded and discusses the Mayflower Compact, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the Northwest Ordinance. The third section describes methodological developments which enable educators to mount effective moral education programs and presents recommendations for combining efforts of parents, citizens, teachers, policy makers, and major educational institutions to improve education for citizenship responsibility on all levels. (Author/DB)

MORALITY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 1

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for the State of Utah

PLANNING FOR MORAL/CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
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Foreword

The speech reproduced in this publicaton is a strong direct call for moral education by a nationally known leader in public education. It was delivered by Terrel H. Bell, Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Utah, at the National Conference for Education and Citizenship, Kansas City, Mo., September 23, 1976. The conference was sponsoned by the United States Office of Education (USOE) in collaboration with its regional Kansas City office, and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Because of its significance for moral/citizenship education in the United States, it is here issued as an Occasional Paper of a national effort, Planning for Moral/Citizenship Education, being carried out by Research for Better Schools, under contract with the National Institute of Education.

Before assuming his present post, Dr. Bell was for two years the United States Commissioner of Education. A graduate of Southern Idaho College of Education, Dr. Bell received the M.S. and doctorate degrees from the University of Idaho. He has served as superintendent of several large school districts in Idaho and Utah and from 1963-70 was Utah State Superintendent of Instruction. Dr. Bell was awarded a Ford Foundation Fellowship in school administration and served as professor and chairman of the Department of Education Administration, Utah State University, during 1962-63. In 1970 he became Commissioner for School Systems, USOE. Immediately prior to becoming the administrative head of USOE, he was superintendent of Utah's largest school system – the Granite School District in Salt Lake City.

Dr. Bell serves on the boards and councils of a number of educational and civic organization. He is the recipient of many professional honors, citations, and awards, including an honorary doctorate from Westminster College and a special citation for outstanding service to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The author of numerous articles in professional journals, Dr. Bell has published five books. His latest book, Parenting and the Public Schools – a parents' guide to public school education – is in press.

In the present address, Dr. Bell makes a number of salient points regarding moral/citizenship education: its honored tradition in our heritage, its grounding on our basic cultural values, the increasing public advocacy for it, the imperative responsibility of education and other social institutions – and, finally, the vision.

MORALITY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

Terrel H. Bell
Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Utah
(Former Commissioner of the United States Office of Education)

It is a particular pleasure to participate in a conference which addresses issues of deep and long-lasting concern to me. It is evident that all of you share this concern. The healthy diversity of viewpoints represented here only underlines the strength of our common cause.

I see this conference as a significant event in the long and honorable history of citizenship education in the United States. It can provide impetus and rededication to the principles of education and citizenship – principles that we all believe in.

One aspect of the many discussions here has especially heartened me – and that is the emphasis on ethical, or what I prefer to call moral, education. I am in full accord that citizenship education cannot and should not be divorced from moral education. The two are intimately related, and moral education may well be the single most important component of the more general concept of citizenship education. I think that the willingness of conference participants to posit ethical or moral rights and wrongs, do's and don'ts, is a testament to where we are – and perhaps a reflection of where we have been. The time is long past when we can muddle our way through an area as vital as moral and citizenship education. Indirection, vagueness, or ostrich-like neglect avail us nothing.

Examples could be drawn from any period in history attesting to the need of human societies for some recognized system of morality, code of ethical conduct, or call it what you will. It simply is not possible for men and women to live in groups without practicing adherence to some form of moral behavior. Moral education does not have to have a basis in organized religion. If spiritual values can be shown to have naturalistic meaning, as I believe they can, then there is no need to attempt to validate them by reference to supernatural forces. If morality occupies a natural and necessary position in the affairs of civilized humankind, as I believe it does, and is not the exclusive province of organized religion, then it is the common responsibility of all men and women to accept the teaching of moral values in a system of public education.

The psychologist Abraham Maslow put it in even stronger terms: "The teaching of spiritual values, of ethical and moral values, definitely does have a place in education, perhaps ultimately a very basic and essential place, and this in no way needs to controvert the American separation of church and state for the very simple reason that spiritual, ethical, and moral values need have nothing to do with any church. Or perhaps better said, they are the common core of all churches,

all religions, including the non-theistic ones. As a matter of fact, it is possible that precisely these ultimate values are and should be the far goals of all education, as they are and should be also the far goals of psychotherapy, of child care, of marriage, of the family, of work, and perhaps of all other social institutions."

In a few minutes I will discuss the morals and values upon which this country has been founded since its very beginning – and which have been deliberately passed down from generation to generation. First, however, let me sketch the present climate as I see it. For it seems to me the signs and harbingers are everywhere. That there is strong and increasingly vocal public advocacy for moral education can hardly be disputed. (I am deliberately avoiding the stronger term "mandate," although it may be more acurate.)

Take, for example, the messages coming at us from all sides from two interacting fields – politics and the media. Anyone who followed the national conventions this summer, anyone who has listened to the statements of both presidential candidates – I promise you this is a bipartisan speech! – anyone who has read or viewed media commentary on the contemporary scene must be aware of the call for a reaffirmation of our historic values. The need to state and teach our values is so widely voiced that we may lose sight of its importance. Fortunately, like all truisms, it remains true.

Some other signs and portents. Item: The 1975 Seventh Annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education included a series of questions devoted to education in morals and moral behavior. Seventy-nine percent of those interviewed supported the instruction of moral behavior. Of parents with children in public schools, 84% were in favor of moral education. Of parents with children in parochial schools, 85% were in favor. The Phi Delta Kappan, in its December 1975 issue, commented as follows on this survey: "Presumably, the home and the church are the proper places to give children instruction in morals and moral behavior. But in the absence of such instruction in many homes, the responsibility shifts. . . to the schools. At least to meet the present need, an overwhelming majority of all groups in the population would like to see such instruction provided by the schools. And, significantly, one of the groups most in favor is that composed of parents of children now attending public schools."

Item: The Citizenship Objectives of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1974-75, listed seven major goals. Four of them are directly related to moral education: Show concern for the well-being and dignity of others; support just law and the rights of all individuals; approach decisions rationally; and help and respect [one's] own family. In several ways, the report emphasizes that students must formulate their own beliefs while understanding and respecting the viewpoints of others.

Item: In a recent survey of State Departments of Education, an overwhelming majority cited moral education as a major goal. Most of them are engaged in, or planning to be engaged in, carrying it out. The Michigan Department of Education, in a task force report, stated: "To show young people the value of moral inquiry [is] most distinctly [the purview of public education], since in a democratic society, one of the purposes of the public school – if not the purpose – is to educate for the betterment of the whole."

The Hawaii Department of Education, in a 1973 document, stated: "Values education is a process of discovering and developing values. Its aim is to encourage teachers and students to raise questions about what constitutes the good: the good life, the good man. It seeks through analysis and survey to discover what people individually and in groups believe to be good."

The State of Virginia's Standards of Quality for Public Schools states two specific goals of public education: participate in a free society; and develop ethical standards of behavior and a realistic self-image.

The introduction to the Guide for Teaching Ethical and Moral Values in Alabama Schools states:
"Whereas, there has been widespread confusion and misunderstanding of the imperishable truths, time-tested doctrines, and democratic ideals upon which our state and nation were founded; and . . .
"Whereas, there has in recent years also been a clearly evident decline in the spirit of patriotism and disregard for religious, moral and ethical values on the part of young people and adults as well; and . . .
"Whereas many students in Alabama's public schools, colleges, and other institutions of learning, and teachers themselves, are sometimes disturbed and uncertain about what positions they should take as to basic truths, standards of morality and ethical behavior; and . . .
"Whereas, Alabama has never formulated a statewide program for teaching morals and religion in public schools . . .
"Now, therefore, be it resolved that the State Board of Education hereby authorizes the preparation of a general handbook and related curriculum materials to be used in such instruction . . ."

Despite this cacaphony of diverse voices urging moral education, there seems to be a curious misapprehension among some that moral education is "new" or "innovative" or "gimmicky." Of course, nothing could be farther from the truth. What we are talking about is as old as this country – and older. For moral education has always been with us. God willing, it will always be with us. The enduring social and personal values on which it is based are grounded in the American heritage.

When we consider these basic cultural values, it is important to recognize that the question of whose values is not really relevant. They are all of ours, the values – or ideals – of the many, many elements of our pluralistic society. There might be room to differ on the source of values – for instance, revealed truth, rationality, or intuition, or a combination of these – but it is not the source that concerns us. The social-political agreement of our body politic, on which this country rests, resides in a set of values which transcends their source and ethnic or racial diversity. Would anyone here dispute the fundamental value of respect for self? respect for others? equality? liberty? R.S. Peters, the noted British philosopher – note I said British, so here we have values that transcend nations – cites, among others, as values basic to democratic societies: liberty; rationality; and freedom, including the freedom for self-development and autonomy. Moral educators, values educators, religious and special interest groups – you name it – come together on exactly this point. These are our fundamental values. These have always been our fundamental values.

Even a cursory reading of America's basic documents reveals how deeply these values are embedded in our history. The signers of the Mayflower Compact in 1620 stated: "[We do] solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one another, convenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation . . . And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience." [emphasis added]

From this beginning have flowed our most cherished historic documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. All of these reaffirm, as this conference is now reaffirming, the values which have shaped this country's destiny. The documents contain the words, phrases, and concepts which illuminate the principles that have guided us for 200 years. They clearly reflect both our Judaic-Christian tradition and our Western intellectual tradition. These are the very principles and values which sustained us in our earliest days. They are the principles which have continued to sustain us through wars, adversities, and national upheavals.

Up to now I have been talking about what the word "moral" means in moral education. Let me now approach it from the point of view of the second word: "education." Again, our past illuminates the present. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 states, in Article 3: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." This country's schools were grounded on a concern for transferring our basic values to our children – in short, educating them in these values. In earlier and simpler times, this was accomplished through a loose, informal, but intimate confederation of home, church, and school. Each, in its own way, was a purveyor of

moral education. Each reinforced the other two. Thus there was a three-way interaction, with teachers, parents, and religious leaders sharing functions, roles, and, yes, even places of residence. Moral education thus became an implicit responsibility of the child's most immediate environmental influences.

Things are not that simple today. The mixed blessings of the industrial revolution, urbanization, technological advances – and all their accompaniments – have led to the highly complex and fragmented social structure we now live in. Unlike earlier times, today's children may rarely be in contact with a religious leader or organization, may (and this is well documented) require of their home only a bed and a TV set – but they do go to school – at least, most of them. The downward spiral of alienation and dropouts exists, to be sure, but school is perhaps the sole common denominator of children past infancy.

Today, then, it becomes even more imperative than ever for the school system to assume the responsibility for moral education. It stands alone in having both the opportunity and the right to do so – a claim which can be made for no other social institution. And, schools do "teach" moral education every school day of the year, whether they know it or not, whether deliberate or not. Teacher attitudes, disciplinary codes, and the so-called hidden curriculum all operate to implicitly convey a values/moral set. There are no "values-free" schools. Our task here, then, is to consider ways of deliberately, systematically, and effectively carrying out moral education in the schools – and to do this in a way that violates none of the ethnic, racial, or religious differences that characterize our country's children.

You will note that I used the words "effectively" and "systematically" in speaking of teaching moral education. I use them purposely. We are learning all the time in this field. Our new knowledge and research provide a rich source of valid information about what techniques, approaches, curricula, and so on, do and don't work. The issue is really not whether moral education should be embedded throughout a curriculum or taught directly in a separate course – or both. The point is that schools now have access to a knowledge base which can guide effective moral-education programs. The evidence is in, and we must use it.

Some very important strands of this knowledge base refer to crucial aspects of moral education. For instance, the developmentalists (Kohlberg and many others) have arrived at significant findings regarding children's developmental growth in moral judgment. The prosocial theorists (Staub, Bandura, and many others) have identified, tested, and validated techniques which are effective in teaching children to behave in a helpful, altruistic, caring manner. A triangulation of effort from many approaches has helped us to analyze and identify what constitutes moral/ethical action. These are only a few quickly mentioned aspects of the new knowledge and research which, together, enable us to mount effective educational programs.

When we consider the proliferation of such knowledge, it becomes a certainty, not a speculation, that we now know enough to go about this complex business of moral education. Finally — and I hope I hardly need say this — we can go about it in a way that is fair, noncoercive, and nonoppressive. In short, we can go about moral education morally.

Earlier I referred to both historic and contemporary documents and statements highlighting our enduring commitment to moral education and the values on which it is based. There is one effort under way at this time which is related to this conference and which, I believe, deserves special mention. Under the auspices of the National Institute of Education, a national program was launched in 1976 to plan an agenda for research and development in moral/citizenship education. I congratulate Bud Hodgkinson on that program — as I congratulate the architects of this present conference.

Let me again sound the call for a reaffirmation of and rededication to our national values. They lie at the very heart of moral education. And moral education, in turn, lies at the very heart of citizenship education. If our society is to survive as we know it and want it, educators have a responsibility and an opportunity of awesome proportions.

This conference marks a crucial step in assuming that responsibility and seizing that opportunity. From here we can move, move to help schools carry out the powerful moral-education programs to which we are all — from our different backgrounds and disciplines — committed.

It seems to me that the most important outcome from this national conference might well be a resolve to get our major institutions to assume more responsibility for citizenship responsibility. Of all the institutions that serve the public, certainly our educational institutions ought to be foremost in concern and commitment to both the preservation and improvement of our American system of government. This ought to be a universal commitment that transcends almost all others in priority and in importance. Those of us who accept the proposition that this can best be done through education ought to be turning our thoughts and resources in this direction. Perhaps this ought to be foremost in the institutional goals on every campus and in every school system. As we address ourselves to the question: "Whose responsibility is it?" — we should be responding that the responsibility heavily rests with education and with our educational establishment nationwide, kindergarten through graduate school, public and private. (But we should not by any means assume that it is exclusively the responsibility of education, for we all know better.) We educators are not giving citizenship responsibility enough attention and enough priority. To be sure, we teach many subjects that address themselves to these basic issues and responsibilities. But in these times it requires a deeper concern and a more urgent, front-burner activism than has been the case in the past few years. Recent events and the

emergence of problems that are deeply rooted in our societal structure remind us that American education must assume more leadership; it must devote more of its resources to the improvement of governmental responsiveness and, consequently, the quality of life and living — bringing enlightened citizen commitment to government, its responsiveness, and its overall effectiveness. Through teaching, research, and service emanating from our educational institutions, we should take on the enormous challenge to attain great strides upward in this necessary, active concern that becomes a new moral imperative for all of the American people.

RBS POSITION AND RESEARCH PAPERS ON MORAL/CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

PLANNING FOR MORAL/CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION is based on three assumptions: the need for and interest in moral/citizenship education are increasingly expressed in many segments of our society; the field is rich with diverse activities, theories, research, and promising directions to explore; a national coordinating effort is necessary to draw together this diversity and establish common ground and guidelines for future work across the field. To this end, the initial objectives of the planning program include: coordinating activities, sharing knowledge, identifying issues, convening informational planning conferences, examining managerial techniques, analyzing programmatic approaches, and preparing planning recommendations. An Advisory Group and Resource Panel will assist in shaping the planning program: