

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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EIGHT TIPS TO DEVELOPING CARING KIDS

BY NANCY EISENBERG, PH.D.

There is a word we researchers use to refer to voluntary behavior that aims to help another, like sharing, or providing comfort: “prosocial.” Although most parents and teachers would say they value prosocial behavior in children and want to encourage it, it is important to note that not all prosocial behaviors are equal. They can be performed for a variety of reasons, ranging from the self-oriented desires (e.g., to get approval from peers, or to get something in return) to more altruistic reasons (e.g., because of concern for another person or the desire to act on one’s personal values). Most adults would prefer to help children develop behaviors that are performed for the latter reasons rather than for selfish reasons. Unfortunately, it often is impossible to know children’s motives for assisting another, but there are things we can do to promote other-oriented or value-based (altruistic) behaviors.

What Not to Do: Rewards

First, one thing that is *not* advised is encouraging prosocial actions by giving children concrete rewards such as candy or money for their behavior. Providing rewards appears to encourage prosocial behavior primarily when it has a benefit for the child. Providing praise or approval for helping behavior probably does not undermine children’s prosocial development, although it is not clear that approval, by itself, is very effective at promoting children’s concern for others and their welfare.

Be Aware of Children’s Capacity for Empathy and Sympathy

An important tool for fostering children’s prosocial behavior is their capacity for empathy and sympathy. Empathy involves feeling another’s emotion, or feeling an emotion consistent with what another person would be expected to feel in a given situation. For example, if a girl views a boy who is sad and she feels sad as a consequence, that is empathy. Or if a boy reads about children who are victims of an earthquake and feels sad, that also is empathy.

After feeling empathy, children often experience sympathy, which is concern or sorrow for another person. Although it is likely that sympathy often stems from experiencing another’s emotions (empathy), it can also occur when a person tries to take the perspective of another. Thus, children may experience sympathy without actually first experiencing another’s emotional state (e.g., they may only know what the person is experiencing). Feelings of sympathetic concern for another often provide the motivation for both children and adults to help another.

Surprisingly, even children in the second year of life seem to experience empathy and sometimes help others—usually familiar people—when they experience it. Moreover, as children develop a better understanding that others’ feelings are not the same thing as their own feelings, they begin to develop rudimentary sympathy in the early years. These capacities for empathy and sympathy can be exploited by adults.

How do adults promote empathy and especially sympathy in children?

Heighten Children’s Awareness of the Emotions of Others

This can be done by discussing others’ emotions in everyday conversations and informally teaching children about how events are associated with specific emotions. Adults can also point out how others who are not in the child’s everyday world feel—for example, that poor children who receive food during a famine would feel happy to get food.

Point Out the Consequences of Actions and Try to Understand the Other’s Feelings

Misbehavior that has negative consequences for others is a great time to foster empathy, such as when a child hurts a peer’s feelings or acts aggressively against

another child. In such a situation, adults can point out the consequences of the child's actions and help the child understand what the other person is feeling and thinking. With young children, this technique—which we call inductive reasoning—must involve simple ideas and language, such as “see, you made Mary cry.” With older children, the adult can elaborate more. With young children, such inductions appear to be more effective if delivered with some emotional force—that is, if the parent is emotionally involved and seems concerned or even a bit upset. The adult's emotion likely serves to focus the child's attention on what the adult is saying and to communicate that the message is important.

Adults can also strengthen a child's capacity for empathy and sympathy by being supportive and sensitive. Children are better able to attend to others' emotions and needs if their own needs are met. Moreover, the supportive adults in a child's life provide empathic models to imitate. Many studies indicate that children tend to follow the modeling of adults (as well as peers) who show concern or exhibit prosocial behavior.

In addition, warm parenting has been found to be associated over time with the development of children's skills in regulating their actions. Children who are well-regulated tend to experience sympathy rather than be overwhelmed by the negative emotion experienced when empathizing. When people cannot manage their empathic arousal, experiencing the pain of others can be a tremendously negative experience; when this occurs, individuals focus on alleviating their own distress rather than that of a needy other. Moreover, when parents use harsh discipline, children tend to focus on their own needs and on avoiding punishment rather than attend to the needs of others.

Help Children Learn the Skills for Dealing with Their Emotions

Adults can also foster children's sympathy by helping them learn to deal with their emotions. For example, when children experience negative emotions in their own lives, adults can teach them ways to actively deal with stressors (e.g., help them develop study skills or discuss ways to deal with negative experiences at school). In contrast, when parents minimize children's negative emotion (e.g., say “it is not that bad”) or punish children for expressing their own negative feelings, children tend to be relatively low in sympathy.

Minimize Punishment, Maximize Support

Perhaps the most important way to enhance children's prosocial

behavior, as discussed above, is through children's capacity for empathy and sympathy. However, both parents and teachers can promote prosocial behavior in additional ways. Supportive and sensitive rather than punitive parenting and discipline are not only related to sympathy, but also to children's tendencies to experience guilt and moral tendencies more generally.

Opportunities to Give—Community Service

Children who are encouraged to engage in activities that benefit others are more likely to help in the future, as long as they did not initially feel forced to help. For example, adults can provide children with opportunities to donate small amounts of money to others or make toys or reading materials for needy children.

Help Children Develop Perceptions of Themselves as Being Prosocial

Adults can take advantage of the occasions when children engage in prosocial actions by attributing such actions to a prosocial disposition. As an example, when a child helps or shares with another, the adult can say, “you helped because you are a generous person.” For children about seven years or older, such statements may foster the self-perception that they are generous and helpful, which serves to motivate future prosocial actions.

In summary, parents, teachers, and other adults in a child's life can increase the likelihood of children's behaving prosocially by helping children understand others' feelings and how their actions affect others; by modeling prosocial actions; by providing supportive rather than punitive socialization and discipline; by providing children with opportunities to assist others (opportunities that are perceived by the child as voluntary); and by attributing children's prosocial actions to the child's personality or character. Moreover, helping children regulate their own emotions likely not only promotes children's sympathy, but provides them with the resources to deny themselves when it benefits another. ✨

Nancy Eisenberg, Ph.D., is one of the foremost researchers on children's prosocial development in the Western world. She is Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University, and editor (with William Damon) of Social, Emotional, and Personality Development Handbook of Psychology, 5th ed. This article is adapted from her contribution to Good Things to Do: Expert Tips on Fostering Goodness in Kids, to be published by CSEE later this year.

CSEE COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD
2008-2009



Application for Recognition
Excellence in Elementary School Programs

Application Deadline February 23, 2009

With our 2009 Award, CSEE wants to hear from elementary schools, who too often get passed over for the excellence of many high school service programs.

Tell us about service in your elementary school (schools with any or all grades pre-K through 6 may apply).
This form may be photocopied for submission to CSEE.

School Information

School Name: _____

Address: _____

Head of School: _____

School Web Address, if you have one: http://www._____

Grade Levels: _____ Student Enrollment: _____

Please circle all categories that apply to your school:

- | | | |
|----------|----------------|---------------|
| urban | co-educational | non-sectarian |
| suburban | boys only | religious |
| rural | girls only | |

Service Program Information

Circle the grades involved in your service program: pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6

Please provide a brief description of the program (mandatory, volunteer, hours or project based, whether service is integrated into the curriculum, etc.): _____

Name of Service Director: _____

Phone: () _____ Fax: () _____

Email address: _____

Your position: _____ voluntary _____ full-time _____ part-time

In addition to the application, please submit a formal response from the Community Service Director or teacher in charge of service, addressing the following:

- a. How are service projects identified and how do they fit the needs of your community?
- b. How are teachers familiarized with the program and their possible roles in it?
- c. If the program is integrated into the curriculum, how does this take place?
- d. How is your program evaluated?

Include any supporting documentation you would like to share (note: please send copies, as we will not be able to return these)—newspaper clippings, letters or materials from agencies/organizations where service is performed, student publicity photos, etc.

Submitted by: _____

Title: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: () _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Awards should be received at CSEE by midnight Eastern Time on February 23, 2009.
They may be emailed. We recommend you keep copies of this completed application for your files.
Award honorees will be notified in writing and by email.

YOU CAN PREMIUMIZE A PIG, BUT...

Despite all the choices of candy in the world, I am happily married to my favorite: Plain M&Ms. Clearly, I am not alone. M&Ms and other classic brand-name candy bars made by Mars, Inc. have made that parent company into the largest confectionary empire in the world, with total annual sales over \$21 billion.

You'll notice I dated myself (and my philosophy) when using the now-defunct name "plain M&Ms" for my sweet spouse. Truth be told (truth be sold?) there's no such thing any more as "plain M&Ms." Now those same M&Ms in the classic brown bag are called "Milk Chocolate M&Ms." Why the change? According to a statement from the official Web site of the Mars Company emblematic of our ever-increasingly consumerist culture: "In the summer of 2000, it was decided that 'M&M's® Plain Chocolate Candies were too good to be called 'Plain' and therefore the packaging name was changed to 'M&M's® Milk Chocolate Candies.'"

Same candy, different day. I preached a sermon to students that year about the sad sign of the times to be found in the emerging liability whispered in the word "plain" and how such naked insecurity on the face of everyone's favorite candy was no way to begin a new century. In fact, like many of you, I spent the 1990s speaking out often in the pulpit and the classroom against the cult of perfection that was gaining force and brutality as maniacal materialism was going mainstream.

You remember those days, right? When Madonna went from putting on style in the 1980s to taking everything off in the 1990s; when Michael Jackson went from expressing himself with his body to expressing himself on it; when the image of femininity as starving toward skin and bones sprinted from the catwalk to the sitcom; and when the banal competitions on decades of game shows morphed into the daily dose of Darwinist dog fights on elimination-as-entertainment reality television shows. I was worried then that our students—from the

time they were old enough to watch their first television shows—were being shown and told that the good is the enemy of perfection.

But a new century has brought an even higher-stakes concern for those of us who share and shepherd spiritual communities in our schools. And as before, the trends of truth in our times can be found in the packaging of M&Ms. One would think that upon surveying the absolute meltdown of our economy this season, any serious and successful company would look at the rising inflation, soaring food prices, and general doom and gloom as screams to lower prices and offer more for less.

But not our friends at Mars, Inc. No, they have chosen the worst of times to release a new, luxury upgrade for their old but loved classic: enter the Premium M&Ms. This pack has high-end, curvy clutch-me casing to protect and purvey the precious chocolate pearls and trumpet the new style of M&Ms that cost twice as much as the old ones. Same candy, different way.

I was not the only person to notice. In a recent *New York Times* op-ed, Roger Cohen wrote an entire column on Premium M&Ms. He explained a new trend in marketing called "premiumization," one that involves the counter-intuitive move to raise prices and upgrade packaging for products in order to stir a sense of scarcity and offer invitations to buyers to experience episodic luxury and single-purchase posturing of affluence. Apparently it's a body-blow to call a politician

I believe we must be people who practice incarnation. We must show up at the moments of meaning in the lives of our students, and not just at the camcorder sessions. Rather, we must show up in between the big games and seasonal concerts to be a non-anxious and unconditionally loving presence in the lives of our students.

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CSEE PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT

Discipline for Moral Growth

by Marilyn Watson, Ph.D.

© 2006 by CSEE

Price:

\$7.50 (members)

\$9.00 (others)

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

In all of CSEE's work with schools to encourage effective character education and moral development programs, the power of discipline continues to surface. The way we approach discipline for misbehavior in schools can improve, or diminish, the effectiveness of our character education efforts.

Discipline for Moral Growth was commissioned by CSEE specifically to encourage CSEE schools to adopt practices that simultaneously curtail misbehavior and allow a misbehaving child to be integrated into the community in a way that preserves his or her sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging.

Marilyn Watson is the past program director of the Child Development Project, often cited as one of the most effective moral development programs ever instituted. She also headed the National Teacher Education Project for the Developmental Studies Center.

Discipline for Moral Growth is an easy-to-read, clear guide to disciplining in such a way that young people learn to control their behaviors, but without experiencing the anger or frustration that causes them to feel alienated from the community. ✨

SPIRITUAL DIRECTIONS
CONTINUED FROM P. 5

an elitist, but it's become the new goal of marketers to invite everyone to that caste party.

I used to worry that our highly resourced and competitive schools were aping the culture and idolizing perfection in our systems of reward and punishment. I still have this worry. But in addition, I now worry that students are seeing a new concern from the culture that it is not enough to be loved or valued. No, being good is the new plain. I worry now that our students feel the pressure to premiumize their bodies, activities, Facebook profiles, and school transcripts. And what are the forms of premiumization in the lives of our young people? Age-old ways to fake the facts have new force in a culture of premiumization: steroids, cheating, embellishing, stealing, lying, posturing, and prejudice. And there's nothing like an election year to parade premiumization over any other form of presentation.

The answer to this newest tsunami of vitriol-reality is timeless, spiritual, and beautiful. I believe we must be people who practice incarnation. We must show up at the moments of meaning in the lives of our students, and not just at the camcorder sessions. Rather, we must show up in between the big games and seasonal concerts to be a non-anxious and unconditionally loving presence in the lives of our students.

I want my students to know that their being, not just their busyness, is a thing of awe and beauty. In our eyes let them see that we rejoice at their non-competing uniqueness, that we celebrate our solidarity as spiritual beings, and that we are safe adults in their lives because we speak and live creatively but shamelessly with the imperfections that we all share. ✨

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@sssas.org.

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



FOUNDED IN 1898

December 6

Saint Nicholas Day (Christianity)

On this day, Christians celebrate the birth of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children. Saint Nicholas was known for his kindness and generosity. He is also recognized for his secret gift-giving, as when he discreetly provided the dowries for three daughters of a poor farmer to save them from destitution. For many, this day is celebrated by giving gifts. The American Santa Claus is derived from the Dutch Sinterklaas, another name for Saint Nicholas.

December 6-9

Hajj (Islam)

Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca, occurring on the seventh through twelfth days of the month of Dhu al-Hajja in the Islamic calendar. This is the largest annual pilgrimage in the world, and all able-bodied Muslims are required to participate at least once in their lifetime. Several rituals are performed during this pilgrimage, including walking counter-clockwise seven times around the Kaaba, a cube-shaped building representing the Muslim direction of prayer, and drinking from the Zamzam well.

December 7

Waqf al Arafa—Hajj Day (Islam)

Waqf al Arafa is the Islamic observance day during Hajj in which pilgrims pray for forgiveness and mercy. Pilgrims stay awake at night to pray on the hill of Arafat, the site where Muhammad delivered his last sermon.

December 8

Bodhi Day, Rohatsu (Buddhism)

This day marks the time when Prince Siddhartha Gautama, a spiritual teacher and founder of Buddhism, positioned himself under the Pipul tree and vowed to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment. Buddhist traditions vary as to what Siddhartha's experience was while meditating under the tree, but all agree that by the rising of the morning star he had experi-

enced enlightenment and attained Nirvana, a state of being free from suffering and breaking out of the cycle of rebirth.

December 8

Immaculate Conception (Roman Catholic Christianity)

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates the belief that the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, was conceived without the taint of original sin, and thus preserved from this taint all of her life. Catholics observe this as a day of obligation and church attendance is required.

December 9

Eid al Adha (Islam)

Concluding the Hajj, Eid al Adha is the Feast of Sacrifice, the most important feast of Islam. It recalls Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, in obedience to God, and commemorates God's forgiveness. All are expected to dress in their finest clothing and perform Eid prayer in a mosque, and those who can afford to do so sacrifice their best domestic animals, such as sheep or cows, as a symbol of Abraham's sacrifice.

December 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Roman Catholic Christianity)

In December of 1531, Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin saw visions of the Virgin Mary on the hill of Tepeyak near Mexico City. On December 12, Mary instructed him to ask church officials to build a basilica in her honor in Mexico City. When Juan Diego asked for a sign, she placed roses in a blanket that he carried with him on his journey to the city. Upon arrival, he unrolled the blanket to find an image of Mary imprinted on the cloth.

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The Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe was built in her honor, and thousands of Catholics make pilgrimages there every year. This day is celebrated with festivals, dances, and special masses.

December 16-25

Posadas Navideñas (Christianity)

In Hispanic Christian tradition, Posadas are the celebrations that happen during the nine days before the “Noche Buena” or “Holy Night” of December 24. These Posadas are an enactment of Joseph and the Virgin Mary looking for lodging on their pilgrimage to Bethlehem. In some practices, families in a neighborhood will take turns hosting, or playing the part of innkeeper, while others have a door-to-door procession with candles and symbolic elements.

December 21

Yule (Christianity, Paganism)

Yule marks the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, and celebrates the rebirth of the sun in the Norse pagan tradition. The modern-day, Western yule festival contains a large blend of celebrations, reaching back to multiple cultures and religious practices. Christians often celebrate this holiday as the birth of light through Jesus. Practices include decorating a fir or spruce tree, burning a yule log, hanging mistletoe and holly branches, and giving gifts.

December 22-29

Hanukkah (Judaism)

Also known as the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah commemorates the 164 B.C.E. Maccabean recapture and rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. During this celebration, special readings and songs that focus on liberty and freedom are performed, and gifts are often given. Hanukkah lasts for eight nights, and on each night a candle from the Menorah is lit to represent the miracle of the eternal flame. Tradition has it that there was only enough consecrated olive oil to fuel the flame in the Temple for one day, but the oil miraculously burned for eight days, the time it took to prepare and consecrate fresh olive oil.

December 25

Christmas (Christianity)

Christmas is the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The actual date of Jesus’ birth is unknown, but December 25 was made popular by Pope Liberius of Rome in 354 C.E. Although this day is celebrated by Christians throughout the world, traditions and practices vary among different cultures and communities. The day is often celebrated in prayer and song at church services, and gifts are often given to represent the gifts Jesus received from the Magi.

December 25

Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christianity)

The Feast of the Nativity is the Orthodox Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus. It is also the break of a 40-day fast, in which participants purify both body and soul in preparation for Christ’s birth.

December 26

Zarathosht Diso, Death of Prophet Zarathustra (Zoroastrianism)

Zarathustra was a Persian prophet who, around the sixth century B.C.E., believed he had seen visions of God, whom he called Ahura Mazda: the creator of all that is good. Zoroastrianism is strongly dualistic. Zarathustra believed in the existence of two powers, good and evil, and taught that all human beings have the free will to choose between these two powers. On December 26, Zoroastrians recognize the Prophet’s death and spend the day in solemn prayer.

December 28

Holy Innocents (Christianity)

Holy Innocents is a Christian day of solemn reflection, recognizing the male children of Bethlehem who were killed by Herod the Great in his attempt to eliminate the infant Jesus, whom he deemed as a threat to the throne.

December 28

Feast of the Holy Family

(Roman Catholic Christianity)

This day celebrates the family unit of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and is recognized with special prayer. The movable feast is usually celebrated the Sunday after Christmas, or, if Christmas is on a Sunday, then December 30.

December 29

Al-Hijra—Muharram, first day of the new year (Islam)

Al-Hijra is celebrated on the first day of Muharram, the month when Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina.

December 31

Watch Night (Christianity)

Watch Night began with the Moravians, in the early 1700s. Watch Night became a significant event for African-American Christian communities after the celebration of 1862, which fell on the evening before the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect and slavery was abolished. ✨

COSMOPOLITANISM: ETHICS IN A WORLD OF STRANGERS

Kwame Anthony Appiah

NEW YORK: W. W. NORTON, 2006

BY RICHARD BARBIERI

For many young people growing up in New York a few decades ago, the *Daily News* was the first source of knowledge about the wider world. Then as now, the *News* heaped scorn on numerous targets, especially a group it called “one-worlders” (often linked with the equally opprobrious “do-gooders”). Both terms were puzzling: was there more than one world, and why was doing good a bad thing?

Anthony Appiah’s latest book seems designed to answer these niggling questions. Yes, he says, there is one world, and doing good in that world is part of “the very idea of morality.” But the first step toward doing good is to become aware of the variety of values present in our own and other cultures, and of the grounds for respecting or challenging these values.

Appiah comes to his topic with a great advantage: he has seen, in his lifetime and his family’s, Ghanaian chiefs, Englishwomen, and a host of other nations and cultures coming together. He therefore writes about customs, such as taboos and family structures, as an insider of several cultures. (In Ghanaian society, for example, a man’s primary obligations are to his sister’s children rather than toward his own.)

Although he never cites Isaiah Berlin, Appiah shares with him the position that there are many values, and that no one overarching principle, not even the Golden Rule or Kant’s categorical imperative, can cover all situations. As he puts it, “There are some values that are, or should be, universal, just as there are lots of values that are, and must be, local.”

However, Appiah challenges the view that an openness to other cultures implies relativism about values, or that the familiar fact-value distinction is itself a plausible description of the world. The middle chapters of the book are,

in fact, an excellent review of the subjectivity debate, with a firm conclusion that values are discussable in much the same way as are facts, and that in each case there are better and worse positions.

In addition to the big question of how we can come to appreciate a variety of values across cultures, and how we can decide when a particular value—say the opposition to genocide—overrules cultural respect, Appiah delves into several other intriguing questions: what do we mean by preserving a culture, and who should decide whether to do so? Another example: how do we balance the view that each society, or nation, or people, has a special right to its arts and artifacts, with the belief that these treasures are the common legacy of all humanity? Most interesting, perhaps, is his discussion of what our moral obligations are to “a world of strangers.” His chapter “Kindness to Strangers” includes such classic questions as our obligation to save a drowning child at little cost to ourselves, the “press a button and kill someone in China” dilemma, and the issue of how much of our wealth we should sacrifice to alleviate great suffering around the world (which he aptly dubs “the Singer principle” after utilitarian Peter Singer). This chapter in particular would be an excellent ethics course text.

Although Appiah cautions, “I’m a philosopher by trade, and philosophers rarely write really useful books,” *Cosmopolitanism* is an exception to the rule, useful to anyone with an interest in learning how to “live together as the global tribe we have become.” ❁

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

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES

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FEBRUARY 2009

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Putting Together an Effective Character Education Program (Focus on Service Learning)

The Director of the School for Ethical Education will spend two days with CSEE participants in this event, discussing and showing how schools incorporate the Eleven Principles of Character Education into school programs. The special focus of the second day will be on how programs like service learning can both be enhanced and enhance the school's mission, when they link their goals with those of the school's moral development goals.

A CSEE "Working with the Best" event
With David Wangaard, Ph.D.
November 21-22, 2008
Wooster School, Danbury, Connecticut

Honor Codes and Honor Councils

This conference will help schools 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, but 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

With Dan Heishman
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.

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 🍀

EMPATHY, MISBEHAVIOR, AND DEVELOPING A CONSCIENCE

Nancy Eisenberg's article on helping children develop their natural tendencies for empathy touches on issues addressed in three or four of my pieces in this column in the past five years. Though the columns in question have addressed empathy in a variety of ways, the thread is the same: there are actions—easily accomplished actions—we can take in our schools that can help children grow up with a disposition to be aware of others and sensitive to their needs.

The “king” of empathy studies and translating them to the public is Martin Hoffman, whose book *Empathy and Moral Development* (Cambridge, 2000) is a valuable resource for educators and parents alike. Certainly Hoffman would agree with Nancy Eisenberg's eight suggestions in this newsletter (he cites her research at several points in his book), but the action he clearly stresses above others entails pointing out the consequences of actions and trying to understand others' feelings.

All of the scholars, researchers, and moral development trainers on CSEE's National Advisory Board for Moral Development have emphasized this same point in their writing, both for us and elsewhere. We can help children develop their natural capacity for empathy, even—and especially—when we are correcting misbehavior.

The procedure is simple, though a little practice helps: Teddy kicks a ball in the gym and it hits Maria. The adult who witnesses the action (or who even just hears about it) shows concern for Maria, then points out to Teddy what happened because of his actions, and helps him note her hurt, her fear. The key ingredient is that one child begins to understand better another's perspective (i.e., “How do you think she is feeling right now?”); this ingredient is accompanied by his recognition of his responsibility for causing the other's pain.

Although Hoffman does not stress a following step, when the action in question did indeed cause harm, or could have caused harm, a number of experts point to the value of encouraging the child to make up for the damage in some way. In some cases, an apology suffices. In others, perhaps more is called for. When we ask Teddy to think about what he might do to make up for how he hurt Maria, we are performing a much greater service than just a disciplinary one, though, since the action taken will be his (assuming he suggests something basically appropriate). He will thus leave this encounter with a reminder of how others feel or might feel as the result of his actions, and with the knowledge that an adult trusted his competence sufficiently to allow for his input into how this matter should be handled.

When treated this way, children leave disciplinary situations more disposed toward being empathic, and more capable of seeing others' perspectives. The whole school community is better for it. ✨

David Streight