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Character education : early intervention

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Character Education:
Early Education Intervention

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LS400, Capstone

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Abstract

To educate a man in mind and not morals is to educate a menace to society.

~Theodore Roosevelt

Today more than ever children face obstacles that interfere with academic success such as violence, peer cruelty and a degrading moral character. Children need to be educated socially, emotionally and morally to adequately prepare for today's market in today's world. Character Education helps children from every cultural background and economic level, particularly in the early years of learning, to develop an understanding of the value of responsibility, respect and self-discipline, essential life-skills needed to face real-life situations with a sense of empowerment and integrity. The overall goal of character education is to help kids function in society with recognizably accepted virtues that are a community's best values and ethical ideals. We as educators and parents need to be aware that character education is an essential part of providing the framework for shaping a schools cultural climate while also providing a safe and positive environment for all children to thrive.

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Research Background

Problem Statement

"Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, and show disrespect for their elders. They contradict their parents; they chatter before company; they gobble their food, and they terrorize their teachers."
~so said Socrates in the fifth century BC.

Now at a different time, our society reveals many of the same problems facing educators today as during the days of Socrates. Leading thinkers around the world identified one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century:" Right up there with nuclear catastrophe and environmental accidents was breakdown of moral values." (Rushworth, 1994).

With a decline of morality and values, the need for character education is becoming more apparent and gaining considerable momentum. According to a survey conducted of teachers in 1992 by the National Center on Addiction and Substance abuse, "More than half of the respondents reported perceiving a decline in student morality since they began teaching" (Education World). Paralleling the rise of school violence is a significant lack of conscience. The Ethics of American Youth reported 43% of high school boys and 37% of middle school boys feel threatening or hitting someone who makes you angry, is alright (Davidson, and Stokes, 2001). In fact, the rise in youth crime has continued to rise exponentially. According to statistics, "Over a 20-year period (1968-1988), there was a 53 percent increase in all violent crime for males and females seventeen or under" (Lickona, 1991,p. 4). These statistics, although alarming, illustrate a growing trend among youth, which could result in the degrading character of our nation if

these issues are not adequately addressed through an integration of early intervention of character education.

The violence among American youth is an unfortunate representation of a dark side to what is normally seen as a great and powerful nation. According to author Thomas Lickona, "Among leading industrial nations, the United States has by far the highest murder rate for 15-24 year old males, seven times higher that Canada's and 40 times higher than Japans" (p. 13). Consequently, this ongoing rise of violence in schools, particularly like what happened at Columbine High School and others, has created a public awareness that something was lacking in an academic school setting. It is no longer a debate that schools must respond to the rise in violence among its students.

Fostering the development of good character is a viable alternative to instilling essential skills needed when dealing with anger issues in hope of preventing further social violence, but how to implement these skills remains elusive. National teachers' associations agree that character education is the foundation of teacher education, but with little consensus as to how character education programs should be implemented (Colorado Department of Education, 2000). Many schools shy away from formal character education, citing a national diversity in beliefs and values that make such education a family, rather than an institutional, imperative (Education Week). While the debate continues to disagree how to implement and measure character education, my research will present the case that makes character education in public schools both possible and desirable. Clearly, "Schools cannot be ethical bystanders at a time when our

society is in deep moral trouble" (Lickona, 1991) Even Dr. Martin Luther King adamantly stated, *"Intelligence plus character- that is the goal of true education"* (1947).

History of Character Education

In Early colonial America, education was the foundation of democracy. Educators and preachers taught the young to read the Bible to ensure an ethical citizenship. In the Nineteenth-century, McGuffey Readers extolled values of honesty, hard work, and thrift. In the advent of the common schools in the 1800s, the emphasis then shifted from good habits of conduct to good reasoning skills. During that time, George Palmer, a philosophy professor who was adamant about the importance of teaching moral character stated, "A teacher who fails to impress elementary righteousness on his pupils brutalizes every child in his charge" (Palmer, 1913, p.37). But then in 1919, the research findings of Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May at the Institute of Social and Religious Research made a significant shift on the public's perception regarding the benefit of teaching character education stating, " prevailing ways of inculcating ideals probably do little good and may do some harm" (Amundson, 1991). Nothing set back the teaching of character education more than the conclusion of these findings.

As a result, schools began to adopt a growing public perception that values were a private issue and began departing from teaching character education. During the 50s and 60s, educating for character was no longer a part of the curriculum and the confidence once felt about character education began to crumble. Among the notion was "when it came to right and wrong, many people began to think that it was all relative to your point of view" (Lickona, 2001, p. 7). Some of the long-term effects included wide-spread

disciplinary problems in schools; disrespect of teachers; a rise in youth violent crime, in and out of school; prevalent drinking and drug use and an overall lack of moral understanding and judgment (Colorado Department of Education, 2000). Finally, after more than a generation of disagreement and disorder, schools began to re-focus on the issue of character building and instilling values among their youth. In addition, with school violence and dropout rates increasing, the high cost of neglecting these issues had caught the attention of Congress.

In recent years, politicians have taken an active stand in financially supporting character education in schools. According to Erik W. Robelen, "The existing federal initiative, called the Partnerships in character Education Pilot Projects Program, was created in 1994 as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act." Adding, "Under that program, the Department of Education issued about $36 million in grants to 37 states through fiscal 2000." (Education Week, 2001). Those states receiving grants were to set up character education programs that would provide curriculum material, teacher education and develop character education into the broader curriculum.

Most importantly, in March of 2001, Bush unveiled an outline for education spending, including tripling of federal funding for character education to about $25 million a year (Education Week, 2001). From a historical perspective, the instruction of social morals coupled with the rights of its' citizens have remained the glue to a democratic society and with the return of character education, can continue to prepare the future leaders of tomorrow's democracy.

Personal Interest

I am interested in character education because I believe good character is the backbone of a progressive society and I see the degrading moral character in schools today. I also believe in Character Education as a tool to empower youth to become emotionally, socially, and intellectually successful in today's society. Youth need to be better equipped in dealing with various issues like self-control, capacity to communicate, ability to cooperate, and an appreciation for human difference. Character Education not only benefits children by developing these attributes, but builds on an interlocking set of ethical, civic, and humanitarian values that has long-lasting social and global benefits as well.

I have witnessed first hand how destructive and discouraging a school climate that lacks a core of ethical principles can be to the nurturing of young minds. I have seen young students hitting and pushing each other violently, screaming foul language at teachers and administrators with out a conscience or concern. I have watched how the news continues to report kids killing kids in the schools that we as tax payers and parents, entrust to keep our children safe. As a future educator and a parent, I feel character education is the number one issue facing our nation today as a leading deterrent to the decay of social moral values and a key factor in preparing our children to be productive citizens of tomorrow. Authors Ryan and Bohlin write, "There is a direct, cause-and-effect

connection between a society's education system and its social progress or decline"

(1999, p. 89).

For the future of our children, our schools, our society, and a nation, I believe a
school that builds on academic achievement can have a greater overall impact on its
student's success through the support and incorporation of character education. And it is
my firm conviction that when you build moral character within a student you give them
fundamentals that profoundly affect all other abilities.

Definition of Terms

Character- (from the Greek word *charassein,* which means to "engrave") An individual's pattern of behavior; his moral constitution (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

Ethics- A group of values or beliefs that govern behavior.

Ideals- A mental image of excellence or a perfect exemplar that one believes to be attainable.

Morals- Habits of conduct relating to right and wrong, good or bad.

Principles- Guiding rules or codes of good conduct by which one directs one's life or actions.

Values- Successful social concepts held in general high regard, which are derived from pragmatic usefulness over time.

Virtues- (from the Latin *vir,* which has a root meaning of "force") Traits that adhere to the highest standards of good in order to further the pursuit of the general welfare (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

Research Findings

Competing Theories of Character Education: Pros

"Virtue and vice will not grow together in a great degree, but they will grow where they are planted, and when one has taken root, it is not easily supplanted by the other. The great art of correcting mankind consists in prepossessing the mind with good principles.
~Noah Webster

A. Cross-Curriculum Integration:

The first theory involves teaching character in the classroom through integrating various values and beliefs into a skills-and-knowledge curriculum. This approach is exemplified by Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School, one of the "Schools of Character" honored for integrating character education at the center of a rigorous course of academic study. Based on the belief that there is embedded within a shared knowledge important lessons about morals, virtue, and civility, this school integrated a monthly theme into the core knowledge curriculum that supports and teaches about virtues. One example of this includes a study of immigration that focuses the discussion around the courage and perseverance of the immigrants. Another example includes multicultural stories about different children in differing hardships and what aspects of character were applied to overcome these hardships (ERIC, 2004). Ultimately, proponents of this theory believe integrating values into established curriculum can be a powerful force shaping a school and can easily become part of the day-to-day school experience.

B. Single-Unit Curriculum:

The second theory includes character education taught separately as distinct contexts of study rather than additions to existing curriculum. Buck Lodge Middle School, also

one of the "Schools of Character" exemplified this approach through implementing a

"Virtue of the Week program". This program presents a different virtue every week for

students to discuss. In addition, students present projects that demonstrate practical

applications and an understanding of the virtues learned (ERIC, 2004). The belief here is

that character education is important enough to single out and address individually.

C. Tradition-based Curriculum:

A third theory establishes that children develop an attachment to positive traits

through the emulation of adults before they can understand the moral reasoning.

Incorporated in to the belief of Hazelwood Elementary School, another member of the

"Schools of Character" is the conviction that it takes a community to teach a child (ERIC,

2004). The key components include the three core values integrated into the classroom,

which help to build a sense of community among the children. Each of the these core

values- autonomy, belonging, and competence, are taught through example and designed

to include the community through assignments that involve their parents and connect

students with community members. This approach is essential in the early years of a

child's life to learn valuable character traits and requires adults to see that modeling

values is an important, if not critical part of this process.

D. Values Clarification Curriculum:

A fourth theory identifies the role of a student in recognizing their own values,

whereas, the role of the teacher remains morally neutral while encouraging discussion

and problem solving. Referred to as "Values Clarification", this approach is presented by

Simon, Howe, and Kirschembaum, authors of *Values Clarification, a handbook of practical strategies for teachers and students,* who write, "The teacher should present themselves as a person with values, but does not impose them" (p. 2). This method of application was also translated into the curriculum in Hazelwood Elementary School through teachers giving students opportunities to talk about problems without directing their choices. Ultimately, the goal of the values clarification approach is to involve students in practical experiences, making them aware of their own feelings, ideas, and beliefs, so that the choices and decisions they make are conscious and deliberate, based on their own value system.

Competing Theories of Character Education: Cons

A. Cross-Curriculum Integration:

Critics of integration feel the method of simplistic applications (posters, tee-shirts, and banners) can conflict with a more serious integration of the fundamental components within school pedagogy. This method of reinforcing important aspects of character education through colorful and simple messages can deter students from understanding the more significant purpose of applying the skills of character education throughout your life.

B. Single-Unit Curriculum:

Critics of separation feel students may isolate matters of morals and right behavior as a pedagogy rather than real-life situations. This can be seen as a "bag of virtues" method, or according to Schaps, Schaeffer, and McDonnell, "a cheerleading variety of education that involves multicolored posters and bulletin boards featuring a value or virtue of the month" (Education Week, 2001). The issue here is that if exposed to an ongoing ensemble of optimistic character messages, the students will take on the belief of right and wrong as issues isolated to school and not everyday applications.

C. Tradition-based Curriculum:

Critics of cultural tradition warn that conformity and control do not constitute evidence of good character. The main concern posed by Schaps, Schaeffer, and McDonnell is that this approach, all too often, results in the award becoming the primary

focus rather than the student's action. Schaps, Schaeffer, and McDonnell write, "This praise-and-reward approach applies positive reinforcement as its mainstay in the form of catching students being good and praising them in ways of privileges or prizes" (Education Week, 2001). This message can only lead students to confusing messages as to the way of real-life situations that may not always come with a reward for good behavior.

D. Values Clarification Curriculum:

Critics of values clarification feel this method of pedagogy has several flaws and excludes the essential individuals in a child's life that help to promote cooperation and mutual respect. Authors Ryan and Bohlin examined this issue and found that the problem with values-driven character education is that "although it is more important for students to arrive at their own perspective than to accept someone else's truth, without a pedagogical inclusion of a system of beliefs from which to develop, the best students can do is to come up with their own feelings about an issue" (p. 38). Ultimately, students are left to their own devices with out given a moral compass to guide them.

Critical Review of Character Education

1. The Values Controversy: should we teach values and if so, which ones?

2. Are there significant improvements in the character of children resulting from the integration of Character Education?

The Values Controversy: should we teach values and if so, which ones?

"The common way of life, enduring in all societies, regardless of politics, religion, geographical location, or even across time is the essential element to a fully functioning society, human kindness."
~C.S. Lewis

With such a diverse student population in our schools today, a question worthy of consideration is how to impose a single set of values while adhering to differing pluralistic perspectives? By remaining convicted to the basic moral concepts that are indeed universal (respect, responsibility, compassion, and integrity), these character traits can be implemented to encourage each child's humanity. Theoretically, the teaching of values to students can be in alignment with standards of ethical ideals essential for optimum human interaction. For example, according to authors Ryan and Bohlin, "As children grow from infancy to adulthood, they need to acquire certain character strengths: sound judgment, a sense of responsibility, personal courage, and self mastery" Adding, "These habits of mind and will and heart have traditionally been called the *virtues:* prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance." (1999, p. 207). Essential to all cultures is the need to have virtue through the educating of values.

Expanding upon the perspectives of Ryan and Bohlin, John Dewey posed a question over a century ago that makes a case for incorporating value instruction in the early years of a child's life. Dewey asks, "What is the relative place of habit and of reason in the formation of nature into virtuous and social character?" Dewey goes on to

explain, "The irrational soul is prior to the rational spirit; that is, impulse, will, desire exist in children from the moment of their birth, while judgment, or reason, is in the course of nature not developed in them until they grow older; and so the first training must be of the habits, but later on reason must be trained" (1899, p. 61). The terms "virtues" and "habits" have been introduced interchangeably and refer to a collective belief that not only is the teaching of values important to the healthy, emotional growth of children, but early intervention historically has been considered a natural process to instill habits that later can be put into intelligent use.

Many people concerned with offending community standards of ethics wonder if it is possible to respect the diverse viewpoints of a pluralistic society while learning to share and act upon a set of values that neither infringes upon nor defines a particular religious format? One perspective to consider by Louis Raths (whose strategies were developed from the thinking of John Dewey) focuses more on the process of "how" people come to hold certain beliefs and establish certain behavior; an approach contrasting, rather than focusing on "which" values to teach. The "values clarification approach" (as previously mentioned) helps young people answer some of the moral questions they have, while building upon their own value system (Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, 1978). According to authors Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, "The values-clarification approach does not aim to instill any particular set of values, rather help students utilize seven processes of valuing in their own lives and apply these valuing processes to already formed beliefs and behavior patterns" (p. 19).

The values-clarification approach has many benefits that are two-fold. In one way, teachers can encourage the awareness of differing beliefs and behaviors that students have and would be ready to defend both in and out of the classroom. In another way, this approach also encourages students to critically look at the pros and cons and the consequences of their individual choices thus, reinforcing the main directives of character education. The success of this method is noted by Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum, "The growing amount of empirical research that has been done on the values-clarification approach, and the large amount of practical experience with this approach by thousands of teachers, indicate that students who have been exposed to this approach have become less apathetic, less flighty, less conforming as well as less over-dissenting." Adding, "they are more zestful and energetic, more critical in their thinking, and are more likely to follow through on decisions." (p. 20). Although controversial among educators, the values clarification approach presents fundamental methods to build upon when implementing character education strategies in a school.

Are there significant improvements in the character of children resulting from the integration of Character Education?

Current research is limited, but not restrictive. Even though character education

has not been put through a controlled research evaluation, there have been empirical

studies that show promise. Supported by the Hewlett Foundation, an extended evaluation

of character education was conducted by the California Child Development Project

(Lickona, 2001). According to Lickona, "The CDP employed a team of research

psychologists to answer the question: Does a multifaceted values program, begun in

kindergarten and sustained throughout a child's elementary school years, make a

measurable and lasting difference in a child's moral thinking, attitudes, and behavior?"

(p. 29). The finding of this research was very revealing stating:

> The children participating in the program were from kindergarten
> through fourth grade, and showed significant differences emerged
> in four areas such as:

1. Classroom behavior was positive with increased spontaneous acts of helping, cooperation, affection, and encouragement toward one another in the classroom.

2. Playground behavior showed an increase in concern toward others.

3. Social problem-solving skills presented significant productivity toward resolving hypothetical conflicts paying more attention to the needs of all parties, were less likely to propose aggressive solutions, and came up with more alternative plans.
4. Commitment to democratic values were apparent supporting the belief that all members of a group have a right to participate in the group's decisions and activities.

In addition to the research of psychologists, there are currently many schools that have implemented character education and have been honored through awards presented by professional leaders of leading organizations. For example, an article entitled *The 1998 Ninth Annual Business Week Awards for Instructional Innovation,* noted ten top schools that "…have successfully integrated character education into the lives of their students" According to article, "Schools of Character foster in students a commitment to living and acting in accordance with core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect" Adding, "they do so by developing successful and sustained character education initiatives; connecting students with teachers, school staff, parents, and other adults in an atmosphere of caring community; and, not least, demonstrating that core ethical values can be the basis for improved academic performance and student behaviors" (*Schools of Character,* ERIC, 2004). The following are three of the top ten schools, diverse in nature (suburban, urban and rural; and, from a small body to a large body of students) that were honored for their commitment to character education and their success. I have also included their individual philosophies and some key factors that have made them successful:

1. <u>Benjamin</u> <u>Franklin</u> <u>Classical</u> <u>Charter</u> <u>School</u> is a suburban elementary school with an enrollment of 254 students. Founded by a group of parents and educators who envisioned a richer education for their children, they built their school on four pillars: core curriculum, parental involvement, community service, and character education. Integration of character education is the main objective and is a philosophy that is supported by the school's founders that believe embedded within a shared body of knowledge are important lessons about morals, virtue, and civility. According to the principal, "Teaching within a character framework results in a well ordered, disciplined community full of warmth, as well as high expectations" adding, "Test scores and state evaluations show that the school is doing remarkably." The central focus for this school's success is based on its ability to build and preserve ideals among young children that sustain their sense of wonder about the ultimate goodness of the world.

2. <u>Buck</u> <u>Lodge</u> <u>Middle</u> <u>School</u> is an urban middle school serving an ethnically and culturally diverse student population of nearly 900 students. With thirty-five languages spoken among the students, the staff has responded with a community-building character education that includes: a) the six pillars of character-responsibility, caring, citizenship, respect, fairness, and trustworthiness. b) service-learning connecting students to their community c) problem-solving with peer mediation which teaches students skills in mediation d) and a multicultural perspective curriculum that encourages a forum for students to discuss particular concerns in dealing with prejudice and the anger that arises as a response to it. The central focus for this school's success is based on its ability to adapt, adopt, and innovate.

3. <u>Hazelwood</u> <u>Elementary</u> <u>School</u> is a rural elementary school with an enrollment of 608 students that have adopted a total commitment to the Developmental Studies Center model. This model helped the school to address two main areas of concern-discipline and the development of literature-based reading in a character-centered classroom. The main objectives of the school includes: a) three core values of autonomy, belonging, and competence b) translation of these core values into the classroom through discipline, community building, and encouraging cooperative partnerships among the students c) reaching families through special services that connect them with community resources focusing on empowering and enabling parents to be more effectively involved in their children's lives. According to the principal, "People are amazed at how smoothly the school runs. They feel welcome. They see kids smiling and engaged in their work." Adding, "The children know how to control themselves-what is happening in the classroom is carrying over to the hallways and the cafeteria". The central focus for this schools success is the concept that every student feels part of their community and feels like a winner.

Although the overall success of these schools is significant to the belief that character education makes effective and valuable changes in children's lives, more research is being sought to ensure the continued implementation of such programs. In an article published in Education Week, author Erik Robelen states, "The Senate legislation,

S 311, would quintuple the annual authorization level for such grants, from $10 million to $50 million." Adding, "In addition, up to 5 percent of the money would be set aside for research and to disseminate information about character education"(2001). Eventually, further research will be needed to provide the statistical data that will continue to fuel funding for character education in the future. Yet, in addition to research is an unyielding conviction by schools, parents, and members of society to stay committed to taking active roles in making character educations a success.

What makes for effective Character Education?

More recently, leaders of corporations have acknowledged a need for educating leadership skills that are part of character education. Business Week and the Educational and Professional Publishing Group, both divisions of The McGraw-Hill Companies, along with The Character Education Partnership, developed awards for instructional innovation which "... spotlight public schools across the country that, with the help from parents, community, and business people, have successfully integrated character education into the lives of their students" (*Schools of Character,* ERIC, 2004). According to the organizations criteria, eleven principles were noted as developing effective character education. These eleven principles include:

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. "Character" must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school must be caring community.
5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.
6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.

8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guides the education of students.

9. Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.

10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.

11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

Ultimately, the criteria laid out here identify some essential components required for fully integrating and successfully implementing character education in schools. Basically, when teachers and administrative leaders are educated on character development, this helps to guarantee a school climate that is informed and progressive to the needs of its students. It is also important for all involved to have an unyielding conviction and act in ways consistent with the institution's mission including administrative decisions, financial practices, and behavioral practices within a classroom. These daily elements provide the modeling to students of what good character is about. In addition, crucial to a successfully implemented program that is well run is a comprehensive goal of continually improving the school's moral climate through evaluations of teachers, staff, and students. And finally, by maintaining an open-forum for discussion between school, parents and community, partnerships are developed that

can result in a strong foundation that contributes to preparing children for responsible

citizenship and encourage service to others.

"In every classroom of today lies

the next leaders of the world"

~Lillian Katz

Action Strategies: Nurturing Character and Avoiding Pitfalls

In the book entitled *Building Character in Schools, practical ways to bring moral instruction to life,* authors Kevin Ryan and Karen E. Bohlin, provide four straight forward strategies that can help nurture children's character while avoiding some of the difficulties facing educators: (1999, Appendix H, p. 239)

- Cultivate a pedagogical awakening of integrity through example, explanation, ethical environment, experience, exhortation, and expectations of excellence.

- Reconcile multiple viewpoints and encourage students to seek advice from credible sources and those individuals whom they trust.

- Present a comprehensive view that character is a responsibility and a priority.

- Develop and maintain an atmosphere of intellectual honesty among all members and instill an understanding that a student's character is one that is nurtured within as well as without.

Sample Curriculum:

The following are "exemplary moral education curricula" based from the teachings of Ryan and Bohlin (2001, p. 249)

- "Learning for Life" includes lessons based on moral values that are easily woven into the school's curriculum and have shown measurable improvement in student behavior from diverse cultural backgrounds. This program includes curricula lessons that teach moral values such as respect, responsibility, and certain skills that help students learn valuable life-skills. Lessons are short and easily effective.

- "The Giraffe Project" is a story-based curriculum that teaches courageous compassion and fosters the leader in every child. Program lessons are divided into grades: k-2, 3-5, and 6-9. The program gets its name from telling stories of brave, caring "Giraffes" (people) who have "stuck their neck out" for the common good. Students are then encouraged to tell stories of their own real heroes and then implement taking action on a problem that concerns them. This program is easily integrated into a cross-curriculum and supports students involvement in community service while incorporating the fundamentals of character education.

Conclusion and Implications for future study

In conclusion, the idea of Character Education is not new. In fact, civilizations throughout history discovered the need for standards of ethical ideals in order to optimize human interaction. Now more than ever there is a need for schools to re-incorporate similar standards of ethics. The issue is that children face inconceivable obstacles interfering with academic success. Some of these obstacles include, but are not limited to-violence, peer cruelty, and a degrading moral character. These factors continue to pervade school climates and the moral fiber of society. The point is Character Education addresses these obstacles. Built upon concepts founded on resolving issues, Character Education teaches children core principles (like respect and responsibility) needed to succeed in the world today. In support of Character Education, there is a shared consensus among the general public and the Federal government that fostering development of character in schools is a vital piece to the puzzle of education. In fact, this support became realistic when President bush outlined $25 million for Character Education in 2001. The problem is which values should be taught? How can character be measured? And which theory of Character Education is the most effective? Notably "If character traits are not emphasized in school, then the job of helping parents pass along our culture's values is left to the popular media of our consumer society." (Kilpatrick, 1999, p. 33) Most possibly a school cannot afford not to teach Character Education.

With current Federal funding available for Character Education, future implications are promising, but the questions outlined above must be adequately addressed for long-term success.

Fulfillment of Major Learning Requirements

While conducting and compiling research for my Capstone I fulfilled four major learning outcomes for my Liberal Studies Capstone class.

The first outcome was to "facilitate and develop a foundation for resolution on issues and conditions regarding schooling in a multicultural and linguistically diverse society". Through researching the various perspectives of character education, I have learned the importance of character education in addressing issues with in a pluralistic society. In this way, I have also satisfied another learning requirement that includes "the ability to recognize, analyze, and resolve real-world ethical problems in communities and schools contributing to development of productive university-school partnerships". Through extensive research discussing the various issues facing schools and students in our society today, I have gained a deep understanding of the key components fundamental to character building within the framework of an academic environment, which have a direct affect on the moral fiber of society. My study has presented character education as a means to teach students skills in dealing with anger and how to resolve conflict. I hope my research presented here will impress upon the reader the need for character education in schools and the long-term value it can have to society and to the lives of children.

The third outcome includes " an understanding of the developmental needs of learners applying sociological, physical, and multicultural theories of human Character development and change. In my study, I have incorporated a broad understanding of developmental needs of learners through contrasting and comparing the varying perspectives of sociologists, psychologists and theorists. I have gained a deeper perspective on the social and psychological influences of character education, the importance of early intervention, and its effectiveness in the lives of children socially, physically, and psychologically. As a future teacher, I have gained a comprehensive understanding of the power of influence and how a firm commitment to modeling my belief of character education is as important as teaching it.

Through my study on character education I have critically examined varying theories, evaluated past and present perspectives, considered opposing views surrounding the implementation of values in our present day schools system, and developed an analysis that is directed to "demonstrate cognitive comprehension across the many disciplines of a Liberal Studies course through researching and writing" (fourth outcome). I feel by having done this paper on character education and its importance in early intervention, I have fully satisfied these requirements and presented issues of character education that are all-embracing and academically absolute. It is my hope I will impress upon anyone who reads this paper that this is an issue too important to overlook for the sake of our children and a the future of education. To always remember that today's students are tomorrow's leaders and citizens.

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