

COUNCIL FOR SPIRITUAL  
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## ABOUT CSEE

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The Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education supports the moral and spiritual development of young people through offering resources and educational opportunities to elementary, middle, and secondary schools. See more about our work at [www.csee.org](http://www.csee.org)

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## KIDS INTO ETHICAL LEADERS: A NINE-POINT PARADIGM

BY DAVID STREIGHT

A new generation of ethical leaders. Young people with keen intellects, finely honed academic skills, and a desire to use those skills in the formation of communities, and a world where fairness, justice, and kindness permeate all daily interactions and transactions. Is this not what we—all our schools—are here for?

CSEE's *Connections* readers over the past two years know that our goal of developing ethical leadership for tomorrow is attainable. Not only is the goal attainable, it can be sought with no detriment to the academic components of our programs. Not only is there no detriment: ample evidence shows that the quest for ethical leadership may even increase the quality of our academic programs.

We propose nine expert-endorsed, state-of-the-art-thinking standards for school approaches to excellence in ethical development (i.e., moral development, character education, depending on the language a school prefers), and some fine-tuning thereafter to focus on the specific goal of leadership. The more of these standards we can cover, the more successful we will be in achieving our goals. School self-audits or community discussions on the topic are great places to start. The time is well spent, and everyone is the winner.

- **Is ethical growth explicit in school's mission?**

If not in the mission itself (some of us are living with lofty Latin expressions from our schools' founders), is the school's commitment to the development of ethical life prominently visible on the school's Web site and in the school's promotional literature? Ideally, the message of the mission and promotional literature is regularly articulated by key figures in the school: administrators, certainly, as well as coaches, teachers, community-service directors, and a host of others.

- **Have school trustees affirmed, and do they demonstrate, their support of the school's stance on the development of ethical life?**

Trustee concern for excellent academics is a must. Trustee pressure to increase testing scores or other measures, on the other hand, runs the risk of collateral damage, including emphasis on knowledge rather than skills, cheating scandals, and diminished quality in teamwork (academic and otherwise). A recent study by NAIS and IGE cited the benefit to excellence in schools of trustees who focus on being the "moral compass" for the institution (Mirk, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

- **Is some individual or group at the school designated to oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the school's program for ethical development?**

Caveat: there is a difference between putting the responsibility for moral climate on an individual or group and designating someone to be a resource and progress tracker, and to keep the ball rolling. In the former case, a host of people at school feel they have the right to step aside, saying, "That's a character issue, Norman should do it." In the latter case, at least 80% of the members of the community will attempt to address the issue as best they can, and then check with Norman to see if he has other ideas or resources to help continue addressing the issue.

The planning/oversight group helps share information, distill and clarify ideas, plan broader school initiatives, and evaluate successes (and apparent failures), thus making it easier for individual staff members to perform their academic, moral growth, and other responsibilities.

- **Are the school's goals for moral/character develop-**

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ment explicit?

Many schools have broad desires for honor, respect, and responsibility. They feel like failures when words of vandalism, harassment, and cheating scandals reach the community newspaper. But are they successful if this does not happen? What do we mean by respect? Can we articulate it for our students? Can we offer them a dozen examples of what respect looks like in the daily life of the school, and in daily life outside the school? Do we have a way to know if we are making progress? If we are aware of thirteen examples of disrespect per week at school, are we making progress or losing ground? If

The more of these standards we can strive to implement, the greater will be our success in setting up climates and conditions where young people can shape their innate capacities into the leadership skills our world so desperately needs. The time is well spent, and everyone is the winner: academically, socially, emotionally, and—in the true sense of the word—politically.

we do not know the answers to some of these questions, our students probably do not either. And it is they who need to carry the reverence of respect beyond the confines of the school campus and into their future lives.

• Does the school have a planned approach for its

program to foster ethical/moral life?

A planned approach is a multifaceted and multi-tiered strategy. Beyond other issues addressed specifically here (administrative support, definition of goals, etc.) a planned approach means that a school has taken at least a little time to address how goals are to be worked on. How can a head show backing of goals for ethical excellence? (By reminding faculty and staff, by columns written in parent newsletters, in part.) A monthly assembly is not an approach, but it may be part of an approach. Assemblies can heighten awareness, teach, and laud successes; a planned approach deals with what happens between assemblies.

• Are school personnel trained, educated, or otherwise

in the process of professional development to be up-to-date on issues of moral/ethical development/character education as they relate to the school's goals?

The fact is that the smaller the number of adults “on board” at school, the less the school will be successful in achieving goals. Conversely, the more faculty and staff have had input into selection of goals and strategies, and the more they feel comfortable with what is being asked of them to help with the development of ethical leadership, the greater are the chances that they will witness transformations in the students under their care. Our teachers are trained to teach third grade, United States history, chemistry, or health; many are not trained in how to teach moral reasoning skills or how to foster empathy while they are teaching. It can be done!

• Is the school's approach to the development of ethical life integrated into the curriculum?

This point devolves from two points above, but is significant enough that it needs to stand by itself. What top-quality moral development (the foundation of an ethical leader) rests on is four building blocks: the development of the conscience, of an altruistic attitude, of empathy, and of moral reasoning skills. Every minute and every interaction in the school day counts, but most of a student's time is spent in, and most interactions take place in the powerful context of, our classrooms.

• Are parents included in the school's goals for the development of ethical life?

At a minimum, parents are included through regular information about the school's goals and how the goals will be achieved, and about how they can work in tandem with the school. Much more can be done—including parent participation in the formation of goals, using the skills and expertise some parents have that fit with our goals—although admittedly the amount and kind of parent participation depends on resources and time available at school. Like so many other issues, many schools have found out that the time they spent was returned many times in positive results.

• Are students able to articulate, even if imperfectly,

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## THE MORAL OF THE STORY: AN INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Nina Rosenstand

NEW YORK: MCGRAW HILL, 2005

BY RICHARD BARBIERI

No, gentle reader, your faithful reviewer is not suffering from memory loss. The prior issue of *Connections* did indeed review a book of this same name and genre. But a search on Amazon revealed this second textbook, giving teachers a choice of approaches to the same goal.

Rosenstand's book parallels the Singers' *Moral of the Story* in its heft—over 700 pages—and in its conviction that “discussions about moral issues can be facilitated using stories as examples, as a form of ethics lab where solutions can be tried out under controlled conditions.” The books differ, however, in several key ways.

Rosenstand asserts that “it is better for students to be introduced to basic ethical theory before they are plunged into discussions involving moral judgments.” Her book, therefore, provides an enormous amount of background information on ethical history, current ethical theory, and the branches of ethical thought, divided first into Ethics of Conduct and Virtue Ethics and then into a myriad of sub-heads, from ethical relativism and universalism to utilitarianism, deontology, rights theory, and so forth. In fact, well over 60 per cent of the book is in Rosenstand's words, rather than in primary sources, leaving far fewer speakers to be heard in their own voices than in the Singer collection.

These “textbook” sections are well-executed: they assume little prior knowledge on a student's part and should be accessible to most older high school students, as well as to the college classes for which the book was designed. They come as close as possible to being exhaustive, spanning the field from pre-philosophic ethical issues expressed in myth and ritual to the most recent hot-button issues—not only abortion and euthanasia but 9/11, Chinese tainted foods, and the death of Pat Tillman. Rosenstand also introduces her readers to many lesser-known contemporary thinkers, especially women. Finally, she is strenuously impartial in her commentaries on the strengths and weaknesses of many

popular theories, such as ethical relativism, without committing herself to, or pressing on her students, a particular ethic. (Like the Singers, she spends little or no time on a religious approach to ethics, but without comment, either positive or negative.)

The source material itself, divided into two categories—Primary Reading and Narrative—although including passages from Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Hobbes, Bentham, Mill, and Locke, among other philosophers, is rather scanty in actual story texts. (However, over 60 pages are devoted to the theory of why we should learn from stories.) Even more disappointing, at least to the English teacher turned ethicist, is her focus on film: the majority of the Narratives are summaries of movies, and most others are also summaries, with occasional excerpts, of print texts, even though she concedes in her preface that “from a literary and artistic point of view, summaries and excerpts do not do the originals justice.”

The film choices cover an enormous range, from *Schindler's List* and *A Man for All Seasons* to *Shrek* and *The Truman Show*. Although a few, such as *Pulp Fiction*, are out of bounds for school use, no teacher could ever cover the more than 30 films suggested. Instructors will be more likely to assign for reading several of the longer literary works which are suggested, together with two or three films.

Indeed, *The Moral of the Story* may work best as a teacher's source book, rather than a text for the whole class—and at a price of \$82, the library's budget may be the only one large enough to absorb the cost. ✨

*Richard Barbieri, after seven interim headships, is giving himself a well-deserved sabbatical this school year to read and relax, write and reflect. He can be contacted at richarde.barbieri@gmail.com.*

what the school's goals for moral and ethical development are?

Student behavior is where the proverbial rubber hits the road. The chances of our observing certain behaviors, and of not observing other behaviors, increase dramatically when students are aware of what the behaviors in question are. We must be clear; this is not a case of "we've taught them," unless "we've taught them" means "they can articulate what we've taught them." Or better, "they can teach others what we've taught them."

• **Does the school have in place a plan to evaluate and fine-tune levels of success in its program?**

Good programs do not become excellent programs unless they are periodically evaluated. Some of our strategies may need adjusting after we begin implementing them. Occasionally a strategy may need to be scrapped, or replaced by something else. Some of our plans will meet with success beyond our expectations. Unfortunately, an objective view of where we are successful, where we are partially successful, and where we are unsuccessful is not possible without measurement of some kind, even if relatively informal. Measurement is not always fun, but it is a necessity if we are to be responsible about our endeavors.

To get from a community where ethical life is respected as the norm to a community where leadership potential becomes a reality entails but a few short further steps. We do want to teach our students about looking toward the future, about the skills of both inspiring and empowering others, about validating the contributions of others; and we want to help them develop the courage to challenge themselves and those with them.

As noted above, the more of these standards we can strive to implement, the greater will be our success in setting up climates and conditions where young people can shape their innate capacities into the leadership skills our world so needs. The time is well spent, and everyone is the winner: academically, socially, emotionally, and—in the true sense of the word—politically. ✨

<sup>1</sup><http://www.nais.org/ismagazinearticlePrint.cfm?print=Y&ItemNumber=149918>

## CSEE CHARACTER AWARD APPLICATIONS DUE FEB. 10

This spring, CSEE will award a total of \$100,000 to six schools to develop or fine-tune their initiatives for character education. Three awards (\$30,000, \$20,000, and \$10,000) will be made to schools that are starting out new on a program. An additional three (\$20,000 and two of \$10,000) will be granted to schools with existing character education programs that are making important adjustments.

Award applications are due February 10. These awards are made possible through a generous foundation grant, in the hope both that an increasing number of schools will make their ethical standards as high as their academic standards and, of course, that they will make concerted efforts to give students all the tools available in schools to meet these ethical standards.

Announcement of winners will be made by April 21.

For further information, suggestions, and application materials see [www.csee.org/awards](http://www.csee.org/awards) ✨

WHAT TANGLED WEBS WE LEAVE

As part of a new year's resolution, I decided that the classroom in which I teach religion and ethics to high school students was bare and needed creative revival in its decor.

Over the years, I have posted an occasional photo or map, but in general, I have neglected to use the walls and windows as part of the curriculum. It has taken me years to realize that the central faculty for faith in the human person is the imagination. And reviving this inspired faculty which is begotten not made in the soul of a young person takes every creative rescue effort possible. Meritocracies that traffic in materialism deaden the imagination. The high-risk behavior of young people everywhere cries out the truth that they are searching for social and sensory experiences that transcend transcripts. Like any venue of sport, music, or art, the religion and ethics classroom must be a place not just of intellectual considerations but also of concerted practice, experimentation, and creative expression. And it must be the student who is practicing, experimenting, and expressing.

And so I engaged all my classes to create tissue paper "stained glass" windows. This required that each class take long strips of cellophane paper, cut hundreds of pieces of colored tissue paper, glue them in place, and then run the long collages of color through a laminator to create exquisite coverings for our classroom windows. Perhaps you would imagine this kind of project working best with younger children, but I can tell you that my twelfth graders were enthralled with joy and energy in the project. The first college process-worn senior boy who walked into class for our first day of working picked up a glue stick, looked intently at it, and sighed, "God, I have missed glue."

It goes without saying that this kind of creative student-driven project achieved all the goals of the mission statement of any spiritual school. The final products were naturally and gracefully multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious in colors, images, and ideas.

And the theological lesson burst beautifully through like light through genuine stained glass: we are given gifts not to create life and light, but in humility, gratitude, and hope we are called to shape and to color the life and light of the world.

But while we are in the middle of a column about enlightenment, I need to include a confession about this collage project. Although I rail endlessly in columns, in pulpits, and in cafes about the tragic obsession of many parents and schools with perfectionism, I admit struggling to stop myself

from intervening in the student decisions about their stained-glass creations while they were being made. I caught myself—many times—secretly supplementing students' piles of paper pieces to vary colors or make shapes for them so that

"others" who visited "my" room would be impressed by the final products. I was forgetting that the goal of any authentic spiritual exercise is for students to own the process so that they will also own the spiritual growth. It took this exercise to remind me that the classroom committed to students' spiritual growth is their classroom, and that the colors and shapes of the communion should be as playfully inscrutable, tangled, and beautiful as the souls of young people. ✨

The central faculty for faith in the human person is the imagination. And reviving this inspired faculty which is begotten not made in the soul of a young person takes every creative rescue effort possible....

The goal of any authentic spiritual exercise is that students own the process so that they will own the spiritual growth.

*Patricia Lyons, D.Min., teaches religion and ethics and is Director of Service Learning at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, Virginia. She may be reached at [plyons@ssas.org](mailto:plyons@ssas.org).*

## A SERVANT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

A world rapidly shrinking, a globalizing “Hot, Flat, and Crowded” world replete with moral ambiguities and an apparent dearth of quality, value-based leadership, would certainly seem to cry out for a new generation of leaders trained in a different, more ethically based model of leadership.

The news of corporate leaders risking investors’ money to reap greater personal gain or the sight of automotive CEOs needing to be chastened for flying private jets before they drive a hybrid car to Washington to beg their

The opportunities for leadership abound as every club, every activity in the school is student developed and directed. The Student Senate, a dozen juniors, literally manages every non-academic, non-athletic student activity—all clubs, dances, assemblies, retreats, service projects, and so forth—utilizing the student Congress; this Student Senate is comprised of at least one representative from each of the advisement groups and meets weekly. All decisions are made by consensus.

government to give them citizen monies to support their distress would seem to confirm the need for a leadership paradigm shift to a style focused not on self-aggrandizement and personal gain but on timeless values and the Common Good.

This need for a new generation of servants as leaders becomes the driving force for schools to rethink

and reform their training of student leaders. If we are to educate this new generation of servant leaders then it will be necessary to see leadership training as we see everything else we teach, which is as a primary piece of the curriculum, holistic and programmatic in approach and available to every student in our schools.

The Summit Country Day School in Cincinnati, Ohio is one school working over the past decade to fine tune such a holistic, programmatic model. The school’s

mission statement speaks to the ideal of its community growing “in grace and wisdom” to become “people of character who will improve the world they inherit.”

A student leadership program in this model is best implemented in a thoroughly integrated manner. Nearly every student-related activity becomes another venue for teaching and practicing the servant-as-leader model. The belief that every student can be a leader in some area at some time with the proper “tool box” of leadership skills in their possession is also a central premise of this model.

The foundation of the program is the school’s advisory system, as it is the nexus to all other student leadership activities. Every member of the faculty and administration serves as an advisor and every student entering the school as a ninth grader is randomly placed in one of the advisement groups. This group is together every day for all four years and becomes a “school family” in many ways. The group sits together at all activities, meets daily for announcements, does service work together, is together on retreats and trips, and basically functions as a base for all activities.

Leadership, especially servant leadership, is all about having the will to serve, the opportunities to apply that desire and the skill set—the tool box of leadership skills—to do so effectively. The training piece begins early with two ninth-grade leadership workshops, conducted by a senior leadership training team. These workshops and the two trainings done with all tenth graders build that leadership tool box of skills and competencies necessary to the servant-as-leader including group dynamics, communication, decision-making, and consensus building, to mention a few. Additionally, every tenth and eleventh grader takes a course (required for graduation) on Leadership for the 21st Century, in which both leadership theory and further skill training are taught and practiced.

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See additional details, including holy days for the month of January, at [www.csee.org](http://www.csee.org)



FOUNDED IN 1898

### March 1 Saint David of Wales (Christianity)

Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, was a church official who lived during the sixth century. It is said that he lived for 100 years, in which he founded many churches and monasteries, and was celebrated for his teaching and preaching. His saying, "Do the little things in life," is a well-known Welsh phrase.

### Intercalary Days conclude (Baha'i)

In the Baha'i tradition, the Intercalary Days that run from February 26 to March 1 are days in preparation for the Baha'i fast. They are celebrated with hospitality, charity, and gift-giving.

### March 2 Clean Monday/Lent (Orthodox Christianity)

For Orthodox Christians, Lent begins on this day, the seventh Monday before Easter. Also known as "Clean Monday," the day is spent leaving behind sinful attitudes and non-fasting foods, which must then be abstained from for the duration of Lent. These 40 days of Lent, which mirror Jesus' 40-day retreat into the desert, are spent in prayer, penitence, and self-denial, to prepare for the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### March 9 Mawlid al-Nabi (Islam)

Mawlid al-Nabi means "the birth of the Prophet." This day celebrates the birthday of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. In some Muslim circles, the day is spent reciting litanies and with special sermons, recognizing religious dignitaries, giving gifts, and feasting.

### March 10 Purim (Judaism)

Purim is a Jewish festival that recognizes the deliverance of the Persian Jews from destruction during the reign of King Ahasuerus. This story, recorded in the book of Esther, is read aloud in synagogues on Purim, and adults and children often wear costumes commemorating the characters. Families also exchange gifts and eat special foods.

### March 11 Holi (Hinduism)

Holi is a Hindu spring festival, celebrated in India, Guyana, Trinidad, and Nepal. Also known as the "festival of colors," Holi is a lively, two-day celebration. The first day is spent burning huge bonfires to represent the burning of the demon Holika, as told in Hindu mythology. On the second day, people throw water and colored powder on each other, as a symbol of medicine and good health.

### Hola Mohalla (Sikhism)

A week-long celebration that often coincides with the Sikh new year, Hola Mohalla was started by Guru Gobind Singh as a day of mock battles and poetry. Today, those who celebrate the festival often camp out, watch demonstrations of fighting and bravery, and listen to music and poetry. The day is concluded with a military-style procession.

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March 17

### St. Patrick's Day (Christianity)

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was credited with spreading Christianity and abolishing pagan practices in Ireland in the fourth century. Today, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated worldwide with large parades, Irish-themed food and drink, and wearing of the color green. The symbol of the shamrock is often associated with St. Patrick's Day, as Patrick is said to have used the three leaves to explain the mystery of the Christian doctrine of three "persons" (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) in but one God.

March 21, Vernal Equinox

### Nowruz (Persian Zoroastrianism)

Nowruz is the celebration of the Iranian new year, and marks the first day of spring. On this day, Persian families wear new clothing, visit each other's homes, give gifts, and act kindly, as it is said that when someone acts well on Nowruz, it will affect him or her positively for the entire year. Likewise, any fights or ill-temper on Nowruz will result in a poor year.

### Naw Ruz (Baha'i)

Similar to the Zoroastrian Nowruz described above, this day is the celebration of the new year as adopted by Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i faith. The equinox is believed to be a symbol of the manifestations of God, and springtime to be the carrier of new life and new beginnings.

March 25

### Annunciation of the Virgin Mary (Christianity)

This day commemorates the angel Gabriel's announcement to the Virgin Mary that she would bear a child, Jesus. The feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary is celebrated with prayers and church services.

March 26

Khordad Sal

### (Zoroastrianism)

Khordad Sal is the birthday celebration of Prophet Zarathustra, the founder of Zoroastrianism. Considered to be one of the most important holidays on the Zoroastrian calendar, the day is spent feasting, wearing new clothes, displaying fresh flowers, and gathering in fire temples for prayers. ✨

## EDUCATING FOR LEADERSHIP CONTINUED FROM P. 6

The opportunities for leadership abound as every club, every activity in the school is student developed and directed. The Student Senate, a dozen juniors elected in February of that year and serving until February of their senior year, literally manages every non-academic, non-athletic student activity—all clubs, dances, assemblies, retreats, service projects, and so forth—utilizing the student Congress; this Student Senate is comprised of at least one representative from each of the advisement groups and meets weekly. All decisions are made by consensus following considerable and open communication through advisements and the Congress with the whole school.

This brief description of a complex program would be incomplete without stressing the need of a school-wide commitment to character and leadership development shared by administration, faculty, parents, and students, as that is essential to success. And most certainly the school leader must be the primary spokesperson and advocate for this program, as he or she is for the ideal that teaching academics without the moral development component simply ignores the problems we see today. The examples of failed leaders who are little more than well-educated crooks and who do little to serve the Common Good offer lessons we should learn for the future. ✿

*Thomas G. Monaco, Ph.D., recently retired as upper school principal at Summit Country Day School in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has been both a member of CSEE's spiritual development team and a presenter at CSEE's workshops on developing student leadership.*

## PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT

### *Good Things to Do: Expert Suggestions for Fostering Goodness in Kids*

CSEE Publications, 2009

Member Price: \$7

Others: \$12

(discount of \$1 per copy for orders of 10 or more copies)

For this publication, CSEE asked a host of national experts in child development, moral growth, nurturing the spirit and related fields to offer their top suggestions for educators (in the case of some writers) and parents (in the case of others). The question posed was this: If you could pick four or five things that, if implemented, would make a real difference in children's lives for creation of a better world for tomorrow, what would they be?

The many suggestions offered were characterized by remarkable uniformity, and what should be a key message for independent schools regarding what they can, and should do, for the creation of climates that will foster goodness in the citizens of tomorrow's world.

Contributors include character educators Tom Lickona, Matthew Davidson, and Marvin Berkowitz; child development and moral growth researchers Nancy Eisenberg and Judith Smetana; Interfaith Youth Core director Eboo Patel; NAIS president Patrick Bassett; and authors Hal Urban and Clifton Taulbert, among others. ✿

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## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

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### MAY 2009

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### JUNE 2009

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### Honor Codes and Honor Councils

This conference will help school teams (consisting of students and adults) both to implement new programs and to improve existing ones. Honor is more than just a code and a council; to be effective, schools should work toward a strong, integrated honor system.

With John Roberts, Ph.D., co-author of *A Handbook for Developing and Sustaining Honor Systems*  
February 6-8, 2009  
Louise S. McGehee School  
New Orleans, Louisiana

### Chaplains Conference

Co-sponsored with NAES, the National Association of Episcopal Schools. The event is for chaplains (and teachers of religion) of all faiths and denominations. This weekend is a combination retreat, learning, and resource-sharing experience.  
With Paula Lawrence Wehmiller, Rev. Daniel Heischman, David Streight  
February 10-12, 2009  
New York, New York

### CSEE Experienced Teacher Workshop

By application only, for teachers of world religions. This year's focus will be on Hinduism and teaching the *Ramayana*, and methodological/pedagogical discussion with Arti Dhand, Ph.D.

### Developing Student Leaders

Directors of model programs for developing student leadership in middle and upper schools will present their programs, and discuss similarities and differences with other school endeavors to develop strong student leaders.  
April 17-18, 2009  
Colorado Academy  
Denver, Colorado

### 2009 Institute on Teaching the World's Religions

This year's focus will be on Buddhism and Islam, but with lots more, too. Get new ideas and deepen understanding with nationally recognized scholars, and share resources with world religions teachers from independent schools across the country.  
With Christian Wedemeyer, Ph.D. and Asma Afsaruddin, Ph.D.  
June 25-29, 2009  
Chicago, Illinois

### 2009 Summer Adult Ethics Institute

A perennial favorite, the Adult Ethics Institute invites school teachers, administrators, and trustees to discuss meaningful pieces of fiction and nonfiction, as well as ethical case studies from real situations in independent schools. Based on the enthusiastic recommendation of participants in 2007, this year's institute will return to the relaxed natural beauty of the Whidbey Institute in Washington state's Puget Sound.  
With Dan Heishman  
July 18-23, 2009  
Whidbey Island  
Clinton, Washington

### Evaluating Character Education Programs

A CSEE "Working with the Best" event  
With Edward de Roche, Ph.D.  
October 2009 date TBA  
San Diego, California 🌸

## ON BASKETBALL AND THE MORAL GROWTH OF A SCHOOL

Corlen Country Day hired Casey Crocker this past fall, as a part time history teacher with added duties as head coach for boys basketball and go-to person for the “moral life” component of the school’s mission.

The school’s athletic program has always been relatively good, depending on the year and the makeup of the student body. The boys made it to the league semi-finals two years ago, but last year—even with three of their five starters returning—they lost two important games (one by two points, one by three) at a pivotal point of the season. But the Corlen student body is a healthy one: strong, strapping kids and—from what Casey was told—a number of parents have semi-pro and even pro athletics in their backgrounds. So not a lot of work would be needed for a top program.

Given Casey’s background—and experience—in moral education, the school head seized this opportunity to identify him as the “point person” for an area that had—like basketball—always had promise.

In both domains, Casey took the bull by the horns. Starting the first week of school, he gathered groups of parents, faculty, and students together to talk about basketball and make some plans about what they would like to see happen. Having a better team than ever, and having the boys feel good about the team, were the two primary goals, approved by a wide range of constituents.

From the athletic department budget, Casey purchased several copies of the two best basketball books on the market, one being the inspirational story of one of basketball’s greatest figures, and the other the well-respected *Big Book of Basketball Plays and Strategies*. Each player got a copy of both titles in the fall, to be read by November 1.

Casey managed to arrange for two additional whole-school pep rallies during the season, and to bump the cheerleading squad up by two members; a greater, more balanced presence. Having the whole school involved is a key factor in a successful team.

Of the four practice sessions per week, two were devoted to discussion of the books. Monday was inspiration day, on which one player was appointed to lead a discussion on one of the chapters. Wednesdays were for the *Big Book*, when a different player either led a discussion or prepared a multi-media presentation on a favorite strategy or play.

A third practice every week was devoted exclusively to free throws. All six backboards in the gym were lowered and in use for the entire practice. Six players shot for 15 minutes, then stood under the basket to retrieve balls for the next 15-minute shift before returning to the free-throw line. (The two big games lost last season would have come out differently had a greater percentage of free throws been sunk.) Though some criticized the little practice time remaining to exercise what they called “the skills of basketball as a team,” the prevailing wisdom was that the squad had sufficient natural talent that the added inspiration and new focus should be fine.

As a final morale builder and strategy, “Catch’em Shootin’ Baskets” tickets were printed, cut, and distributed to both faculty and staff. When adults saw any junior varsity or varsity player shooting baskets outside during lunch or between classes, a ticket was promptly given. Tickets could also be administered for jumping inside the school, provided that the hands were above the head when the jump took place (one exception: no jumping in Hall A, with its questionable floor joists). At the end of the month, all the stickers were put into a box and one lucky winner took home a coupon for a free pizza.

A later column may be devoted to a description of Corlen’s moral development initiatives, but they are similarly focused. Watch here later this spring for results from Corlen Country Day’s basketball season. The results should be of interest! ✿

David Streight