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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

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TEACHING IN YOUR PRIME

BY MARVIN BERKOWITZ, PH.D.

As I work with thousands of educators, trying to help them understand how to improve their practice toward both academic achievement and the positive psychological development of their students, I frequently think about my son. When he was an elementary school student, I dreaded the day, especially in elementary school, when he would be assigned to a teacher who I felt simply did not “get it.” Fortunately, he went to an excellent school and my nightmare never became a reality.

But in ruminating about this I had to consider what my criteria were for a good teacher and a bad teacher. I probably wouldn't have had a good answer back then, but after a decade of pre-service and in-service teacher training and mentoring hundreds of principals, I think I have a better handle on what makes a truly great teacher. Coupling that with both the research literature on teacher effectiveness (which is admittedly skewed toward academic success and rarely considers the development of the whole child) and asking many educators what they consider an excellent teacher, I have zeroed in on five broad characteristics.

I call this five-part model PRIME teaching, for the five parts of the model are:

- Putting academics in perspective
- Relationship building
- Intrinsic motivation
- Modeling goodness
- Empowering students.

Putting Academics in Perspective There are two related parts to this and both are seen as sacrilegious by some educators. The first part concerns the true purposes of education. Academic learning was never intended to be the sole or even the prime purpose of public education. Education was foremost intended to prepare students to be democratic citizens, which includes the formation of

virtuous character. Certainly literal literacy and cultural literacy (along with other academic skills) are part of civic competence, but it is the civic and moral socialization that truly justifies education. After World War II in the U.S., we lost our way concerning the purpose of education. Particularly when the Soviet Union successfully sent up the Sputnik rocket, we, as a nation, panicked and focused public education monomaniacally on the task of catching up to the Soviets in scientific technological capacity.

We have still not returned to the full understanding that the moral character of our youth is everyone's responsibility. This particularly applies to those institutions with the greatest impact on youth development; i.e., the family, the school, and now the media. Teachers, in particular, and the nation in general, cannot afford to pass the buck and claim that fostering the development of positive character in youth is not their job. Not only is it the job of educators to foster the development of positive character in students, it is arguably the most important aspect of their job.

The second part of this issue is even more controversial. Teachers, quite understandably, lose perspective about the concrete knowledge that they purvey. The factoids of the curriculum tend to get over-emphasized by teachers because so much of their energy is necessarily spent on writing lesson plans about them, attempting to pass them on to students, and assessing them. Teachers spend countless hours trying to figure out the best way to get students to understand how magnets work or what a preposition is or how to carry over remainders in long division. Once again this job of knowledge transfer needs to be kept in perspective. I would argue that much of the specific content we teach students is not of intrinsic value. We could easily teach about a different battle or a different artist or a different genre

of poetry and serve the same ends. Knowing where Appomattox is and why it is important has had little impact on my life and likely on yours (if you remember learning about it at all). Certainly learning to read, write, and engage in basic math skills are critical life skills. Being culturally literate is, too.

My point is not that we should stop teaching facts, but that we need to keep them in proper perspective. Most of what we teach in the K-12 years is really about teaching students how to learn and fostering a thirst for learning; it is not about what they specifically learn.

How dare you ask a child to be responsible or respectful or caring or honest if you can't act that way yourself? It is quite a sobering challenge for even the best of us. We know that one powerful way to impact a student's character is to leverage the positive relationship we have hopefully built and model good character. If they care about you and know you care about them, they will want to become like you.

Master teachers like Ron Berger (author of *An Ethic of Excellence*) argue that spending long periods of time on complex projects is much better education than jumping from factoid to factoid as the current mania over standardized state testing seems to demand.

So the first lesson is to keep it all in perspective. Teaching is more about fostering student development and fostering a capacity and thirst for learning than it is about the content of the curriculum. Teachers who say they don't have time for character education simply don't get it. Teachers who, for example, spend the first week or more of the school year building relationships, creating classroom community, collaborating on developing class norms, learning about each other, developing classroom procedures and routines, etc. are teachers who have their priorities straight.

Relationship-building There is a popular saying in education that "students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." The missing two words at the end of that sentence are "about

them." I frequently ask teachers to identify and describe their favorite teacher. The most common characteristics they list are about interpersonal relationships: took a personal interest in me; reached out to me when I was in crisis; took the time to get to know me as a person; went beyond the normal school boundaries to develop a personal relationship with me; etc. I often tell educators that the molecules from which the substance of effective character education is built are relationships. Educators often gravitate first to exhortation (lecturing, reading pithy quotes, putting up inspiring posters, etc.), recognition (listing students of character on the wall or naming them at assemblies or school announcements), and reward (giving students tangible rewards or privileges for good behavior).

But what really impacts student character is rather how the child is treated by others. Character education is fundamentally a matter of promoting healthy pro-social relationships in the school: teacher-student, student-student, teacher-parent, teacher-support staff, student-support staff, and so on. Peer mentoring, cross-age buddying, professional learning communities, etc. are deliberate means for such relationship building. Teachers need to focus on this and learn the pedagogy of relationship-building, most centrally how they can build a strong relationship with each child, how they can engineer a healthy peer culture among the students, and how they can teach students the social-emotional skills they need to build, sustain, and repair such relationships.

Intrinsic motivation As noted above, teachers seem to be almost genetically disposed to dispense extrinsic rewards and motivators (including punishments) to students. However, as psychological research has taught us, this is not a very effective method of motivating students (or others). Yet teachers rely on this as a major means of allegedly fostering student development, seemingly not realizing that punishment is a very ineffective (even counter-productive) means of behavior management and rewards have some serious negative side effects. Teachers frequently get quite indignant at the mere suggestion that they stop relying on extrinsic

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THE MORAL OF THE STORY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF ETHICS THROUGH LITERATURE

Ed. Peter and Renata Singer

MALDEN, MA: BLACKWELL, 2005

BY RICHARD BARBIERI

You've got to love a philosophy collection whose opening epigraph is from *Alice in Wonderland*: "Tut, tut, child!" said the Duchess. "Everything's got a moral if only you can find it." When the collection, by renowned utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer and his wife Renata, offers over 600 pages of excerpts and complete texts, together with discussion questions that illuminate and do not condescend, it is worth reading beyond the epigraph and considering for classroom use.

The Singers state quite cogently the reason for building an ethics course around literature: "In contrast to the examples discussed in works of philosophy, discussions of ethical issues in fiction tend to be concrete, rather than abstract, and to give a rich context for the distinctive moral views or choices that are portrayed. Literature therefore often presents a more nuanced view of character and circumstance than is to be found in the works of philosophers. And of course, because most readers like to engage with characters and to read works that have plots, literary works usually reach a wider audience than works of philosophy." The result is that this collection is readable enough to keep readers up at night at an hour when most pure philosophy would have long turned out the light.

The book offers almost 80 selections, with a rich range of texts chosen from across the ages and cultures of the Anglo-American world and its forebears, from Sophocles and Genesis to Ibsen and Tolstoy, through Shakespeare, Austen, Dickens, and Tennyson, and on to such moderns and contemporaries as Ralph Ellison, Tom Wolfe, Maeve Binchy, Nick Hornby, and Douglas Adams. Fifteen themes, from the existential ("Who Am I?" "Ultimate Values") through the familiar debates ("Love, Marriage and Sex," "War," "Racism and Sexism") to classic ethical systems ("Duties to Kin," "Rules, Rights, Duties, and the Greater Good"), and even to novel topics of our age ("What Do We Owe to Our Country, Compatriots, and Strangers?" "New Life Forms").

Many of the selections, especially from Shakespeare and the classics, are quite short, and can be supplemented by the full texts, some of which students may already know. Others, from Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Fenimore Cooper, and Daniel Defoe, will give the class a glimpse of renowned writers whose names are far better known than their works. Excerpts from novels by Geraldine Brooks, Ian MacEwan, and Pat Barker may lead the class to read whole novels by these thoughtful contemporaries.

As with all texts, of course, there are gaps and biases in selection and emphasis. The section on "Duties to God," for example, contains only three readings: one from Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, the Abraham and Isaac story, and a different passage from *The Brothers Karamazov* than the usual Grand Inquisitor selection. This is one fewer than the number for "Animals and the Environment" and less than half of those under "War." Again, teachers may be distressed by this, or grateful for the opportunity to supplement with their own choices.

The authors strive for balance in their introductions to each section, which are both concise and wide-ranging, giving background on Plato, Kant, and many other philosophers. But the use of evolutionary theory to account for moral principles, and the authors' own utilitarian orientation, often dominate over other positions, though usually quite subtly. Even in these cases, the fact that they write so clearly and comprehensibly gives a teacher the chance to debate and discuss the premises from which they begin. In short, this anthology is both engaging and likely to encourage engagement with its selections and its authors. ♣

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.

motivators. Sometimes they simply get confused as they cannot imagine how not to do so. The reward distracts students from the real message; i.e., what you just did is good and should be done even more in the future. It also teaches students to go wherever the rewards are, and this is easily generalized to inappropriate or even immoral or illegal behavior that has a personal pay-off.

Rather, teachers need to learn to promote intrinsic motivation in students simply by quietly and privately praising them (with a clear explanation of what was desirable about their behavior), by modeling the behavior they want in students (more on this one below), and by discussing and studying values, virtues, and desirable behavior (both in the academic curriculum and in the general life of the school). In this way, students will truly internalize the values and apply them fully in their lives.

Model good character It is utter hypocrisy to ask students to have good character but not hold oneself to the same standard. As I frequently challenge educators, “How dare you ask a child to be responsible or respectful or caring or honest if you can’t act that way yourself?” It is quite a sobering challenge for even the best of us. We know that one powerful way to impact a student’s character is to leverage the positive relationship we have hopefully built and model good character. If they care about you and know you care about them, they will want to become like you. Gandhi challenged us to be the change we want to see in the world; I challenge you to be the character you want to see in your students.

And there is no opting out of this one, either. It is not a personal choice whether you are a role model; it is up to those who look at and up to you. Every teacher is a role model, whether she or he intends it, wants it, or not. And every teacher impacts students’ character through their own character every single day. As Tom Lickona has said, “The single most powerful tool you have to impact a student’s character is your own character.” This one is clear to parents; i.e., they look for what kind of person their child’s teacher is. It is much less clear to teachers who are daunted and cowed by the

prospect of having their character judged, and therefore frequently discount the power of their character on students’ development.

Empower students American education is a decidedly hierarchical and authoritarian institution. And students are at the bottom of the food chain. It is not that educators are predators, but rather that the entire system disempowers students, albeit with benevolent but misguided intentions. Unfortunately this paternalistic/maternalistic system does not prepare students for life, either in general or as a member of a self-governing society. Teachers simply do not know how to empower students. They make all the decisions, solve all the problems, make all the plans, and generally rule by fiat. They are the czars and czarinas of their classrooms.

Exemplary educators, however, have discovered the pedagogy of empowerment. They pass (appropriate) problems, plans, and decisions back to students for resolution. They use pedagogical methods like cooperative learning and class meetings. And they authentically value students’ minds and voices. Such teachers humbly realize that students will often out-think them, even kindergarten students. They recognize that students are a valuable resource in building effective schools and classrooms. But most importantly, they respect students and understand that this respect and the pedagogy of empowerment will promote more learning, more love for learning, and stronger character in their students. Teachers need to truly value students and empower them in all appropriate ways.

So my advice to teachers is to stay in your PRIME. Focus on these five broad strategies and, in the words of Dr. Seuss, “Oh the places you will go.” ✨

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INVESTING IN GOD'S ECONOMY

The parable of the laborers and the vineyard, in Matthew 20:1-16, is a challenging parable. This is a parable that is particularly hard for many people to hear, particularly in today's economic times. I only had to mention the parable to a friend and promptly received the rebuke, "I don't like that one. It's not fair!"

And she's right. It's not fair. It's not fair that the laborers who are drafted for work near the end of the day receive the same wages as those who have been working hard since sunrise. It's not fair for the landowner to hire extra workers and pay them all the same wage. The last hired receive the same wages as the first. So we feel for those hard-working workers and we begrudge the landowner his generosity. How dare he upset the balance of fairness? Who does he think he is? Has he not heard of capitalism?

Our sense of economy—how things should work—is heavily influenced by what has come to be known as the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, the belief that we have been charged by God to work hard in order to receive God's rewards. Eighteenth-century American Christians were heavily influenced by this doctrine, embracing the scriptural passage, "to whom much is given, much is expected." I believe there is some truth in that. We should work hard in gratitude for what we have been given. But we should not begrudge those to whom not much at all has been given, yet to whom God gives much.

The economy of this world focuses on accumulation of wealth. And when the wealth starts to disappear, the very foundations of what we thought to be right, and fair, and true, are themselves shaken to the core. Just look at the response to the bankruptcy of brokerage firms, the federal bailout of AIG, the largest insurance firm in the world, or the massive federal \$750 billion bailout of declining mortgage securities in order to bolster the U.S. economy. This is an economy of accumulation. This accumulation is somehow linked to our physical and spiritual prosperity as a nation. And now that economy of accumulation has taken a big hit. And in the eyes of those who embrace this worldly economy, that's just not fair.

But I think, as those charged with spiritual discipline, we are called to keep in mind another economy. In this parable and elsewhere, Jesus shows us the key to economics in the Kingdom of God: that wealth is never about accumulation, but distribution. That's God's economy, that's how God counts. The engine of the world's economy is fueled by the accumulation of wealth. The engine of God's economy is fueled by the distribution of love. God's economy, in all its radical generosity, is foreign to us. It is a divine economy where God turns the tables on what we expect to happen.

This parable is not about the laborers and what they may accumulate. Of course, we read it and we immediately associate with them. I am sure that each of us has been on the receiving end of circumstances that just didn't seem fair; we may have also had the good fortune to gratefully receive gracious hospitality. But this parable is ultimately not about us. Really, it is about God: God's radical hospitality and incongruous graciousness. Maybe we are not counted according to the amount of work which we do, but according to the spirit with which we do it. Maybe that's God's economy. Maybe that really is how God counts.

Perhaps in these difficult financial times, we are being called to wealth beyond this world. We should not begrudge those to whom not much at all has been given in this world, but to whom God gives much. Maybe we are being called to live lives of gracious response to what God has given. Maybe we are called to be the hands of the God who turns the tables in the face of the unfairness of the world. Maybe we need to invest in God's economy, now more than ever. ✨

The Rev. Michael E. C. Spencer, an Episcopal priest, is Dean of Chapel at St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, where he also teaches Humanities and coaches crew. He can be contacted at mspencer@sps.edu.

CONSULTANT SPOTLIGHT

Disciplinary Problems Down, Happiness and Learning Up: Consulting with Marilyn Watson

The statement, “This is not the same school this year,” came from a school administrator whose staff spent a day with CSEE consultant Marilyn Watson this past September, after doing some preliminary work last spring. This year, according to the administrator, teachers feel more like they are working together for the same goals, the number of students sent to the office for disciplinary problems is drastically reduced and, basically, there is more time available for learning.

Every school has disciplinary problems to deal with, and there are a variety of approaches. What Watson’s Developmental Discipline (a product of years of work at the Child Development Project) does is help children avoid disciplinary situations while fostering their sense, and need, for autonomy, belonging, and competence. We have had three opportunities to witness Watson’s workshops and consultation presentations; she is a master.

Watson is the author (with classroom teacher Laura Ecken) of *Learning to Trust: Transforming Difficult Elementary School Classrooms* (Wiley, 2002) and *Discipline for Moral Growth* (CSEE, 2007).

Full day consultation:
Member schools \$1600
Others \$2000 ❄

IN THE WEB

<http://www.search-institute.org/>

For 50 years, Search Institute has been providing knowledge and leadership for raising kids that are healthy, caring, and responsible. The Institute’s ideas, resources, and models serve educators, parents, community leaders, youth-serving organizations, and others interested in the well-being of children and adolescents.

One of Search Institute’s most useful tools is the list of 40 “Developmental Assets”: principles that are proven to powerfully influence adolescent behavior. Twenty years of extensive research have gone into this list, which includes the following:

- familial and community support
- empowerment through safety and service to others
- clearly set boundaries and expectations
- constructive use of time
- commitment to learning
- social competencies
- positive values such as honesty and integrity
- positive identity/self-esteem.

A complete list of these assets is located on Search Institute’s Web site (available in 15 different languages), along with a plethora of other resources and useful links. Search Institute has also established an online community for networking, including a blog where parents can ask questions and share best practices. ❄

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS & OBSERVANCES

JANUARY 2009

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



COUNCIL FOR
SPIRITUAL &
ETHICAL
EDUCATION

FOUNDED IN 1898

January 1
The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
(Roman Catholic Christianity)

The Solemnity of Mary is a feast that celebrates Mary's motherhood of Jesus, and her role in the mystery of salvation. In many countries, this is a day of holy obligation where Mass is attended.

January 1
Feast of St. Basil
(Orthodox Christianity)

This day celebrates St. Basil, one of the fathers of the Orthodox Church. An influential Christian theologian and monastic, Basil was also known for his attention to the underprivileged and poor, and for his writings.

January 1
Gantan-sai
(Shintoism)

Gantan-sai is the Shinto celebration of the new year (*oshogatsu*). This day is one of the most popular for shrine visits, as many pray for inner renewal, health, and prosperity.

January 3
Vasant Panchami
(Hinduism)

This festival is dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning. On this day, schools and colleges often organize special worship of Saraswati, many participate in special activities at Hindu temples, and young children are taught their first words.

January 5
Birthday of Guru Gobindh Singh
(Sikhism)

Gobindh Singh (1666-1708) was the tenth Sikh Guru, and the last of the human-form Gurus. On his birthday, Sikhs celebrate Gobind Singh as saint and soldier.

January 5
Twelfth Night
(Christianity)

Twelfth Night marks the conclusion of the twelve days of Christmas and the eve of Epiphany. According to tradition, three kings arrived in Bethlehem twelve days after Jesus' birth to bestow gifts. This night is celebrated much like Christmas Eve, with merrymaking, eating traditional foods like king cake, and parties.

January 6
Epiphany
(Christianity)

Epiphany commemorates the Magi's visit to Bethlehem, and the revelation of Jesus as God in human form. Some traditions celebrate Epiphany by giving gifts to represent the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that Jesus received from the Wise Men.

January 6
Feast of Theophany
(Orthodox Christianity)

The Orthodox Church marks this day as the anniversary of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Orthodox Christians reflect on their own baptism and salvation.

January 6
10th Tevet
(Judaism)

The tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tevet is a Jewish fast day to reflect upon Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia's siege of Jerusalem 2,500 years ago. This event ultimately led to the destruction of the First Temple, Solomon's Temple, and the Babylonian conquest of Israel's Kingdom of Judah.

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January 7

Ashura
(Islam)

Ashura is the anniversary of the death of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala. Taking place on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, Ashura is observed with fasting, mourning, and decorating replicas of Husayn's tomb.

January 11-13

Mahayana New Year
(Buddhism)

The Mahayana New Year begins with the first full moon and lasts for three days. It is a time to reflect on the past and cleanse oneself from the prior year's sins to make a fresh start.

January 11

Baptism of Lord Jesus
(Christianity)

Although Eastern Christianity celebrates the baptism of Jesus at Epiphany, Catholics and Episcopalians celebrate his baptism by John the Baptist on the following Sunday. This day is also the beginning of "ordinary time" on the liturgical calendar.

January 13

Maghi
(Sikhism)

Maghi is the day on which Sikhs commemorate the martyrdom of the Forty Immortals, followers of Guru Gobindh Singh who were all killed while fighting a Mughal army. On this day, many Sikhs gather in Muktsar, India, the original site where Gobindh Singh blessed the martyrs and cremated their bodies. Sikhs visit their palaces of worship (*gurdwaras*) and listen to hymns (*kirtan*).

January 14

Makar Sankrant
(Hinduism)

Makar Sankrant is an important Hindu festival that celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere. For Hindus, the sun stands for Pratyaksha-Brahman, or the manifest God. In some traditions, colorful kites are flown, and in others there is a focus on the harvest.

January 18

World Religions Day
(Baha'i)

On this day, members of the Baha'i faith recognize all faith traditions and note their common denominators. Commencing in 1950, the goal of World Religions Day is to help foster interfaith understanding and harmony.

January 25

Conversion of St. Paul
(Christianity)

On this day, Christians commemorate the conversion of Paul the Apostle. Previously a great persecutor of Christians, Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, when he had a vision of Christ.

January 26

Chinese New Year
(Confucianism/Daoism/Buddhism)

The most important holiday for the Chinese, the New Year is a time to reflect on the past and celebrate the future. Celebrations include visits to relatives and friends called "new year visits," and red packets, typically red envelopes with money, are given to children by elders. The color red, also used extensively in decoration and dress, symbolizes good luck and wards off evil spirits.

January 27

Losar
(Buddhism)

This day marks the commencement of the Tibetan New Year. In some traditions, the celebration lasts for fifteen days, while in others the focus is on the first three days. Traditional foods and beverages are made and consumed, such as changkol (similar to beer) and guthuk (a type of noodle), and special ceremonies and dances are held, some in celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

January 31

Birthday of Guru Har Rai
(Sikhism)

Guru Har Rai (1630-61) was the seventh of the ten human-form Sikh Gurus. He is celebrated for his compassion for life and living things. Tradition says that at a young age, he was disturbed by the suffering of a flower after he accidentally damaged it in passing. This strong compassion continued throughout his life and work. ❁

MAGICAL BOOKS FOR MORAL GROWTH IN LOWER SCHOOL

“The act of reading is a miracle.”—Maryanne Wolfe, author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*

“If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive.”—Barry Lopez, author of *Arctic Dreams*

The following stories have found a special place in the lives of a number of teachers, parents, and students.

***The Golden Rule*, by Ilene Cooper (2007)**

This is a must-have book to make the point that the most basic character education program is the Golden Rule. The captivating pictures draw the reader into six different cultural examples of the Golden Rule. Every classroom in our school has this book and I have given it to about 40 families. Several parents have commented that children read the book again and again. A great way to engage in parent partnership.

***Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully*, by Audrey Penn (2008)**

Even better than Penn’s earlier book, *The Kissing Hand*. You could hear a pin drop at readings of this book in both of our first-grade classrooms. The artwork is as superb as the story. The students insisted that I leave my copy in the classroom.

***Simon’s Hook: A Story about Tease and Put-Downs*, by Karen Gedig Burnett (2000)**

This second-grade staple is a bit long for second graders, but it is worth the journey. *Simon’s Hook* should be read early in the year. It can be used in boundless ways to combat teasing.

***The Don’t Pop Your Cork on Mondays! Series*, by Adolph Moser and illustrated by David Pilkey (1988 on)**

The series now covers all the days of the week. The children’s favorites are *Don’t Feed the Monster on Tuesdays!* and *Don’t Tell a Whopper on Fridays!* Some of the books of the series should only be used for specific purposes, such as *Don’t Fall*

Apart on Saturdays! (divorce). I have had children come to my office and ask for one of the books years later.

***Courage*, by Bernard Waber (2002)**

“There are many kinds of courage. Awesome kinds. And everyday kinds...including courage is two candy bars and saving one for tomorrow.” I love the simplicity of this book and its message. One fifth-grader told me she read the book 40 nights in a row when she was in the third grade.

***My Friend is Sad*, by Mo Willems (2007)**

Again, buy multiple copies. *My Friend is Sad* helps boys (ages five-seven) express their feelings.

***Inch and Miles: The Journey to Success*, by Coach John Wooden (2005)**

This book profiles in a child-friendly fashion John Wooden’s pyramid of success. We have used this in the third grade, but it probably is better placed in the fourth grade. We have had students pick one of the attributes of the pyramid (e.g., determination), work on it for a month, and then reflect/write about their experience. This book could be used for an entire curriculum.

***Just Kidding* (2006), *My Secret Bully* (2004), and *Sorry!* (2006), by Trudy Ludwig, and *Say Something*, by Peggy Moss (2004)**

We use this four-book combination in the fourth grade to dissipate relational aggression. Each book has teacher-friendly resources and guide questions. These books are imperative in setting the groundwork for the skills needed in the middle-school years. I highly recommend using all four titles in a planned fashion in the classroom. ✨

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.

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES

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28	29	30				

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.
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 2008, 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.
Fall 2009 date TBA
San Diego, California

What makes a school stand out for the quality of its character?

The Character Education Partnership (CEP) annually identifies 10 schools (or in some cases, school districts) with the distinction “National School of Character” in recognition of their outstanding work in character education. These schools exemplify CEP’s “Eleven Principles of Character Education,” although each does so in its own way.

Eleven schools were named to the NSOC distinction this year, a fact I note because five of the 11 are Missouri schools located around the University of Missouri St. Louis, where CSEE Moral Development advisor Marvin Berkowitz heads the McDonnell Leadership Academy in Character Education. Berkowitz has mentored four of this year’s five winning schools.

What is the catch? In Berkowitz’s words, “I try to get as many principals as I can” to follow five guidelines. (See this issue’s page 1 article, in case you’ve not already been there.)

Modeling

We are powerful models for the students in our schools. They see how we interact with them, how we interact with one another, how we interact with visitors to the school. Our actions speak far more loudly than our words. As Berkowitz says: be the character you want to see in students.

Relationship Building

Build healthy relationships with every student. Every adult does not need to have a healthy relationship with every student at school, but every student must have a good relationship with an adult in the school. The more such relationships there are, the better the school. Schools characterized by strong relationships have fewer behavior problems, less school violence, and more generous alumni donors down the way.

Empowering Student Voices

Berkowitz’s third recommendation is to empower students. Leadership is a skill; ethical leadership develops only when

students’ voices are respected and students have meaningful roles to play in their schools. Great teachers have demonstrated how even children in the early elementary grades can be empowered, and trusted, to help decide rules for the classroom.

Knowledge Transfer in Perspective

We should keep perspective on the number of facts we think our students need to learn. We know well that students (at least those in classes other than the ones we teach) will forget most of the year’s facts. It is the skills we teach, the chance to practice them, and the kind of modeling we do that our students will remember.

Stop the Rewards

And finally, we have Berkowitz’s impassioned command: Stop the rewards! Goodie stickers for behaviors, points for this and that. In the most extreme situations—involving training rather than teaching—external rewards might be useful. But in schools like those receiving this newsletter, especially where behavior is concerned, extrinsic rewards get in the way. Young people *want* to behave, and usually *will* behave, if we do the right kind of interacting with them and build strong relationships.

Berkowitz’s “top five” clearly lead to success, if we can judge by the number of St. Louis area schools that stand out for their character work. The five are goals to aim for rather than absolutes to reach, however. “Most schools get only part of the way there, but it is still powerful stuff,” he notes.

What keeps most of us from setting “goals to aim for” like the above is time, or so we say; at least that is our excuse. But it is well known that the time spent on the moral growth of a school is won back both in terms of student social maturity and academic performance. ✨

Note: For more about CEP and National School of Character distinction, visit CEP’s Web site at www.character.org.

David Streight