

## CHAPTER ONE

---

# *Living, Learning, and Leading in Harmony*

## *Character Development in Middle and Secondary Schools*

*Let us present the same face to everyone.*

—Lao Tzu, Ancient Chinese Philosopher

### INTRODUCTION

There is a shifting perspective among educators about the way that character development programs should be delivered in middle and secondary schools. Discussions with teachers, program consultants, principals, and district leaders throughout the United States and Canada reveal a desire to go deeper in examining the fundamental issues that impact students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Highly prescriptive programs, such as those designed to teach a specific character attribute, provide a valuable resource and launching point for teachers and principals looking to start a character education program in their classrooms or schools. My own experiences as a high school principal support the position that specialized programs are a useful starting point; however, they are most effective when applied as part of a more comprehensive approach to character development in schools.

## 2 Keep It Simple, Make It Real

A lot has been learned over the past 15 to 20 years about the importance of teaching good character to students. Working in an environment with adolescents is unique. Teaching and running a school is a difficult task, and the issues are often complex. Gender identity, multiculturalism, the rights of those with disabilities and special needs, poverty, media influence, domestic and community violence, and a general lack of respect for authority create challenges to ensuring that students develop good character as an outcome of their educational experience.

Given the diverse backgrounds and unstable home environments that many middle and high school students come from, is it any wonder why a very large part of students' school experience is focused on establishing their own identity and working through personal issues? And therefore, your efforts to nurture good character must take into account this critical stage of the students' development.

The availability of personal communication devices such as cell phones and iPods, which enable a student to access family, friends, and the Internet at any time or any place, has changed the face of communication. Students are empowered by their control of information and their ability to make decisions regarding how that information will be used. The changing nature of communication, power, and control are both challenges and teaching opportunities.

Understanding the theory about how and why adolescents behave in a certain way is the starting point of our journey. The real challenge in this complex environment is the ability to put the theory into action. The idea "keep it simple, make it real" is about identifying the context where the teaching and learning of good character is taking place and choosing to live, learn, and lead in harmony within the reality of that situation.

Determining who your students are and what you bring to them each day is the first step. Then you need to identify their needs and how you will construct your teaching and your students' learning environments to meet those needs so that positive character traits will be developed. What positive messages do you communicate to students and colleagues? How do you run your school? What needs attention in the common areas of your school, outside the building, around the corner, and down the street?

These questions have been selected to provoke you to think deeply about what's really going on in your building. Answering these questions will provide the context for the deeper discussions that follow

this chapter, about what character educators are looking for, and what character education programs will look like in the future.

What is the prevailing trend in character education? How do students' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors connect with academic achievement? This chapter will outline current trends and then introduce the *Keep It Simple, Make It Real* approach to character development in middle and secondary schools. What principles will you need to guide you toward living, learning, and leading in harmony? Do you have the courage to bring your true authentic self to work by striving to live, learn, and lead in harmony in your specific environment and with those that share your work experiences with you? Let's begin the discussion.

## CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Character Development Strategies

If you have already implemented a strategy to teach good character, it's likely that most of your efforts or initiatives will fit into one of the following categories: events, projects, programs, models, or frameworks. A complete examination of the purpose, structure, and effectiveness of the strategies that fit into these categories is the topic for

another book. However, a brief overview of each category, along with an example of a strategy, will give the reader a perspective on the wide range of approaches currently being used in character education.

#### Events

Events create an excellent opportunity to focus on an issue, create awareness, and gather individuals or groups together for a particular cause. They usually have a singular focus. Have you seen the impact that undertaking a musical can have on a high school culture? The degree of schoolwide participation and cooperation between departments and the community can have a very positive influence



A man does what he must—in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures—and that is the basis of all human morality.

—John F. Kennedy

---

on the climate of a school and nurture character traits such as responsibility, perseverance, and cooperation among participants. Events that focus on teaching attributes such as respect, responsibility, and citizenship help to raise awareness of issues that touch communities close to home and abroad.

The annual Marathon of Hope for Cancer Research takes place across Canada each September to commemorate Terry Fox and his attempt to run across Canada with an artificial leg. His goal was to raise one million dollars for cancer research. His determination and perseverance, in the face of tremendous adversity, made him a hero and role model to many worldwide. Unfortunately, because of the progression of his disease, Terry was unsuccessful in making it from coast to coast. However, hundreds of thousands of students now participate in the fundraising event each year. The event gives students a chance to contribute to a worthy cause and an opportunity to contribute to solving a serious health issue of society. The event provides a meaningful service learning opportunity and ties back to the curriculum. Teachers can make the curriculum connection by having students write about the character attributes that Terry displayed and relate them to the individuals they are or want to be. Students write stories and poetry and speak about their real-life experiences. The event provides an opportunity for students to examine their own morality and behavior.

Events, if repeated, can also create rituals and build traditions. The annual National Character Education Conference hosted by Huntsville High School is an excellent example of a rich event that has motivated educators and students to get involved in character development. Educators and students from across Canada are given an opportunity to hear inspirational speakers and participate in workshops that highlight best practices in character education.

### **Projects**

You may organize a more complex event aimed at accomplishing a well-defined objective. The project's goal will likely involve a unique venture that relates to a need in your school or community and will require accomplishing a variety of tasks that create a final product.

Whitwell Middle School is famous for its Children's Holocaust Memorial and Paper Clip Project. Whitwell is a small town with a population of 1,600 in Marion County, Tennessee. The principal of the school identified a need to open the eyes of the students to the diversity of the world. The makeup of the 460 students who attend

the school is white and Christian. Students collected six million paper clips, one for each Jew that was killed in the Holocaust. An authentic German cattle car, once used to transport Jews in WWII, was brought to Whitwell to house the six million paper clips. The project was so successful that a museum was created. The project has received national attention for its role in raising student awareness of the importance of tolerance for diversity.

The Whitwell Middle School Paper Clip Project lives on through the students. They are responsible for responding to inquiries about the museum, writing letters, and hosting guest speakers. The students also conduct tours and lead learning activities for other groups and individuals. A documentary film was produced to educate others. Graduating students who participate in the Holocaust Study Group are now eligible for a museum scholarship.

### **Programs**

A more comprehensive approach to character education will incorporate the use of a program designed to focus on a specific aspect of character development. Violence prevention, substance abuse, and bullying are three areas that have received tremendous attention in recent years and government support in terms of funding and resources.

Several key characteristics distinguish a program from an event or project. Many programs are developed by independent companies with significant research having been conducted to determine which strategies will be most successful in developing specific character traits, such as respect and responsibility. Each program is designed to meet the needs of students at various grade levels. Staff training, resources, toolkits, and specific lesson plans support a step-by-step implementation plan.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is an internationally recognized program in use by many school districts. The program was developed by Dr. Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher whose original work on bullying was published in Sweden in 1973 and then later in the United States in a book entitled *Aggression in the Schools: Bullying and Whipping Boys* (1978). His work was motivated by the 1983 triple suicide of three Norwegian adolescents that resulted from severe bullying.

The two-year program emphasizes creating a committee, surveying the students, establishing rules and procedures for dealing with and reporting bullying, teacher and parent engagement, conducting weekly classroom meetings, and organizing events to teach and

promote positive student behavior. Successful implementation of the program requires a commitment to teacher training and adherence to the implementation guideline.

What makes character development programs, like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, so successful? First, the plan is built around a school climate assessment. Therefore, each program targets the specific needs of that particular school. Second, the program is year round, unlike a one-time event or special project which comes and then ends. Third, it is a research-based program.

### **Models and Frameworks**

The use of a model or framework provides a comprehensive approach to character education. Unlike programs, models do not provide a single script for schools to follow. Rather, they provide a set of guiding principles or criteria by which a comprehensive character education program can be developed. Once a model is adopted then the selection of purposeful events, projects, and programs can be made to support the implementation of the model. Dr. Philip Fitch Vincent's *Developing Character in Students* (1999) and Dr. Edward DeRoche and Mary William's *Educating Hearts and Minds: A Comprehensive Character Education Framework* (1998) are two excellent books that give examples of models or frameworks with guiding principles for developing a character education program in schools.

The most recent and widely regarded work in developing a set of guiding principles was completed by Thomas Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Catherine Lewis (1994). Their research forms the foundation of the 11 guiding principles established by the Character Education Partnership, a national nonprofit character education organization. The principles outline a holistic approach to the character movement. The approach includes establishing a set of core values that are widely accepted by the school community. It promotes character taught implicitly and explicitly through academics and extracurricular activities with a focus on the climate of the school and building positive relationships. It recognizes that schools are a reflection of society, and therefore, it is important to make the natural connections between the curriculum and issues that concern everyone. Leadership from within the school system and the wider community is the driving force behind sustaining a character education program. Adults are called upon to model good character. Evaluation and reflection are essential.

In Canada, a more recent model has been published by the Ontario Ministry of Education under the leadership of Dr. Avis Glaze, a national leader in character education. Dr. Glaze's *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12* (2006) has received wide acclaim for its focus on supporting student achievement through community, culture, and caring. The model emphasizes the importance of recognizing diversity in a democratic society. Teacher, student, and community engagement are at the heart of character development.

## **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND STUDENTS' BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS**

### **Character Education Assessment**

Unfortunately, limited attention has been given to the study of character education programs and the positive effect they have on academic achievement. However, a desire among educators to apply a school- and district-wide assessment that examines the impact of character development is growing.



Don't measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should have accomplished with your abilities.

—John Wooden, NCAA  
Hall of Fame basketball coach

---

### **Elementary and Middle School**

A 2003 study, *The Relationship of Character Education Implementation and Academic Achievement in Elementary Schools* (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2003), examined 681 elementary schools in California. The research compared schools that rated high on a character education program rubric to their SAT9 and California Academic Performance Index scores, a state measure of overall academic performance. The data supported a correlation between schools with strong character education scores and higher academic scores. This finding is significant in that it supports the position that schools that focus on developing positive attributes of good character, such as respect, responsibility, and citizenship, also demonstrate high academic success. Other characteristics of these

schools included attention to a clean and safe physical environment, parent and teacher modeling, and a focus on student contribution to community. All of these attributes will be discussed further in later chapters of this book.

Kenneth Leithwood, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; Lucie Leonard, from the National Crime Prevention Center of Canada; and Sandra Dean, a former elementary principal in the Durham Region of Ontario, conducted a study on the academic benefits of *Creating Safe and Caring Communities in Canada: Together We Light the Way*, a framework for character development (Dean, Leithwood, & Leonard, 2004). The framework focused on fostering teamwork, academic achievement, and respect by using a variety of guiding principles, pillars, cultural components, specific programs, and overlaying strategies. The study piloted four schools over three years. The data collected, using the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, showed that students in the program met or exceeded academic grade expectations by the end of the three-year study period. The study concluded that the framework created a behavioral foundation for learning based on a safe and caring learning environment.

### **Secondary School**

*Smart and Good High Schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in Schools, Work, and Beyond* (Lickona & Davidson, 2005) is the most comprehensive study of student success and the integration of character education programs at the high school level. In 2005, Thomas Lickona and Matt Davidson examined 24 high schools from across the United States that had received recognition for programs of excellence. Classroom observation, interviews, and the analysis of specific character development programs were used to capture the qualities of these schools. The study generated a character development framework with six key components: shared purpose and identity, aligned practices with research, having a voice, taking responsibility, practicing collective responsibility, and grappling with tough issues, which all contributed to a school culture focused on excellence and ethics. The Smart and Good High Schools study identified a strong correlation between the presence of the six components and achieving overall excellence in a school.

### **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports**

Positive Behaviors Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is an example of a specific approach that targets a “wide range of systematic and

individualized strategies aimed at improving individual quality of life” (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). The program requires the collection of data, making it a leader in the assessment of good behavior. PBIS emphasizes setting up environments for success and then reinforcing positive behavior rather than consequences for negative behavior. Staff training is extensive. Stephen Lassen, Michael Steele, and Wayne Sailor’s study of urban middle schools examined the relationship between implementing PBIS and academic achievement. The specific behaviors that the study program targeted included responsibility, respectfulness, readiness to learn, cooperation, being safe, and honesty. Settings outside the classroom such as the hallways, cafeteria, and assembly areas were also observed. The study found that schools that implemented the PBIS model had higher scores on math and reading achievement tests and fewer office referrals and suspensions.

## **KEEP IT SIMPLE, MAKE IT REAL**

### **The Huntsville High School Story**

In the fall of 2000, after 11 years as department head of physical education and student services, I became the vice principal of Huntsville High School. The school is situated in a rural

region of Central Ontario that ranks among the lowest in the Province of Ontario for family income and average level of family education. The student population of approximately 1,150 is almost entirely white. The school has 80 teachers who service students with a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Perhaps it has been the influence of my mother, Dr. Eva Olsson, a Holocaust survivor, Canadian national best-selling author, and public speaker, who has motivated me to seek and to understand the factors that contribute to the development of good character in one’s self and others.

I had an opportunity my first year as vice principal to learn about the school’s culture and attempt to define my role. My goal was to find a meaningful way to contribute to the school’s overall improvement and influence positive staff and student behavior. My nine-year tenure as an administrator at Huntsville High has become a rich and challenging journey of discovery, working hard with the staff at the school and learning from the best in the field of character education.



Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

—Leonardo da Vinci

---

It began in earnest in the spring of 2002 when I had the opportunity to participate in a board-sponsored Covey Leadership workshop. I took three staff members who I thought might be interested in making some changes at the school. During the workshop, we identified several potential goals to improve school climate, teacher morale, and student behavior. We returned to the school enthusiastic about our ideas. However, we didn't follow up with a concrete plan immediately. That same spring I was selected to attend a three-day leadership conference in Toronto called Schools That Learn. It was based on Peter Senge's book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990). One of the keynote speaker's comments regarding typical school cultures—"learn or we will hurt you"—left a deep impression on me. The speaker was Roland Barth. Another speaker, Michele Borba, spoke passionately about the value of using multiple intelligences to personalize each child's education.

That June, the director of our school board took a group of us to Tom Lickona's Summer Institute in Cortland, New York. There, I heard Kevin Ryan, Hal Urban, and Tom Lickona speak. The institute was my first formal introduction to character education. After these conference experiences, I knew that improving our school climate, teacher morale, and student behavior was where I wanted to direct my energy as an administrator. These professional development activities provided a different viewpoint on how to address change in these areas. I realized I had a responsibility to return to Huntsville High School and introduce character education as a possible way to improve school climate, teacher morale, and student behavior.

I conducted a staff survey that examined six correlates of effective schools to find out how teachers felt about the school as a teaching and learning community. The survey compared how important staff viewed each correlate, with how evident they felt that correlate was in the school. Table 1.1 Huntsville High School Climate Survey Responses, shows the results of the survey.

Staff identified two areas of significant concern: a clean, safe, and inviting physical environment and student behavior.

A Character Education Committee was formed from a group of 15 volunteer staff members. The committee reviewed the ideas and material from the three professional development activities, as well as the results of the staff survey. During the first year, the committee's efforts focused on improving the physical environment of the school. Vandalism, graffiti, and a general state of disrepair were specific concerns

**Table 1.1** Huntsville High School Climate Survey Responses:  
Percentage of Priority Minus Percentage of Perception Equals  
Percentage of Need

| <i>Categories</i>                              | <i>Perception<br/>How Evident</i> | <i>Priority<br/>How Important</i> | <i>Need<br/>Differential</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Student involvement and responsibility         | 73%                               | 85%                               | +12%                         |
| Clean, safe, and inviting physical environment | 71%                               | 89%                               | +18%                         |
| Student recognition                            | 73%                               | 88%                               | +15%                         |
| Positive student behavior                      | 67%                               | 91%                               | +24%                         |
| Parent involvement and support                 | 76%                               | 84%                               | +8%                          |
| High expectations for all students             | 77%                               | 90%                               | +13%                         |

identified by the staff. The common areas, such as the cafeteria, hallways, office spaces, and staff room, required restorative work.

The committee's plan to improve the physical condition of the building was not readily accepted by the teachers. They did not see how the simple approach of enhancing the physical environment could have a positive impact on student behavior. However, as teachers began to see real changes in both the physical building and student behavior, support for character education slowly began to grow. The results of a follow-up survey administered two years later showed that about 86% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that the school was a safe working environment—up from 71% in the original survey. Now 71% agreed or strongly agreed that most classes were orderly and free of disruption—up from 67%.

## **Establishing a New Context for Character Development**

### **Keep It Simple**

Character education may be most effective when it is approached one step at a time. Be selective about your content. Select one thing to work on. Limit your goals to one or two each year. Commit to a plan

and stick with it. Then evaluate your progress before moving on to another target. Many benefits will result from mastering one challenge successfully. The organization, cooperation, time management, and communication skills developed from focusing on one simple goal has transferability to the next priority. Once the goal is reached, then you must keep coming back to it over and over again to ensure that your efforts will be sustained. Move ahead slowly and keep things simple.

### Make It Real

The Huntsville High School story is about context. We focused our character education efforts on the physical environment because that's what our staff said was important to them. Students did not respect their environment. Vandalism and graffiti were common place. The results of another survey administered to staff, students, and parents in 2007 continued to identify the physical environment as a priority. It's no surprise. As hard as we have worked at making changes to the physical plant, the reality is that the school is over 60 years old, and individuals tend to perceive it in a negative light.

Character development can be achieved in your school or classroom by addressing the real issues. For example, if you are a teacher and rudeness and disrespectful behavior are an issue in your classroom, then creating rules and procedures for civility might be the focus of your character development efforts with your students. Your goal will be to develop respect for self and others in your students. If you are a school principal and there are behavior issues in the common areas of the school, then being visible and modeling good behavior throughout the hallways could be your focus for changing the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of staff and students. These strategies do not require expensive resources. However, they do require a fundamental understanding of the concepts described in this book.

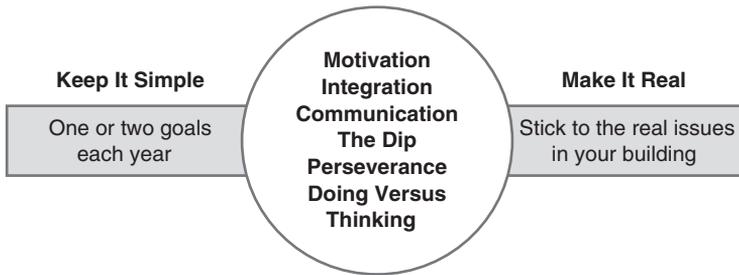
### Principles of Action

Figure 1.1, Principles of Action, illustrates the relationship between the two theoretical concepts, "keep it simple" and "make it real," and six principles that support living, learning, and leading in harmony.



A woodpecker can tap 20 times on a thousand trees and get nowhere, but stay busy. Or he can tap 20 thousand times on one tree and get dinner.

—Seth Godin (2007)

**Figure 1.1** Principles of Action**Principle 1: Motivation**

You are highly educated. Your skill set is growing each day in response to your experiences in the field of education. However, are you motivated to use your knowledge and skills to live, learn, and lead in harmony with the day-to-day realities of the modern school environment. In the *Disciplined Mind*, Howard Gardner (1999) concludes that the most successful individuals in life, be it in business or education, rely on motivation to a higher degree than aptitude to achieve success. Educating to develop good character in your students goes beyond academia. It requires having desire, a strong belief, and a clear mental picture of what you want your students to learn beyond reading, writing, and mathematics.

**Principle 2: Integration**

All behavior will repeat itself over and over unless an effort is made to connect an individual's experience with the world in which they must function. If you and your colleagues do not challenge yourselves and your students to look at relationships with others in a different way, then everyone's behavior will remain the same. Mark Nepo, in his book *Facing the Lion, Being the Lion* (2007), suggests that "we do not have the luxury of sitting this one out." You need to join together with your students. If not, you will only become increasingly more disconnected from the reality of working with kids. Nepo goes on to say that "there is rarely a neutral place in between." You are either moving ahead or hiding.

**Principle 3: Communication**

Communication will be emphasized in each chapter of this book. Your word creates all of the interactions among the stakeholders in

your school. What you say can empower or destroy another individual's confidence, sense of well-being, and self-worth. In *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz (1997) discusses the fertile nature of the human mind "where seeds are continually being planted." He reminds us that "the seeds are opinions, ideas, and concepts." When speaking to a student or fellow colleague, choose your words wisely.

#### **Principle 4: The Dip**

"Almost everything in life worth doing is controlled by the dip" (Godin, 2007). Most initiatives bring positive results in the beginning and then lose effectiveness as time goes on. Muscular strength training is the classic example where early gains in strength are realized over the first three to six weeks of training. The rest of the improvement in muscular strength will take years.

Students respond positively to changes in their environment over short periods of time. My experience has been that the same three- to six-week cycle applies to positive changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Initially, students appear to demonstrate growth in their character. However, without ongoing opportunity to practice good character, and positive reinforcement, students slip backwards into their old patterns of behavior.

#### **Principle 5: Perseverance**

A former principal of mine, Leo Robinson, once told me that "the short road is the long road." Character development is a lifelong process. Changes in an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are realized over many years of life experiences and reflection. When you make the commitment to teach good character in students you must commit to the process, not the outcome. You may never see the outcome of your efforts during the time that the student is in school. However, you must persevere.

#### **Principle 6: Doing Versus Thinking**

Stephen Covey (2004) describes success as a three-step process: knowing, committing, and doing. If you don't reach the third step, the doing part, the first two steps don't matter. In your school environment you spend a great deal of your time encouraging and practicing the art of thinking. However, adolescents don't work that way. They try things first and then learn from their experiences. The simplest way to approach character development is to reduce the amount of thinking

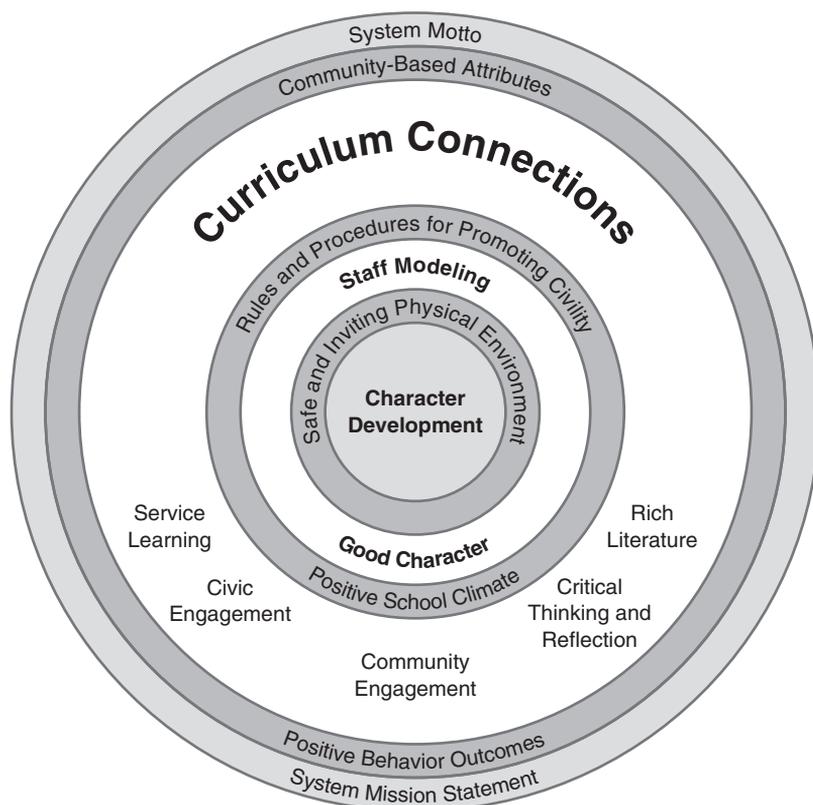
time and spend more time committing to doing something, no matter how small of a step it may be. Change only occurs with change.

## A CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOLS

### The Components of the Framework

Figure 1.2, Character Development Framework for Schools, illustrates a conceptual framework for schools developed by the Character Development Committee of the Trillium Lakelands District School Board in Ontario.

**Figure 1.2** Character Development Framework for Schools



Source: Trillium Lakelands District School Board, Ontario, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

The framework provides a spatial representation of all the layers of character development that a school can implement. If you take a moment to list the activities your district or school have undertaken, you will quickly see that each one may be placed inside one or more of the circles of the framework. Here are some examples of how it is working at Huntsville High School. Our school has used the display of student art work to help create a *safe and inviting physical environment*. Our Take the Five Minute Challenge campaign encouraged *staff modeling good character* by asking teachers to get to their classrooms five minutes before the students arrive. To establish *rules and procedures for promoting civility*, our code of conduct was revised to reflect the responsible use of technology in the building, particularly cell phones. For *curriculum connections*, our hospitality and tourism students run a soup kitchen for individuals in the community as part of their course curriculum and service learning.

The second most outer ring of the framework is where your attributes identified by your community go. They represent the desired outcomes for each individual's character development. The most outer ring is where your school district's motto goes.

## Understanding the Context

Take a closer look at the positioning of each circle. At the core is your target, character development. On the outside are the virtues, the behavioral outcomes resulting from your character education program that focuses on character development. Between the target and the outer circle are the key strategies that promote and nurture character development. Where should you start?

The framework has been structured on the basis of a series of foundations, starting in the center with the most fundamental components that address the most basic needs of the child. You may choose to start your character education program with an event, such as an assembly, that promotes respect. This is a valuable and meaningful activity. However, unless staff model good character by speaking to students in a respectful manner, the message in the assembly will be lost. As part of your history curriculum, you may have the students study tolerance for diversity. Ensuring that the school has a

*safe and inviting physical environment*, where students can move about free from bullying, intimidation, and harassment, will also promote tolerance for diversity.

The first three rings of the framework, safe and inviting physical environments, staff modeling good character, and rules and procedures for promoting civility, create a character development threshold. Students can't learn unless they feel safe in their environment, have adult role models they can look up to, and buy into a set of rules that makes their school a safe, civil, and fair place to be. Giving priority to the first three rings will ensure that the school is safe and civil and that everyone values the importance of meaningful relationships.

In Chapters 2 through 5, I will outline an action plan for each of the four inner rings of the model, safe and inviting physical environment, staff modeling, rules and procedures for promoting civility, and curriculum connections. The fifth ring identifies the attributes selected as target virtues by your wider community. Your school or school district may select any number of virtues as a priority. They will be your outcomes resulting from the comprehensive model described in this book.

## **SOME FINAL THOUGHTS**

You cannot insulate your school and therefore your students from the surrounding community, country, or rest of the world. You will likely be challenged by your students to give yourself some kind of a reality check. At their disposal is uncensored access to information to assist them with dealing with a complexity of issues over which you have limited control. Therein lays the challenge of developing good character in your students.

The character development strategies that you choose to adopt, whether they involve an event, program, project, or model, will need to be simple, sustainable, and relevant to the students' world. And though there isn't a wide body of research to support a focus on character education, you know that success in living, learning, and leading is a reflection of individuals, groups, and organizations working in harmony and demonstrating good character.

## QUOTES

---

*While we live in a complex world it doesn't mean we have to lead complicated lives. But often we do just that because we spend too much of our time struggling with life's complexities while ignoring its simplicities.*

—Hal Urban (2003),  
*Life's Greatest Lessons: 20 Things That Matter*

*What we won't face or express moves into our hands as a compulsion to speak itself through our actions: a sad and empty teacher painting a sad and empty world for his students.*

—Mark Nepo (2007),  
*Facing the Lion, Being the Lion*

*Harmonize your actions with the way life is.*

—Epictetus,  
quoted in Sharon Lebell's (1995) *The Art of Living*