

COUNCIL FOR SPIRITUAL
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ABOUT CSEE

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

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FIRST STEPS: PUTTING QUALITY IN MORAL GROWTH

BY SUSAN BAUSKA AND MIKE PARDEE

A park sign in Cortland, New York reads: “Welcome Home!” Churches and schools dot the landscape. Waitresses work late to accommodate visitors, and shuttle bus drivers pause to assure themselves that pedestrians have chosen to walk rather than ride.

So it makes sense that some of the most important research on character is conducted at Cortland’s campus of the State University of New York. Dr. Thomas Lickona and Dr. Matthew Davidson are, respectively, Director and Research Director for the Center for the 4th and 5th R’s (i.e., Respect and Responsibility), and authors of *Smart and Good High Schools*, a source book for research and ideas about “integrating excellence and ethics for success in school, work, and beyond.”

At CSEE’s most recent “Working with the Best” event in the series of trainings for effective moral development in independent schools, Lickona and Davidson took participants on a tour through the key points of quality moral-development programs by opening their “big bin” of best practices for character education; each idea in the bin is aligned with theory and practice.

Character, the authors note, is the essential attribute required for success in school and life. It is character that helps individuals become both smart and good: performance character entails excellence in achievements, while moral character refers to being ethical in relationships and citizenship. We ought not to have one without the other, Lickona and Davidson say: it is dangerous to be smart without also being good, and useless to be good without being smart.

School cultures that are conducive to character development require that both moral character and performance character be addressed. The visual image Lickona and Davidson use to convey this idea is a ball. Taoism’s yin-yang symbol is another compelling meta-

phor for the interdependence of moral and performance character.

Lickona and Davidson suggest the following first steps in creating schools that exercise both intellectual and ethical muscles:

Develop a school-wide touchstone: In *Good to Great*, author Jim Collins notes that the most successful companies and organizations express the ethos of their culture through a touchstone phrase, a creed or way of being. Schools can and should do this, too. Begin with an examination of the school’s mission statement. Deconstruct the mission: look for the core values (stated and implied) embedded within it. Ask: do those values emphasize development of *both* performance character and moral character? What is the “way” that both characterizes and distinguishes our school as a school of character? Work with all school constituencies to ensure support and authenticity; take the time to develop a valid touchstone against which all community members can measure and evaluate their own and others’ behaviors.

Engage faculty, staff, students, and parents in developing a compact for excellence: Any smart and good school’s sense of purpose must be shared by all within the community, especially teachers, students, and parents. Students and teachers must be clear with one another about expectations within classrooms. Faculty members need to define how they will work with one another to do their best work and treat one another with respect and care. Of critical importance as well, parents should be invited to become active partners in helping students pursue ethical excellence. Schools most successful in fostering a culture of character create explicit compacts or contracts with parents to work together to support expectations regarding integrity and behavior.

Create a culture of excellence: In *An Ethic of Excellence*, Ron Berger makes the case that all students, whatever their abilities or background, have the potential to do excellent work. “What most inspires students to care,” Berger notes, “is the experience of excellence.” Lickona and Davidson offer five pedagogical practices to move schools toward cultures of excellence. Teachers need to assign work that matters; students need opportunities to study examples of excellence. Formal feedback sessions build a culture-of-caring critique that is essential for improving students’ and teachers’ work. Teachers should encourage—and require—multiple revisions, and the school must provide frequent opportunities for public presentation of work in order to help students understand that real work is completed not for an audience of one but for the greater public eye.

Collect and use data: Conduct a survey, identify top issues, and establish action steps for confronting and changing trouble spots or mixed messages within the school community. We have to be willing to identify “elephants in the living room”—those toughest issues in our schools—meaning the behaviors and attitudes that affect excellence and ethics. On-line survey engines like Survey Monkey or Zoomerang are relatively inexpensive, user-friendly, and effective ways to gather information. Once the “elephants” have been identified, schools can create study groups or committees to grapple with the highest priority items. A repeat survey at a later point in time will assess progress and pinpoint areas for further improvement.

Develop a participatory student government and a strong honor code: Lickona and Davidson stress the importance of giving students meaningful opportunities to “have a voice and take a stand.” Ample research affirms that students in democratic schools feel greater responsibility for (or sense of participation in and ownership of) their school community, and thus develop greater concern for its collective welfare. Wrestling with ethical dilemmas and experiencing cognitive dissonance enhance moral-reasoning skills. Students engaging in democratic debates thus get to practice this crucial competency of moral and performance character. Schools that implement honor codes (or strengthen ones already in place) also report cultures and climates

more conducive to academic and ethical excellence.

Exercise the power of one: Lest such a comprehensive systemic approach seem too daunting, Lickona and Davidson champion “the Power of One.” Committed individuals—teachers, coaches, parents, or other school staff—can contribute in countless ways to the moral and ethical development of students. Whatever our respective spheres of influence as individuals may be, we can choose to model ethical excellence and lead our students to develop habits consistent with strong moral and performance character. Naturally, the more such values and principles permeate our educational institutions the better. In the meantime, each of us can increase our effectiveness as character developers in our classrooms, extracurricular arenas, school buildings, and families.

Lickona and Davidson show how Ethics of Excellence (or Cultures of Mastery) emerge in caring, ambitious school communities that both challenge *and* support all their constituents (i.e. students, faculty, staff, and parents). The best schools thus become ethical learning communities where everyone is accountable for manifesting high standards of individual and collective achievement. Ethical learning is enhanced by studying moral exemplars as well as by rigorous self-scrutiny. In schools pervaded by cultures of constructive critique, students and teachers are also more likely to share freely, in public, their own best practices and personal or professional achievements.

Confronting these issues in our schools challenges us and inspires us. Good character education is not an either/or proposition. All our schools can aspire to be both smart and good. ✨

Susan Bauska is Upper School Director at The Annie Wright School in Tacoma, Washington. Mike Pardee is Director of Character Education at the Kinkaid School in Houston, Texas. Both are members of CSEE’s Moral Development Team that has been training with the nation’s best-known character education trainers over the past two school years.

Good education aims at transformation—in thought, feelings, and actions. It aims to alter our very way of being in the world. Such transformations involve our understandings of ourselves, our relationships with other humans, and perhaps even with the natural world. They offer us visions of alternative approaches to living and they offer us possibilities for crafting a better world. What follows is a list of tested titles: books that push, tease, and encourage social and moral transformation in middle-school students.

Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court by John Wooden with Steve Jamison (1997)

“Coach Wooden’s own life is the embodiment of enduring American values. His priorities are, and always have been, correct—family, faith, and friends...” (Bill Walsh, former head coach, San Francisco 49’ers). This is a fine gift for a middle or upper school student; I have handed out at least forty copies of this book. Both male and female athletes will take to this book and those in need of a father figure will benefit.

After by Francine Prose (2003)

The shootings in Pleasant Valley were fifty miles away, but at Central High a grief and crisis counselor is hired, security is increased, and privileges are taken away. Prose has written a disturbing novel about the tension between individual rights and safety. This is a timely and important book upon which one could base an entire course. I have yet to give this book to a student who has not read it in about two days and then shared it with a parent. Those students who confront authority or think out of the box will be captivated by this tale.

A Single Shard by Linda Sue Park (2001)

Courage and survival at an engaging level for both students and adults—this book can be mined for years of class discussions. At first blush this book does not entice the reader but rest assured after about eighty pages the middle-school student is hooked on the continuing life events that are thrown at the likeable orphan who lives under a bridge.

Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life by Wendy Mass (2006)

A charming story of Jeremy and his best friend Lizzy as they attempt to find the keys to open a box given to Jeremy by his dead father before his thirteenth birthday. Their journey together is uplifting, challenging, and ultimately satisfying on many levels. Both the male and female characters are strong and appealing in this book. For example, you really want to read a second book to see how their relationship develops.

The Ultimate Gift by Jim Stovall (2001)

Stovall has overcome blindness to become a national champion Olympic weightlifter, a successful investment broker, and an entrepreneur. Jason, via a will, is given a series of “gifts” which transform him from a spoiled know-it-all to a very different person. Several middle-school students and their parents have loved this book. This book is about challenge and perseverance.

Seeker: Book One of The Noble Warriors by William Nicholson (2005)

What is a noble warrior? Can both Seeker of Truth and Wildman be noble warriors? A soon-to-be classic journey from boy-man and the trials and tribulations en route, including confronting one’s duty to family and society.

Naughts & Crosses by Malorie Blackman (2001)

A truly clever immersing of the reader into stereotypes regards race and relationships. A must read, undiscovered by American audiences. This book will be appreciated by both the romantic student and those confronting “differences” in others.

Ender’s Game by Orson Scott Card (1985)

Sci-fi writing at its finest. Mankind has barely survived two separate invasions by the insectoid “buggers.” The finest candidates are taken into Battle School at a very young age to supply commanders for the coming Third Invasion. Ender Wiggin emerges as the most capable, at the tender age of six. This book will take a child away from playing videogames. The “training” at the “battle school” is on simulated “war games.”

Daniel’s Walk by Michael Spooner (2001)

We are transported to the Oregon Trail in a semi-mystical coming-of-age tale of historical fiction which grips readers with the first sentence of “Git up, Boy!...your daddy’s in trouble.” Daniel’s journey is intense, filled with humor, romance, and an unveiling of the white man’s treatment of Native Americans.

The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly by Luis Sepulveda (1996)

This book highlights the importance of keeping promises. Zorba the cat promises a dying seagull that he will watch over her egg, will not eat the egg, and will teach the baby gull to fly. ♣

Mike Cerkovnik is Lower School Counselor at Mary Institute Country Day School in St. Louis, Missouri, and a member of CSEE’s Moral Development Team. Special thanks go to Matt G. for his assistance with the recommendations included here.

WHAT'S IN YOUR HAPPY MEAL?

BY PATRICIA LYONS

I was eavesdropping at an over-crowded McDonald's at the end of the summer and I still have not recovered from what I learned. Let me first say that I am one of the "billions and billions served," as the sign above any McDonald's proudly announces. I love McDonald's and always have. The disturbing discovery this summer was not about the food, though documentaries and best sellers are legion that explain why my life expectancy will be limited if not outright threatened by my slow digestion of the truths about fast food. While waiting for my daily fountain Diet Coke, a woman in front of me ordered a Happy Meal for the wide-eyed, broad-smiling kindergartner at her side. She leaned forward in glee to share with the employee, "He's really excited about the toy." When they walked away, I couldn't help myself. "Sir, what is the toy this summer?"

Without looking up, he pointed lifelessly to the promotional sign above his head. I was stunned. The Happy Meal Toy of the summer was a plastic car. But not just

The Hummer Meal is a reminder that multinational corporations will pry their advertisements into any and every venue in the life of children, in hopes of forging and feeding the consumerism of America. What disturbs me most about the Hummer meal is not that it aims to sell children Hummers, but that it promotes them under the word Happy.

any car. It was a plastic model of a Hummer. But not just any Hummer. It was the 2006 Alpha version of the Hummer H1, which is a vehicle weighing over 10,000 pounds and costing just over \$140,000.

The gas mileage of this automobile of mass destruction is estimated at about 13 miles per gallon. Could innovation-obsessed Henry Ford have ever imagined that after nearly one hundred years of American progress since his first motor cars, we would be proudly promoting a car as a stimulant for happiness that get one mile less per gallon than the first Model T of 1908?

The McDonald's clerk must have noticed my spiritual alarm and offered me a line of levity. "You should buy

one...it does things," the clerk said with a smile. "It has real wheels and a towing feature. Do you want to buy one?" Of course I bought it. Why? Because according to McDonald's, so did over 25 million people. Besides, occasionally chaplains and teachers of religion or ethics know when they have spotted a true emblem of our times amid the clutter of cultural collectibles. But rarely can we own these state-of-the-spirit touchstones for only \$1.43. I am looking at it right now.

So how did the Happy Meal become a Hummer Meal? And what does this event show us about what stimulates or passes for happiness in the world of our young people? On one level, the Hummer meal is a reminder that multinational corporations will pry their advertisements into any and every venue in the life of children, in hopes of forging and feeding the consumerism of America. This trend is disturbing enough, and well documented in dozens of books out in the last decade on the marketing and branding of children and adolescents. But what disturbs me most about the Hummer Meal is not that it aims to sell children Hummers, but that it promotes them under the word Happy.

After all, many of you have seen the Hummer commercials in that last year, some of them rated as the most popular commercials on television. The most representative of these is the one in which a sweet but sheepish mother watches her sweet but equally sheepish son get pushed off a line for a ride in a park by a pushy son and his wickedly smiling pushy mother. "But Johnny was first," she shyly remarks in defense of her little boy. "Well," sneers the pushy mom, "Johnny's not first any more." And how do Shy and Sheepish Mother handle this injustice? In the second scene of the commercial, she briskly signs her name to a car contract and drives out of the dealer in a new Hummer and with a new, but no less wicked smile. With her son barely visible somewhere in the fifth or sixth row of seats in her new stadium on wheels, the mother appears healed from the social shame of the park.

CONTINUES ON P. 9

School spirit is most frequently defined by a combination of numbers of attendees at athletic events and the volume of their verbal output at such events. Assuming that the verbal output supports both the players on the field and high quality performances, such spirit has great importance.

Closer to the core, however, is the issue regarding the ways our schools encourage, or discourage, the life of the soul. When schools engage in a spiritual audit, here are a few of the questions they consider. The results a particular institution might desire will depend on the mission, of course. But schools whose focus includes spiritual growth engage in some introspection regarding questions like those that follow.

Mission

- Is spiritual life addressed in the school's mission?
- If so, do members of the school community feel that the paper version of the mission carries weight in the daily life of the school?
- If addressing the life of the spirit is not part of the school's mission, is this because the school believes the spiritual realm is not important, belongs only in the family, or is such a "hot potato" that there is greater comfort in not addressing the issue?

Trustees

- Do trustees buy into the school's spiritual mission?
- Is the moral and spiritual life of the school a regular topic of formal discussion among trustees?

Administrators

- Is support for the spiritual life of the school verbalized and/or demonstrated by key school administrators?

Faculty / Staff

- Do faculty and staff understand the spiritual aspirations of the school when they are hired?
- Is there training for faculty and staff to deepen their understanding of the school's spiritual aspirations?
- Are a critical mass of teachers and other key adults at school comfortable addressing issues of spiritual growth?

- Are faculty/staff responsible for doing something explicit to further the school's spiritual aspirations?
- For schools with religious affiliations: Does the school have a chaplain or other individual identified as guardian and promoter of the school's spiritual aspirations?
- Does this person have a committee or others working with him or her, or is she/he working in a void?

Student Climate

- If interviewed about the school, what percentage of the student body would say that the life of the spirit is a matter of importance at the school?
- Do students feel free to discuss spiritual issues in the classroom, or is there subtle pressure not to address such issues?
- Do students feel free to discuss spiritual issues among themselves outside the classroom, or is there subtle pressure not to address such issues?
- If addressing the spiritual life is part of the school culture, do students feel pressured to accept a "party line" as they develop their spirituality?

Assemblies / Chapel Programs

- Do official gatherings at the school deal with issues that those in attendance tend to consider as belonging to the spiritual realm?

Graduation Requirements / General Program

- Is community service linked to the school's spiritual aspirations? Would a majority of the students answer yes to this question?
- For high schools: Is the realm of the spiritual addressed formally in any courses required for graduation?
- For elementary or middle schools: Is the realm of the spiritual addressed formally in classes other than religion?
- Other than graduation requirements and the assembly/chapel program, are there components of school life outside the classroom that the typical student would say address the spiritual?

Like academic and ethical improvement, we can also make progress in the spiritual climates of our schools. The first step entails knowing where we are; having this information offers a sense of how to get to where we want to be. ❁

IN THE WEB

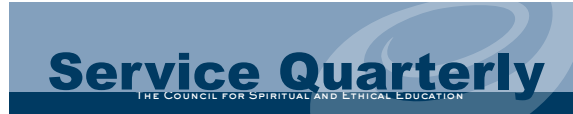
<http://www.csee.org/resources/film.html>

Csee is often approached by educators who wish to expand their religious curricula by showing films that illustrate religious traditions and ethics lessons. Films serve as useful teaching tools in the classroom, as they bring the material and lessons to life in an exciting fashion for students. Sandra Switzer of the Lovett School in Atlanta, Georgia, with the assistance of members from CSEE's national resource panel on the teaching of religion, has compiled a list of films for possible use in the religion or ethics classroom. The list is now available on the CSEE Web site.

The films are categorized by religious tradition; there is a line of description about each one, and in some cases a note is made about appropriate age level for viewing. From Hollywood blockbusters to lesser-known documentaries, the Film Resource Page on the CSEE Web site reads as an extensive film library for those wishing to further their knowledge of religious traditions. Moreover, Switzer is thorough in providing film titles relevant to a wide variety of religions and geographical areas as she represents the major world religions, as well as indigenous traditions and smaller sects.

The Film Resource Page on the CSEE Web site is a useful tool for educators, students, and parents alike who wish to expand their knowledge of religious themes by way of film and media. ✨

CSEE LAUNCHES PDF PUBLICATION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SERVICE LEARNING COORDINATORS



Service to others is an essential component of most CSEE member schools. When implemented well, community service and service learning programs are integral to our schools' missions for moral and or spiritual development. Yet too many coordinators of service programs work in relative isolation. They have busy academic lives, often teaching in addition to their duties as program coordinators, and frequently they have no one to share their duties with or bounce ideas off of.

With these issues in mind, CSEE is launching a regular publication to help fulfill our mission to be resources in schools. Called *Service Quarterly*, the publication will offer resources, ideas, and news of note for the people responsible for "making it all happen." Community service coordinators who are not sure that CSEE has their names and email addresses, and who want to be sure of receiving *Service Quarterly*, are invited to email us at <service@csee.org>. ✨

2006-07 COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD APPLICATION DEADLINE FEBRUARY 25

The 2006-07 Community Service Award will recognize schools that have done an exemplary job integrating service with academic work. Schools applying are asked to describe how this integration takes place, how service projects fit with the needs of the community, and how student reflection on their service is facilitated.

Applications are requested from elementary, middle, and high schools. Results will be announced in the May issue of *Connections*. For further details and application materials, visit <www.csee.org>. ✨

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS & OBSERVANCES

JANUARY 2007

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

See additional details, including the holy days for the month of December, at www.csee.org



January 1
Feast of the Solemnity of Mary (Christianity)
Catholics worldwide recognize the Solemnity of Mary eight days after Christmas. The day commemorates Mary's role in the mystery of salvation, and falls on the first day of the New Year, reminding Catholics that Christmas marks both the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary and the beginning of salvation.

January 1
The Feast of St. Basil (Orthodox Christianity)
Saint Basil's life is remembered by Orthodox Christians each year on January 1, the same day that he died in the year 379 AD. Saint Basil is best known for his writings on asceticism, on monastic rules, and on Christian scriptures. After living a life of solitude for many years, he was elected in 370 C.E. to lead the church in Caesarea.

January 1
Gantan-sai (Shinto)
Gantan-sai is the Shinto New Year holiday. The faithful visit shrines, often at midnight, praying for renewal of heart, health, and prosperity. During the seven-day holiday, individuals visit the homes of friends and family to express their wishes for the coming year.

January 3
New Year (Mahayana Buddhism)
The New Year celebrations in Mahayana Buddhist countries are observed with a variety of ceremonies. The New Year begins on the first full moon in January and lasts for three days. Like many New Year celebrations, it is a time for making a fresh start and cleans-

ing oneself from the prior year's errors. In Theravadin countries—Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Laos—the New Year is celebrated for three days from the first full moon day in April. In Mahayana countries the New Year starts on the first full moon day in January. However, the Buddhist New Year depends on the country of origin or ethnic background of the people. For example, Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese celebrate in late January or early February according to the lunar calendar, while Tibetans usually celebrate about one month later.

January 5
Twelfth Night (Christianity)
The Christian tradition holds that twelve days after the birth of Christ (hence the title Twelfth Night) the three kings arrived in Bethlehem with gifts for the baby Jesus. In Hispanic countries, this day is referred to as Tres Reyes (Three Kings) and is celebrated by the exchange of gifts and festive meals. In many countries, cakes are prepared with a trinket hidden inside.

January 5
Guru Gobindh Singh Day (Sikhism)
Sikhs celebrate the Gurburb—any anniversary associated with the lives of the Gurus—of Guru Gobindh Singh's birthday on January 5. Guru Gobindh Singh lived in the 17th Century and was the tenth and final leader of the Sikhs.

January 6
Epiphany (Christianity)
Most Christians mark the end of the Christmas season on January 6, or Epiphany. The term means "to reveal"

or “to show.” Like Twelfth Night, Epiphany commemorates the three kings’ visit to Bethlehem, “revealing” Jesus to the world as Lord and King. In contemporary times, the day is observed as a time to focus on the church’s mission to reach out to all people.

January 6

Feast of Theophany (Orthodox Christianity)

The Feast of the Theophany marks the anniversary of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River. In addition to reminding Orthodox Christians of their own baptism and salvation, the day also celebrates the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

January 7

Baptism of Jesus (Christianity)

Many Christians commemorate the baptism of Jesus on January 7. This day also marks the beginning of “ordinary time” in the liturgical calendar, or the point when the Gospels describe the public life and preaching of Jesus’ ministry.

January 13

Maghi (Sikhism)

Sikhs commemorate the martyrdom of the Forty Immortals on the day known as Maghi. The Forty immortals were followers of Guru Gobindh Singh who were all killed while courageously fighting a Mughal army. Sikhs visit their gurdwaras and listen to kirtan (recitation of hymns) on this day. A large gathering of Sikhs takes place at the city of Muktsar, in India, where Gobindh Singh blessed the martyrs and cremated their bodies.

January 20

New Year begins (Islam)

The Islamic calendar is reckoned around the date 622 C.E., the year that Muhammad and his community sought their safety from persecution in Mecca by migrating (hijra) miles through the desert to Medina. Because most Islamic countries use a lunar calendar, the

Hijra or New Year moves through the year as it appears on the Gregorian calendar.

January 21

World Religion Day (Baha’i)

Members of the Baha’i faith observe World Religion Day annually on the third Sunday in January. The aim of the holiday is to create interfaith understanding and harmony by noting the common denominators underlying all religions.

January 25

Conversion of Paul (Christianity)

Christians commemorate the Conversion of Paul of Tarsus annually on January 25. Prior to his famous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul (or Saul) had been a great persecutor of Christians. The traditional scripture passages include Acts 9:1-22 and Acts 22:3-16.

January 29

Ashura (Islam)

Taking place on the tenth day of Muharram, Ashura marks the anniversary of the death of Imam Husain, the grandson of Muhammad. Additionally, tradition has it that a number of other important events occurred on this date, including Noah’s ark coming to rest, the Prophet Abraham being born, and the Kaaba being built. For Shi’ites, this is the most sanctified day of the month, and celebrating it includes fasting and “passion plays” of his martyrdom. Because of this, the day is not celebrated in the way that holy days normally are. Some mourners beat their chests, lamenting and grieving over Husain’s death, and replicas of his tomb are profusely decorated. ❁

Do you remember the fast food marketing mantra of the 1980s, “Where’s the beef?” Do you remember how this query made its way through the airwaves, even into political campaigns and out of the mouth of Ross Perot? It became a cultural cliché, a late-night punch line, and a potent political accusation. But now the Hummer Meal stimulates a different question for our time, and one that is infinitely more spiritual: where is the happiness? What is the message to young people, and people of all ages that saw the toy this summer, about what can make a person happy? Clearly, McDonalds or Hummer, Inc. did not invent the falsehood that material goods can provide fulfilling happiness. But when I think of how independent schools go about their daily business, I wonder if we are challenging this McMessage or mimicking it.

Those of you who have a free month can wade through Jerome Karabel’s 800-page magnum opus *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale*. There you will find a very helpful historical consideration of the notion of “meritocracy” in American society and in American schooling. Beyond his parochial meditations on these three Ivy League schools, Karabel engages in a painstaking effort to study the history of private education in America and how, for centuries, the uniquely American myth of merit emerged as the supposed fairest criterion for judgment of intelligence and success. Karabel focuses on the lies of equal opportunity in this myth and, with the insight and the anger of voices like Jonathan Kozol, points out repeatedly that “meritocracies” reward only those in positions privileged enough to be prepared to compete. Meritocracies reward the ready, not the able. And because they are driven by classism and myriad other prejudicial schemes, they do not provide happiness, they destroy it.

In my classrooms and in the classrooms and chapels of many independent schools across the country that I have visited, I see exhausted faces of all ages. And what I see is not just sleep deprivation, though that reality continues to move from epidemic to pandemic

in college preparatory schools across the nation, among students and faculty. No, I see something more complex than lack of sleep. What I see is lack of happiness; that is, lack of spiritual energy for the spiritual needs of life, such as renewal and a sense of unifying and inspirational purpose. I see fear and anxiety that comes from running a race with no end in sight, more afraid of the punishments than inspired by the rewards. It

seems that Hummers and houses and bumper sticker colleges are everywhere, perhaps one for every meal. But these do not satisfy, and the pressure to get them is spiritu-

ally depressing both the student tutoring frantically for the SAT and the two-job adult doing the tutoring. We are buying and selling and sacrificing our inner peace for the false promise of happiness through Hummerness.

Our schools can be a refuge from this madness if we are committed to challenging the metabolism of materialism, which is to own more and share less. We know better. We know that the spiritual leaders of any tradition teach and model the reversal of fortune, that happiness is to own less and share more.

Gas-guzzling cars are accused of polluting the environment, and for this reason alone, some may be mad at the Hummer Meal. What concerns me more is the spiritual pollution that comes from promoting the idea that owning more than your neighbor will make you happy and that cut-throat competing toward the financial state that allows for endless buying will somehow not pollute the moral and spiritual connection we have with others. In our schools, we can do better. ✿

Patricia Lyons teaches Religion and Ethics at St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes School in Alexandria, Virginia

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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

FEBRUARY 2007

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

Comprehensive Moral Development: Focus on Parent Practices

(For all school staff members, but especially those whose duties entail moral development/character education. This event is also open to parents from CSEE schools.)

With Judith Smetana, Ph.D.
Miami, Florida
January 27-28, 2007

Chaplains

(A conference to enrich and renew those working as chaplains and spiritual directors in schools; co-sponsored by CSEE and National Association of Episcopal Schools. Note: this event is not for Episcopal chaplains only; it is designed for a wide audience of those working as chaplains in schools.)

With Rev. Robert Thompson, Phillips Exeter Academy
Austin, Texas
February 9-11, 2007

Advisors and Advisory Systems

With Barb Dixon Ackerman and LouAnne Smith
Greenhill School
Addison (Dallas), Texas
March 30-31, 2007

Resources for Spiritual Development

(For chaplains, religion teachers, spiritual directors, all grades)

With Thomas Coburn, Ph.D., and colleagues at Naropa Institute
Boulder, Colorado
April 16-17, 2007

Community Service/Service Learning

With Mary Pashley and Ann Saylor
Washington, D.C.
April 21-22, 2007

How We Become Moral, and Activities for Moral Growth

(For school staff, grades K-12)
With Michael Schulman, Ph.D.
The Garrison Institute, New York, NY
April 21-22, 2007

2007 Institute on Teaching the World's Religions

(For teachers of world religions and history.)
San Francisco, California
With Jeffrey Brodd, Ph.D., Martin VerHoeven, Ph.D.,
Linda Hess, Ph.D.
June 23-28, 2007

Summer Ethics Institute for Adults

(For school administrators, trustees, and staff: opportunity to discuss significant pieces of literature and to discuss ethical cases that have faced independent schools—all in a beautiful and relaxed setting)
With Daniel Heischman and Sharon Daloz Parks
Whidbey Island, Washington, in the Puget Sound
July 14-20, 2007

Classroom Climate and Discipline for Moral Growth

(Two-day workshop for educators in early grades through late elementary)
October, 2007 ♣

MARCH 2007

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APRIL 2007

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WHAT CAN WE DO FOR WORLD PEACE?

Is it trite to say one wonders about world peace from time to time? For me, those moments grow more frequent. And I wonder about the students in our schools. Are we giving them the tools they need to fashion a world with more hope for peace than the one we live in today?

Young people in most CSEE schools are brighter than the norm, and they have other doors open to them. We tell them they are the leaders of tomorrow. If leadership requires more than intelligence and a modicum of academic preparation, it is our responsibility to ready them for the task. Thus, in addition to our responsibility to leave them a world that is in the best shape we can leave it, we have the responsibility to give them the finest “world care skills” education can offer.

With the possible exception of that small group among us able to blame peace problems on the rest of the world, we must admit that educating for world peace is a monumental task. And yet its monumentality cannot allow us to avoid the issue. The following suggestions are small, but they are both feasible and effective. Some are mine, and others are offered by a wonderful multi-faith group of chaplains and others working with CSEE on spiritual development issues.

Make all classrooms places of trust, warmth, respect

Create classrooms where young people feel trusted, respected, esteemed, and cherished. Begin creating such classrooms of trust at the earliest levels of schooling; continue the important work until the day of graduation. Those of us who feel trusted, esteemed, and cherished are more willing to treat our neighbors likewise. Those of us who do not feel trusted or cherished are less willing to show respect or kindness to others. Those of us who are trusted, esteemed, respected are more able to devote full attention to academic matters; we are more able to learn, and to use our knowledge more creatively.

Teach students that all human beings get angry

There are ways to diminish our anger, ways to reduce

our chances of becoming angry, and ways to channel what anger we do experience. Most of these ways are not modeled in our media. We must teach our young people about anger and its place in, and out of, our lives.

Teach the skills of psychological resilience

Resilience is a skill. It can be taught. It is related to, but different from, the “anger skills” above. Those who learn such skills are more immune to anxiety, to depression, and to anger. Those who learn the skills of resilience—they are relatively easy to teach—are healthier both physically and psychologically. Their concentration is better in school, their absentee rate is lower, and they have greater energy, and willingness, to use the skills of peacemaking.

Teach interpersonal problem-solving skills

Teach the skills of identifying when a conflict is arising, of identifying the causes of the conflict (surface causes and underlying causes), of interacting firmly and humbly with others to negotiate abatement of the conflict in ways that save face and show respect for all, and of following up later to ensure that the “peace” is intact. Give all students practice in these skills. Skills must be both taught and practiced.

Believe

Believe that small steps are important. Peace in our world is a large, complicated, multi-dimensional issue. Individuals have created world peace in the past; it is just that their accomplishments are less visible than those of their counterparts who were less capable. Our students can further the cause of peace for tomorrow’s world. They will be better able to do so if we give them the tools today. ✨

Among these individuals whose thoughts are reported here, I am particularly indebted to Priscilla Taylor-Williams, from Moorestown Friends School, who has given the issue considerable reflection. Readers with comments or further thoughts are invited to respond.

David Streight