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ABSTRACT

This action research project implemented strategies for effectively promoting attitude and values to elicit good character in children. The targeted population consisted of first and third grade students in three schools in a middle class community in northern Illinois. The lack of respect and poor moral values contributed to the data that are revealed in parent and teacher questionnaires, surveys, and a teacher checklist. Through interpreting documented material, it was found that students were not demonstrating good character traits. This is because of the escalating moral deterioration of children and teachers' inability to teach values throughout the curriculum. Upon reviewing the causes of why students demonstrated inappropriate character traits, three major values (respect, responsibility, caring) were targeted, and a variety of activities were conducted in classroom settings. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in students treating others with respect and in being kind and considerate to others. The intervention of effectively promoting character traits in children appears to have had a positive effect on student behavior. (Contains 5 tables and 23 references.) (BT)

EFFECTIVELY PROMOTING POSITIVE CHARACTER TRAITS IN CHILDREN

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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EFFECTIVE PROMOTING POSITIVE CHARACTER TRAITS IN CHILDREN

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May, 2001

ABSTRACT

This research explains strategies for effectively promoting attitude and values in order to elicit good character in children. The targeted population consists of first and third grade students in a middle class community, located in northern Illinois. The lack of respect and poor moral values contribute to the data that are revealed in parent and teacher questionnaires, surveys, and a teacher checklist.

Through interpreting documented material students are not demonstrating good character traits. This is because of the escalating moral deterioration of children and teachers' inability to teach values throughout the curriculum.

Upon reviewing causes of why students demonstrate inappropriate character traits, a selection of three major values (respect, responsibility, caring) was targeted. The teacher researchers will conducted a variety of activities in classroom settings.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in treating others with respect, being kind and considerate to others. The intervention of effectively promoting character traits in children appears to have had a positive effect on student behavior.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Some students of the targeted first through third grade class exhibit behavior problems in the classroom due a lack of good character traits. The lack of respect and poor moral values contribute to data that are revealed in informal teacher feedback, parent and student conversations, and daily teacher observations.

Immediate Problem Context

School A

Students of the targeted class attend an elementary school with an enrollment of 429 students in grade kindergarten through eighth grade. Of these students, 86.9% are Caucasian, 10.5% are Hispanic, and 2.6% are Asian /Pacific Islander. According to the 1999 Illinois School Report Card, 5.6% of the students come from low-income families and 12.8% of the students are limited-English proficient. The school has an attendance rate of 95.5%, a student mobility rate of 17.2%, and there are no chronic truancy. The professional staff for this elementary school is approximately 43. Of the 43 staff members, 19 are academic classroom teachers, 6 are full-time aides, and 1 is a part-time health aide. There are five special teachers, one each for gym, music, art, library, and band. The staff also includes one teacher each for resource special education, English as a Second Language, speech, gifted, and social work. There is also a principal, a

secretary, a nurse, as well as one part-time and two-full time custodians (School A Report Card, 1999).

The program for this school includes a school day of 6 hours and 20 minutes, with six periods of 45 minutes. Each period is devoted to the core subject (language arts, math, science, and social studies). The number of minutes devoted to the teaching of each of the core subjects varies per grade level. One 45-minute period per day is for granted for a special (gym, music, art, and library). There is a 45-minute lunch period for all students and the students in grades first through fifth grade get a 15-minute recess each morning. Some students are pulled out for special classes such as: gifted classes, speech therapy, ESL, or social work. The school has two self-contained special education classes, and one resource special education class. The average class size is 27 students (School A Report Card, 1999).

There are several committees of teachers within the school. There is a building and safety committee, which consists of the principal and three regular education teachers, to discuss any matters pertaining to the school. There is also a Collaborative Assistance Team (CAT) that consists of the principal, social worker, resource special education teacher, a regular education teacher, and the teacher who is referring the child for the meeting. This team discusses the concerns that the classroom teacher has with the child being referred. This team makes recommendation for interventions regarding the child's academic and/or behavioral issues.

There are several after school activities offered at School A. There is a recreational sports program for all fifth and sixth graders. Junior High students (sixth through eighth graders) can participate in such activities as basketball, volleyball, cheerleading, student council, newspaper, and chess club.

This school was built in 1957. It is only one level and is U-shaped. There are a total of 21 classrooms for grade kindergarten through eighth. The school contains a library, music room, art room, gymnasium, social work room, teacher's lounge, three janitor's rooms, and a main office. The first wing contains first through fifth grade classrooms, the janitor's office, a girl and boy's bathroom, an office for the social worker, and the main office. The middle wing houses the gym, teacher's lounge and restroom, janitor's room, and kindergarten classroom. The third wing has the sixth through eighth grade classrooms, two special education classrooms, the music room, and a girls' and boys' restroom.

The school building is located on a street corner, and is surrounded by a residential area. The building has four entrances. Students in kindergarten through third grade line up on the north side of the building where there is a playground area that is used for recess. Grades fourth through eighth line up on the south side of the building enter at the doors of their appropriate wing. There is a blacktop and an area of grass surrounding one side of the building. These areas are used for recess and a place for students to line up for school when they arrive.

School B

Students of the targeted class attend an elementary grade school with an enrollment of 403 students in grade kindergarten through second. Of these students, 85.9% are Caucasian, 2.0% are Hispanic, 3.2% are African American, and 8.9% are Asian /Pacific Islander. According to the 1999 Illinois School Report Card, 2.5% of the students come from low-income families and 3.5% of the students are Limited-English –Proficient. The school has an attendance rate of 96.2% and a student mobility rate of 6.4%. The chronic truancy rate is 0.6%.

The professional staff for this elementary school is approximately 40. Of the 40 staff members, 15 are academic classroom teachers, and 6 are full-time aides. There is a full-time gym

teacher. The music, art, and library teachers are part-time teachers and share their time with the other buildings in the district. The staff also includes one teacher each for resource special education, self-contained special education, early childhood, speech, and Reading Recovery. There is a multi-needs class with a teacher and six aides. There is a part-time nurse, occupational/physical therapist, psychologist, and social worker. There is a principal, a secretary, and a health aide, as well as two full-time and one-part time custodian. The average teaching experience of the staff is 14.2 years and 70.6% of the teachers have a master's degree (Illinois School Report Card 1999).

The program for this school includes a school day of 6 hours and 30 minutes. The teachers are committed to teaching the core subjects of reading and math. Science and social studies are integrated throughout the curriculum and are also taught as separate subjects. One 25-minute period per day is granted for a special subject (music, art, gym and library). There is a 40-minute lunch period for first and second grade students including a 20-minute recess. All students get an additional 15-minute recess per day. Weather permitting, recess is outside on the playground. Some students are pulled out for special classes such as: speech therapy, English as a Second Language (ESL), special education, and social work. Most special education students are included in the regular classroom. The school has one self-contained special education class. The average class size is 23 students (Illinois School Report Card, 1999).

There are several committees of teachers within the school. There is a Pupil Personnel Service Team (PPS) that consists of the principal, social worker, resource special education teacher, speech therapist, school nurse, psychologist, special education coordinator, and the teacher who is referring the child for the meeting. This team discusses the concerns that the classroom teacher has with the child being referred. This team makes recommendations and

suggests interventions regarding the child's academic and/or behavioral issues. All professional staff members meet twice a month to discuss building issues. Grade level teams meet once a week. The building has a representative that meets with the superintendent to discuss issues that cannot be settled in the building. All teachers in the building are members of the Illinois Education Association/National Education Association (IEA/NEA).

There is a before and after school child care program at this school. Brownies and Cub Scouts hold their meetings after school. There are Junior Great Books and a Rainbow (children of divorce or one-parent families) group that meet once a week during lunch.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very active and involved in the school. They have two or three parties for the children each year during the evening. They have a number of fundraisers every year and contribute over \$5,000.00 per year to the school. They sponsor assemblies, picnics, reading incentives, and other special events. The PTO donates the snacks for the holiday parties so that all classrooms have the same treat. They provide snacks for the children during the week of ITBS tests.

Parent volunteers are vital to the school. Parent volunteers help the children during lunch each day. Many come in to read with children during the day. Volunteers help teachers with copying, typing, and assisting them in the classroom.

The school is situated in a residential area. It is on the corner of two thoroughfares. The school was built in 1948. There were two additions made to the building the following two years. There are a total of 15 classrooms for grade kindergarten through second. The main entrance leads to the school office, gym, kitchen and the south wing. The teacher's lounge and workroom is located in the basement of the building along with the transportation department. The south wing consists of the library, student washrooms, a self-contained special education

room, four-second grade classrooms, and two first grade classrooms. Four first grade classrooms, a girls and boys washroom, a janitor's closet, and the reading resource room are located in the west wing. The west wing can only be reached by walking through the gym from the main entrance. Music, art, early childhood, and multi-needs are in a mobile classroom located outside the gym. The east wing holds three kindergarten classrooms, the speech therapy room, washrooms, and offices, which are shared by the psychologist, social worker, and nurse. There are two-second grade classrooms in this wing.

School C

Students of the targeted class attend an elementary school with an enrollment of 568 students in grade kindergarten through fifth grade. Of these students, 69.8% are Caucasian, 8.4% are Hispanic, 15.6% are African American, and 6.3% are Asian /Pacific Islander. According to the 1999 Illinois School Report Card, 5.6% of the students come from low-income families and there are no students who are Limited-English-Proficient. The school has an attendance rate of 95.8% and a student mobility rate of 17.3%. The chronic truancy rate is 0.8% (School C Report Card, 1999).

The professional staff for the elementary school is 43. Of the 43 staff members, 16 are academic classroom teachers, 4 are full-time aides, and 1 is a part-time health aide. There are four special teachers, one each for gym, music, art, and library. The staff also includes one teacher each for resource special education, English as a Second Language, speech, and social work. There is also a principal, assistant principal, two secretaries, a nurse, as well as one part-time and two-full time custodians (School C Report Card, 1999).

The program for this school includes a school day of 6 hours and 20 minutes, with six periods of 45 minutes. Each period is devoted to the core subject (language arts, math, science, and

social studies). The amount of minutes devoted to the teaching of each of the core subjects varies per grade level. One 35-minute period per day is for granted for a special (gym, music, art, and library). There is a 45-minute lunch period for all students and the students in grades first through fifth grade get a 15-minute recess each morning. Some students are pulled out for special classes such as: speech therapy, and social work. The school has two self-contained special education classes, and one resource special education class. The average class size is 24 students (School C Report Card, 1999).

There are several committees of teachers within the school. There is a building and safety committee, which consists of the principal, and three regular education teachers, to discuss any matters pertaining to the school. There is also a Staff Reporting Team (SRT) that consists of the principal, social worker, resource special education teacher, a regular education teacher, and the teacher who is referring the child for the meeting. This team discusses the concerns that the classroom teacher has with the child being referred. This team makes recommendation for interventions regarding the child's academic or behavioral issues.

There are several after school activities offered at School C. There is a recreational sports program for students in third through fifth grade. Students in grades third through fifth can also participate in a math and computer club.

This school was built in 1956. It is a two level building. There are a total of 21 classrooms for grade kindergarten through fifth. The school contains a library, music room, art room, gymnasium, social work room, teachers' lounge, two janitors' rooms, and a main office. The first floor contains first through third grade classrooms, the computer lab, the janitors' office, a girls' and boys' bathroom, and the main office. The middle wing houses the gym, teachers'

bathroom, janitors' room, and four classrooms (the kindergarten, resource, one special education, and the speech/gifted/ESL classroom).

Surrounding Community

School A

The community surrounding School A is located 14 miles southwest of a major midwestern metropolitan area. The type of dwellings consists of mostly single-family homes but there are several apartment buildings. The school community consists of a population of 28,000. The median home value is \$133,000, and the median income is \$62,965 according to the Chicago Tribune web site. Low taxes and local shopping have spurred growth in this small town adjoining a big city.

The district consists of seven elementary schools, five of which are kindergarten through eighth, and two, which are kindergarten through sixth. The total enrollment is 3,161 students and there are approximately 133 full-time teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio is 21.0:1 and the pupil-administrator ratio is 227.0:1.

The racial/ethnic background for the district full-time staff includes 98.9% Caucasian, 0.6% Hispanic, and 0.6% Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender of the teachers includes 16.2% male and 83.8% female. The average teaching experience is 18.6 years. Of the full-time staff 55.2% have a bachelor's degree and 44.8% have a master's degree or above. The average teaching salary is \$45,648 and the average administrator salary is 67,814. The operating expenditure per pupil is \$5,919.

School B

The community surrounding School B is located 15 miles southwest of a large metropolitan city. The school community consists of three medium size villages. The type of dwelling is

mostly single-family homes, but there are few low-income apartment buildings. There is no industrial area. There are a few strip malls, grocery stores, and restaurants. The largest plaza has a Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and many small stores. Most of the tax revenue comes from property taxes. The 1998 median income is \$67,455, and the 1998 median home price is \$181,378 according to the Chicago Tribune web site.

The district is comprised of three grade level centers. All students in the district are bused to school. Six sections of kindergarten, first and second grades are located in School B. The other two schools in the district house grades three through five, and grades six through eight. The total enrollment of the district is 1,270 students. There are 75 full-time teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio is 19.4:1 and the pupil-administrator ratio is 282.2:1.

The racial/ethnic background of the district full-time staff is 100% Caucasian. The district is made up of 83.9% female teachers and 16.1% male. The average teacher's salary is \$49,237 and the average administrator's salary is \$92,928. The operating expenditure per pupil is \$5,850 (Illinois School Report Card 1999)

A referendum was passed by this school district in the spring of 1999 to alleviate overcrowding and to update antiquated school buildings. In the fall of 2000, students and staff from grades kindergarten through second in School B will move into the building vacated by the third, fourth, and fifth grades. The third, fourth, and fifth grade students and staff will move to a new facility that is currently under construction. There will be remodeling done to the junior high facility.

School C

The community surrounding School C is located 25 miles south of a large metropolitan city. The type of dwellings is mostly single-family homes. The 1998 median income is \$61,787 and

the 1988 median home price is \$103,000 according to the Chicago Tribune web site. Taxes are fairly low in this community.

The district is comprised as a unit. Some students in the district are bused to school. The total enrollment of the district is 1,747 students in the elementary school setting and 2,875 in the high school setting. There are 628 full-time teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio is 24.5:1 and the pupil- administrator ratio is 386.6:1.

The racial/ethnic background of the district full-time staff is 95.5% Caucasian, 3.0% African American, 1.1% Hispanic, and 0.3% Asian/Pacific Islander. The district is made up of 73.3% female teachers and 26.7% male. The average teacher's salary is \$47,461 and the average administrator's salary is \$76,662. The operating expenditure per pupil is \$5,913 (Illinois School Report Card 1999).

National Context of the Problem

There is a growing concern in this country that Americans are deeply troubled, almost fearful, about the moral character of the next generation. According to Lawton, (1997) more than 6 in 10 adults, or 61%, said youngsters' fail to learn such values as honesty, respect, and responsibility. This is a very serious problem. Only 37 % believe today's children, once they are grown, will make the United States a better place. Children who exhibit behaviors such as constant interruptions, name calling, and insubordination make it difficult for fundamental academic skills (Quinn, 1995). A study by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (1998) has shown that the hole in our moral ozone is getting bigger. It states that honesty and integrity are going from bad to worse.

Today's children are growing up in a very complex world. They are facing challenges that were unheard of in previous generations. The increasing rate of divorce, the breakdown of the

family, and violence are issues that are making a huge impact on children. Unfortunately, society pays a high price for the unethical choices made by its members. The children raised today will determine the type of world in which they will be living. Parents, schools, communities, and world leaders are wondering how they are going to get children to have respect, and to learn how to behave responsibly toward each other. Lawrence Kohlberg argued (as cited in Power, 1989), that educational aims should be justified in terms of their intrinsic worth. He said that skills that develop consistently over time have more value than those that develop over a short time.

A primary source for the lack of character traits among students is that the students simply are not equipped with the knowledge to act in socially appropriate ways (Elliot and Gresham, 1993). The future of the world depends on children of today being raised to help the world become a better place. Children do not automatically develop good morals. Dedicated efforts must be made to help children develop the values and abilities necessary to make good moral decisions.

How can educators ignore the problem? They need to accept responsibility for their country's future. American children typically spend over 900 hours per year in school. Schaeffer (1998), the executive director of the Character Education Partnership, said "Don't schools have an obligation not to turn a blind eye to these issues?"

As Lickona (1991) stated, Values education is a doable job. Given the enormous moral problems facing the country, their deep social roots, and the ever – increasing responsibilities that schools already shoulder, the prospect of taking on moral education can seem overwhelming. The good news, as we shall see, is that values education can be done within the school day, is happening now in school systems all across the country, and is making a positive

difference in the moral attitudes and behavior of students, with the result that it's easier for teachers to teach and students to learn." (p.22)

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Within the targeted grades first and third, there were many types of evidence that support the need for teaching positive character traits among children. The researchers chose to use documentation, which reflected the view of the teachers at each site. Their perspectives were reflected through the following methods: informal teacher feedback, parent and student conversation, daily teacher observation, and a formal survey of the staff and parents at each of the sites.

A survey was created and designed by the researchers. The first purpose of this survey was to gain a baseline understanding of attitude and values from the teachers and parents. The second purpose was to have teacher and parents think metacognitively about their own attitudes and sets of values.

The survey that was administered to the teachers and parents at each site is documented in Tables 1 and 2. This survey identified the teachers' and parents' attitudes and values.

Table 1

Attitude and Values Survey for Teachers

#	Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1.	Do you treat others the way you want to be treated?	50%	50%			
2.	Are you courteous and polite?	56%	43%			
3.	Do you demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of others?	25%	68%	7%		
4.	Do you display self-control of your temper?	50%	37%	13%		
5.	Do you demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of others?	43%	43%	7%	7%	
6.	Do you put forth your best effort?	50%	50%			
7.	Do you tell the truth even if it causes difficulty?	44%	56%			
8.	Are you disruptive, sneaky, or tricky?	18%			32%	50%
9.	Do you honor other people's property?	94%			6%	
10.	Do you listen with an open mind?	45%	50%	5%		
11.	Do you treat people fairly to the best of your ability?	75%	25%			
12.	Are you consistent about making decisions that affect other people?	25%	69%	6%		
13.	Are you kind and considerate?	50%	50%			
14.	Do you empathize with others?	50%	50%			
15.	Are you charitable and generous with your time?	62%	25%	13%		
16.	Do you play by the rules?	37%	63%			
17.	Do you obey the law?	50%	50%			
18.	Do you do volunteer and community work?	38%	31%	25%	6%	

Table 1 illustrates the teacher's attitudes and values in society at each site as indicated by the results of the Attitude and Values Survey. Most of the teachers at each site indicated that they felt they lived their everyday lives as persons of good character. The researchers concluded that they would expect their students to act accordingly.

Table 2
Attitude and Values Survey for Parents

#	Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1.	Do you treat others the way you want to be treated?	20%	73%		7%	
2.	Are you courteous and polite?	28%	60%	6%	6%	
3.	Do you demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of others?	40%	40%	13%	7%	
4.	Do you display self-control of your temper?	20%	53%	20%	7%	
5.	Do you demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of others?	13%	53%	28%	6%	
6.	Do you put forth your best effort?	20%	60%	13%	7%	
7.	Do you tell the truth even if it causes difficulty?	60%	33%			7%
8.	Are you disruptive, sneaky, or tricky?	7%	7%	7%	26%	53%
9.	Do you honor other people's property?	93%				7%
10.	Do you listen with an open mind?	33%	53%	7%	7%	
11.	Do you treat people fairly to the best of your ability?	53%	40%		7%	
12.	Are you consistent about making decisions that affect other people?	47%	47%		6%	
13.	Are you kind and considerate?	47%	47%		6%	
14.	Do you empathize with others?	60%	33%		7%	
15.	Are you charitable and generous with your time?	13%	60%	27%		
16.	Do you play by the rules?	53%	40%		7%	
17.	Do you obey the law?	86%	7%		7%	
18.	Do you do volunteer and community work?	27%	33%	27%	13%	

Table 2 illustrates the parent's attitudes and values in society at each site as indicated by the results from the Attitude and Values Survey. Parents indicate they usually live their everyday lives as persons of good character. The researchers concluded that these surveys suggest a need for the children to learn character education.

The researchers completed an Attitude and Values Checklist. This checklist was administered during the first two weeks of school in order to document attitudes and values in the classroom. The researchers developed this checklist. A total of 59 randomly selected students participated

in the checklist at each site. The researchers completed an Attitude and Values checklist about each of the students. The checklist contained ten items, each with five possible answers.

Table 3 illustrates that 64% of the students fell within the acceptable range in the area of treats others with respect, and 36% of the students were within the area of concern range. Students who fell in the normal range in the area of being kind and considerate to others included 73% of the targeted students, and 27% of the students fell within the area of concern range. Students who fell in the normal range in the area of accepting responsibility included 72% of the targeted students, and 28% of the students fell within the area of concern range.

Table 3

Attitudes and Values Checklist for Students

Statement	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Treats others with respect.	10%	54%	27%	7%	0%
Displays self-control.	19%	58%	14%	8%	0%
Does what is required in class.	32%	49%	7%	12%	0%
Tells the truth.	76%	15%	9%	0%	0%
Treats other children fairly.	64%	19%	17%	0%	0%
Is kind and considerate to others.	31%	42%	13%	14%	0%
Follows classroom rules and routines.	31%	41%	21%	7%	0%
Accepts responsibility.	31%	41%	14%	14%	0%
Works cooperatively.	31%	39%	18%	12%	0%
Listens attentively.	31%	39%	17%	10%	3%

Probable Causes

The literature suggests a variety of causes for the need for teaching positive character traits among children. One such cause, according to Lickona (1991), is the following “Children with the most glaring deficiencies in moral values almost always come, their teachers say, from troubled families. Indeed, poor parenting looms as one of the major reasons why schools now feel compelled to get involved in value education.” There seems to be a consensus in the targeted schools that parents allow their children to follow negative trends that appear in the mass media. According to Lickona (1991), “The typical elementary school child spends 30 hours a week in front of the television set. By the age of 16, the average child will have witnessed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence, and by age 18, approximately 40,000 sexually titillating scenes. Episodes of sexualized violence are increasingly common” (p.23). A third possible cause is the lack of good attitudes as discussed by Ediger (1998), “There are also problems of impoliteness, rudeness, lack of patience, and unconcern for others they also indicate character education is important for pupils” (p. 2).

Another possible cause for the need for teaching positive character traits among children is the shifting of values in our society. Reuben (1994) stated, “The world in which the children are growing up is complex and confusing. We face challenges that were unheard of a generation or two ago,” (p. 18). As Reuben reported “These forces have an impact on the lives of children. Raising ethical children is a great noble challenge. It’s the most important task we have.” (1994, p.4).

CHAPTER 3
THE SOLUTION STRATEGY
Literature Review

Purpose of Character Education

As educators embark on the Twenty- First Century there are several reasons why educators need to teach character traits to children. The world in which children are growing up is increasingly complex and confusing. Society is facing challenges that were unheard of a generation or two ago (Reuben, 1994). According to Edgier (1995), character education must be taught to children based on the following:

There are major problems in society today, such as drug abuse, gang membership, intoxication, teenage pregnancy, violence, dishonesty, and other forms of disruptive behavior. There are also problems of impoliteness, rudeness, lack of patience, and unconcern for others that also indicate character education so important to pupils.

As educators, cannot ignore this problem because must accept responsibility for the country's future. "Don't schools have an obligation not to turn a blind eye to these issues?" (Schaeffer, 1998), (p.17) There are several reasons we should teach morals and good character to children. Lickona (1991) states, "There is a clear and urgent need. Young people are increasingly hurting themselves and others, and decreasingly concerned about contributing to the welfare of their

fellow human beings.” (p.20). Young people of this nation are hurting others and themselves in schools and have little caring for the welfare of their fellow human beings.

The school’s role as moral educator becomes more vital at a time when millions of children get little moral teaching from their parents and when value-centered institutions such as church or temple are also absent from their lives. There is no such thing as value-free education.

Schools teach values everyday in the way members of the staff relate to the children, each other, and how they behave towards others. “There is a broad-based, growing support for values education in the schools” (p.21). The federal government believes values education can be a weapon against drugs and crime. Business wants its workers to learn responsible behavior and wants a workforce that will be dependable, honest, and cooperative. Parents are looking to schools to help them raise their children to be moral adults in a difficult world. “Values education is a doable job” (p.22). Values education can be done during the school day. Schools who have taken upon themselves the teaching of values have found it makes a positive difference in its students.

Modeling

According to Elias (1997), teaching by example, or modeling, is the most powerful technique that educators can employ. All aspects of teacher behavior reflect their social and emotional relationships, making a powerful statement of values and expectations. Lickona (1991) states,

Teachers convey and model respect by speaking the language of respect in their interactions with children. It’s frequently said that values are caught not taught, adults have their greatest moral impact when they provide, in the context of a caring relationship, both a good example and reasoned advocacy of good values.” (p.76)

“Opportunities to see examples of positive actions, either by other students or adults or through literature, films, or television, help children become aware of the core values of our society” (Schaps, Solomon, & Watson 1997 p.34). “One of the most basic ways to develop kids’ respect for themselves and others is to respect them, and require respect in return” (p. 18). “They also learn a great deal by simply observing how others behave. That’s why it’s important to set a good example for your child and to point out other role models” (p.274). According to Kohn (1997) a well-designed program of prosocial instruction often correlates with healthy self-esteem. Teaching social skills to children helps them develop self-esteem (Burke, 1992).

Classroom Meetings

Lickona (1996) states the school can provide a caring community “ by becoming a moral community that helps students form caring attachments to adults and to each other. These caring relationships will foster both the desire to learn and the desire to be a good person” (p.96). Educators need to facilitate the development of a caring community within the classroom. Educators must provide an atmosphere of acceptance and respect in the classroom. This can be accomplished through classroom meetings.

Lickona (1991) states, “ The class meeting provides an experience in democracy, making students full partners in creating the best possible classroom” (p.138). Elias (1997) explains,

Building a safe collaborative classroom environment in which children can sort out their feelings, put aside their hassles, and appreciate the joy of learning provides lifelong benefits that children miss out on when they are too angry, hurt, or scared to participate in learning. (p.17)

Educators must use classroom meetings as a tool for providing a sense of community.

According to Elias (1997), “Many teachers use classroom meetings or sharing circles as tools for

building a sense of community. These activities offer a structured opportunity for each student to speak without interruption” (p.46). The student’s share how successful their week has been or to express how they feel about a certain situation that they might be encountering.

Moral discipline

According to Lickona (1991), moral discipline has the long-range goal of helping young people behave responsibly in any situation, not just when they are under the control of a particular adult. The ultimate goal of this approach is self-discipline. Lickona (1991) states “The kind of self-control that underlies voluntary compliance with just rules and laws, that is a mark of mature character, and that a civilized society expects of its citizen” (p.109). One way educators can accomplish this task is to use teachable moments.

Schaps, et .al. (1986), states class events that happen spontaneously (such as a misunderstanding among children) are used as the basis for discussion and negotiations that help children to understand the other persons’ feeling and point of view.

Integration of Character Education through Academics

In order for educators to successfully integrate character education through academics, Elias (1997) states:

“At the elementary level, teachers can choose books for paired reading, silent reading, or read aloud books that contain social and emotional learning. Teachers need to ask questions for discussion or writing assignments that encourage empathetic identification or use a problem solving strategy “ (p.62).

According to Lickona (1991), "Stories, read or told, have always been among the favorite teaching instruments of the world's great moral educators" (p.79). Literature as content provides students with the opportunities for a look at a variety of perceptions and ideas.

Educators can teach monthly themes to approach teaching the character traits in students. Monthly themes can be implemented into the curriculum using team building activities, cooperative learning activities, role playing, direct instruction, modeling, group processing and discussions (Battersby, 1996).

Roger and David Johnson theorize (as cited in Bellanca 1991), that students will develop positive social skills with direct instruction in the use of social skills and with practice. The use of these strategies should have the desired effect in students.

Schools play an essential role in preparing children to become knowledgeable, responsible, caring adults (Elias, 1997). For children to demonstrate these traits, they must be able to understand risks and opportunities, and be motivated to choose actions and behaviors that serve not only their own interests but also those of others. Children will become more caring if they believe the community in which they reside is welcoming, nurturing, and concerned about them (Elias, 1997). Lickona (1991) stated that both character education and social and emotional education aspire to teach students to be good citizens with positive values and to interact effectively and behave constructively.

Values

Schools need to get clear about the nature of values. Values are two kinds, moral and non-moral. Moral values such as respect, responsibility, and caring, carry obligation. Members of society feel obligated to keep a promise, pay bills, care for the children, and be fair in dealing with others. Moral values tell people what they ought to do (Lickona, 1991). As long as children

are taught values at an early age these values become automatic and natural. (McGinnis and Goldstein, 1997).

Respect

Respect means showing regard for the worth of someone or something (Lickona, 1991). Respect is the restraining side of morality; it keeps us from hurting what ought to be valued. Howley, Mangan, Oplawski, & Vogel (1997) reported that students that are responsible are concerned about each other's welfare. Williams (1993) said, "Respect is taught best through a hidden curriculum of modeling and quality teaching that creates a positive and moral climate." (p.22)

Responsibility

Responsibility is the active side of morality. It includes taking care of self and others, fulfilling obligations, contributing to communities, alleviating suffering, and building a better world. To educate for respect and responsibility to make them operative values in the lives of students is to educate for character. Character consists of:

- Moral knowing, (moral awareness, knowing moral values, moral reasoning, decision making and self-knowledge)
- Moral feeling (conscience, self esteem, empathy, loving the good, self control, and humility.)
- Moral action (competence, will, and habit)

Caring

To develop responsibility, young people need to have responsibility. Tigner (1993) stated that friends that care for each other develop a sense of community in the classroom. To learn to care, they need to perform caring actions. Simply learning about the value of caring may

increase students' moral knowledge. It will not necessarily develop their own commitment to that value, their confidence that they themselves can help, or the skills needed to help effectively. To cultivate caring, as with any other moral quality, requires a learning-by-doing approach. To develop caring, students need first hand experiences in face-to-face helping relationships. This is how students learn to bond and discover the powerful rewards of touching another's life. (Lickona, 1993) stated that students that care about one another feel valued and accept responsibility to the group. (Kohn 1991) supported that students that care about one another feel valued. (Goleman, 1995) believes that empathy is built upon self-awareness. He stated that when you have a deficit in emotional intelligence you would be unable to understand another's feelings. He believes that the root of caring comes from empathy or the emotional attachment human's have toward each other. He states that caring comes from understanding people's feelings, motives, and concerns.

Project Objectives and Outcomes

As a result of implementing a character education program during the period of September 2000 through January 2001, the targeted first and third grade students will increase their ability to be respectful, responsible, and caring in the classroom. Teacher observations, checklists, and student surveys will measure this plan.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Provide the climate to improve character traits.
2. Reinforce target character traits through the curriculum.
3. Engage students in listening, communication, cooperation, and problem-solving activities that emphasize group efforts.
4. Develop lesson plans that promote character traits.

5. Teach character traits through direct instruction.

Action Plan

The action plan was developed to improve character traits in the classroom by the researchers using five components when teaching character traits. The researchers used a social skills checklist, and teacher anecdotal records until January 2001 to see if the intervention plans have improved character traits in children. The schedule was approximately twenty weeks in length. The outline is organized on a monthly basis, taking into account institute days and holidays. The remaining weeks were used to emphasize or reteach character traits, as well as reinforce the skills taught. The character traits are respect, responsibility, and caring. The action plan was implemented 100 minutes per week through the months of September to December.

Action Plan

I. Month- September

- Topic- Promoting the climate
- Distribute parent letter
- Distribute Attitude and Values Survey (teachers and parents)
- Complete Attitude and Values Checklist (students)

II. Month- October

- Topic- Respect
- Model- T-chart, modeling, literature, direct instruction, displays, role-playing
- Complete weekly activity

III. Month- November

- Topic- Responsibility

- Model- T-chart, modeling, literature, direct instruction, role-playing
- Complete weekly activity

IV. Month- December

- Topic- Caring
- Model- T-chart, modeling, literature, direct instruction, role-playing
- Complete weekly activity
- Complete checklist on Attitudes and Values (students)

Methods of Assessments

In order to assess the success of the program, a variety of assessments were used as post-data. It consisted of a teacher observation checklist, reports from other teachers, lunchroom and playground reports. The targeted behaviors included: treating others with respect, accepting responsibility, and displaying kindness and consideration to others. The Attitude and Values Checklist was administered to the same 59 students.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve positive character traits in children through a variety of activities and teaching techniques. Within the targeted grades first and third, there were many types of evidence that supports the need for teaching positive character traits among children. The researchers chose to use documentation, which reflected the view of the teachers at each site. Their perspectives were reflected through the following methods: informal teacher feedback, parent and student conversation, daily teacher observation, and a formal survey of staff and parents at each of the sites.

A survey was created by the researchers to gain an understanding of values among teachers and parents. The objective was to have teachers and parents at each site think metacognitively about their own values. The survey was administered to teachers and parents at each site. The researchers then completed an Attitude and Values Checklist. The checklist was administered to the students during the first two weeks of school in order to document attitudes and values in the classroom. The researchers completed an Attitude and Values Checklist about each of the students. The checklist contained ten items, each with five possible answers.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of teaching character traits to the targeted first and third grades students at each site, researchers used an Attitude and Values Checklist, and teacher anecdotal records. This checklist was administered during the first two weeks of school and then the last two weeks at the culmination of the project in order to document attitudes and values in the classroom. The checklist was intended to help determine the success of the interventions and sufficient improvement in the classroom. Results of the checklist are presented in the Table 4.

Table 4

Attitudes and Values Checklist for Students

Statement	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Treats others with respect.	15%	63%	20%	2%	0%
Displays self-control.	21%	68%	10%	1%	0%
Does what is required in class.	56%	35%	7%	3%	0%
Tells the truth.	62%	30%	8%	0%	0%
Treats other children fairly.	52%	29%	19%	0%	0%
Is kind and considerate to others.	44%	46%	10%	0%	0%
Follows classroom rules and routines.	58%	30%	12%	0%	0%
Accepts responsibility.	42%	45%	11%	2%	0%
Works cooperatively.	56%	39%	5%	0%	0%
Listens attentively.	48%	40%	10%	2%	0%

Table 4 shows the comparison of student's attitude and values in the classroom after the interventions. The interventions appear to have had a positive effect on most of the targeted behaviors. Treating others with respect increased by 14% and being kind and considerate to others increased by 17%. Accepting responsibility increased by 15%.

Considering the results of the checklist and the teacher's anecdotal records, the researchers can make certain conclusions and recommendations.

Table 5

Comparison of Attitudes and Values Checklist for Students

Statement	Pre-data	Post data
Treats others with respect.	64%	78%
Displays self-control.	77%	89%
Does what is required in class.	81%	91%
Tells the truth.	91%	92%
Treats other children fairly.	83%	81%
Is kind and considerate to others.	73%	90%
Follows classroom rules and routines.	72%	88%
Accepts responsibility.	72%	87%
Works cooperatively.	70%	95%
Listens attentively.	70%	88%

Table 5 shows the results and comparison of the students' self evaluations of their attitude and values in September (pre-data) and in December (post data) after the interventions had been initiated. The original results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. The percentage scores are a compilation of always and usually, which were the first two columns in Tables 3 and 4. The results show that the students have shown improvement in all areas, but treating other children fairly.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the review and presentation of the data, the students demonstrated an improvement in their classroom behavior. The researchers were pleased with the character traits exhibited by

the students in each of the classrooms. They felt the students' attitudes toward each other had improved. They observed an improvement in treating others with respect and an increase in acts of kindness and empathy towards others. The researchers believed that treating other children fairly decreased as a result of the children being more honest on the survey. The researchers theorized the students were better able to understand what was being asked of them in the second survey as a result of their instruction in character education.

It is the belief of these researchers that following classroom rules and routines increased by 16% as a result of the students learning their expectations and maturing in three months and not necessarily as a result of the character education interventions.

The students appeared to be more considerate of each other. The researchers concluded this was a result of the interventions that had been initiated. The teaching of character education to the students at each of the sites appeared to be successful. It motivated the students to care about each other and they exhibited signs of respect toward each other and adults in the school buildings. The teaching of character education served to enhance learning in the academic area since there was less time being spent on discipline and more time could be devoted to the core subject areas.

The researchers found that teacher modeling was the most important element of the strategies that had been implemented. They felt that their awareness of themselves as persons of good character enabled their students to emulate positive character traits.

The researchers found that the establishment of a classroom community was an important factor of their program. They found the students really got to know each other and felt they had a place where they belonged and were respected.

Direct instruction of each of the three values, respect, responsibility, and caring gave the students at each site a sense of what each value meant and how it was to be used. Reminding the students of the character trait they were exhibiting enabled the students to internalize what each value meant and they were able to use it in everyday settings. . The use of T-Charts gave student's words and mnemonic visuals they could use as a reference when needed. It is the belief of these researchers that direct instruction gave way to transfer of these traits into their everyday behavior.

These researchers concluded that it was possible to integrate character and value education into the regular curriculum. This was achieved through literature and character analysis. This was transferred into their lives by using it to solve conflicts on the playground, at lunchtime, and to solve problems on the bus.

After talking to parents at Parent/Teacher conferences, these researchers concluded that parents believed their children were behaving with more respect and caring at home. They felt their children were more responsible than their other children had been at this age. This caused the researchers to think the students were able to transfer their learning at school to their home.

The researchers would recommend other special teachers in the building fill out behavior charts on the students. These could be filled out by lunchroom monitors, bus drivers, gym, and other special teachers. It would have been interesting to compare children in other classes who were not instructed in character education to the students in the test groups.

These researchers believe that respect, responsibility, and caring are the core values that must be instilled in all children. They will continue to teach new values throughout the school year including trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship.

The interventions described in this paper offer an effective way for educators to implement character education in the classroom. These researchers highly recommend the book Educating for Character by Thomas Lickona. His suggestions are very practical and easy to follow. His work inspires educators to take up the challenge of educating children of the twenty first century in mind as well as in morals. As he said, "Schools and families must come together for a common cause. Working together, these two formative social institutions have real power to raise up moral human beings and to elevate the moral life of the nation." (p.35)

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