



Leading a National Call to Character

Future Educators for Character Grant

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Abstract

Efforts to integrate character education (CE) components into seven core classes in UM-St. Louis' teacher education program focused on five simultaneous initiatives: (1) provoking increased CE discourse among instructors and adjuncts, including individual interviews, workshops, and luncheons, (2) identifying and disseminating CE resources, such as books, articles, and films; (3) adapting and administering a CE efficacy scale to monitor student beliefs about CE; (4) designing and institutionalizing a Character Adventure Day for student teachers, supervisors, and mentors; and (5) completing syllabi audits to document CE course content. Analyses of these efforts are based on both qualitative and quantitative data collected from fall 2004 to fall 2005, including transcribed interviews with 8 lead instructors, CE efficacy surveys from 105 preservice teachers, and 300 Character Adventure Day evaluations. Although UM-St. Louis had only one year with CEP grant support, a core group of committed faculty with expertise in character education, moral development, and citizenship education provided a rich foundation for action. Instructors in core courses have extended explicit curricular connections to CE in syllabi; students report that preparation in CE is important; and the Character Adventure Day will now be offered as a Professional Development option for local teachers. The work to expand the role of CE in teacher preparation will continue under the aegis of a new Center for Character and Citizenship in the College of Education.

Mapping Character: Beliefs and Practices in Teacher Preparation

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. . . Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The discourse around Character Education (CE) reflects a range of situated meanings. Educators often agree that character education is a good thing, but they have different ideas about what the concept means and how to translate CE ideas into "best practices" to support student learning and development. Why is preparing teachers as character educators an important goal for colleges of education? The US Department of Education has allocated approximately 27 million dollars since 1995 for CE programs. Many CE authors invoke the breakdown of moral behavior in American youth as a rallying cry for action (e.g., Lickona, 1991, 1997; Ryan, 1997; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Grounded in an individualistic psychology, these writers suggest that society is being victimized by unvirtuous citizens who need to be taught how to be civil. Smagorinsky & Taxel (2005) label this perspective a "didactic conception of character education" (p. 40). They argue for a more "reflective" Deweyian conception of CE and cite (Noddings, 1997) argument for communities of care. A reflective orientation to CE that will lead to a "just and equitable society" (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005, p.51) is less prescriptive (ought) and more dialogic (negotiated why). But whether character educators are oriented toward a more "didactic" or "reflective" conceptualization of CE work, they seem to agree that teachers are increasingly responsible for teaching character education and citizenship in schools.

With divergent messages about the meaning, goals, and history of the character education movement, it is not surprising that teacher-educators might be wary of an invitation to become educators of character. This case study maps the way one college of education negotiated

individual instructor perspectives about the role of character education in preservice teacher education to insure that CE curricular pieces would be expanded and documented in all sections of teacher education core courses.

As recipients of a 2004-2005 Character Education Partnership (CEP) grant to prepare future educators of character, Virginia Navarro, assistant professor in the Division of Teaching & Learning, and Marvin W. Berkowitz, Sanford N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education in the Division of Educational Psychology, Research, and Evaluation, teamed together to design a program to stimulate faculty dialogue about how to intentionally train future teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become successful educators of character. Additionally, a Character Adventure Day that integrates experiential team-building pedagogy with reflection on CE characteristics was institutionalized as an on-going Professional Development opportunity for student teachers and mentors. Wolfgang Althof, Teresa Fischer Professor of Citizenship Education; Vic Battistich, associate professor with expertise in classroom management; David Shields, a foundations expert who teaches Introduction to Schools; and Pat Suess, a doctoral student who teaches educational psychology, were all generous allies in collecting and analyzing data for this grant. We targeted instructors in seven core teacher education courses in order to (a) probe baseline CE knowledge and beliefs, (b) provide varied learning opportunities and resources, and (c) document curricular changes and evaluate outcomes. Assessment data include transcriptions of instructor interviews, an online CE efficacy survey by preservice students, evaluation data from Character Adventure Day participants, and syllabi audits.

Institutional context

When trying to enact curricular change, organizational structures, personal relationships, and local politics all play a role in success or failure. At the University of Missouri-St. Louis College of Education, approximately 1300 undergraduate, 200 post-baccalaureate, 700 masters, and 200 doctoral students are instructed by 85 full-time and 100 part-time instructors. Two (of 13) endowed professorships directly target Character and Citizenship Education. Hiring new faculty members with expertise in moral development, affective education, and ethics in sports, along with positive support from Dean Charles Schmitz, made it possible to establish a Center for Character and Citizenship in 2005. What is important is that the climate was receptive to expanding the character education agenda at UM-St. Louis.

Strike (1990) identifies three aims that schools can have “without violating liberal neutrality and undermining pluralism” (p.205): (1) We can view people as free human beings entitled to self-direction (autonomy and rationality); (2) we can have views of justice that allow us to cooperate and live together while pursuing our own conceptions of our own good; and (3) we can respect the value choices of individuals within a developed capacity for reflective choice (Strike, 1990). Although schools cannot directly solve many of the larger societal causes that limit opportunity for learning such as poverty, domestic violence, and addiction, they can use CE programs to build positive school communities that will model democratic processes. Teachers continually navigate the three aims of schooling identified above to establish civil and moral classroom practices. Becoming advocates for children may inevitably lead to a degree of teacher activism because children, parents and communities need teacher-leaders able to advocate for needed

reform. Character education, in some school settings, may begin as subversive activity to resist unjust practices.

Although some in the CE field argue that we need to recruit caring educators, not hope to develop them, we believe that the concept of “development” that shapes our understanding of children’s learning, can also apply to developing ethical character educators. Case studies, videos, texts, and field experiences can be deconstructed to assist preservice teachers to 'see with new eyes'. Teacher preparation programs should not minimize or ignore the moral and ethical nature of teaching.

Preparing character-oriented teachers

At UM-St. Louis, the College of Education (COE) supports partnership and collaboration with schools and the larger community in the work of preparing teacher-advocates. By informing education students how to implement CE, we hope to equip them with tools to create positive learning environments, especially in urban classrooms. In 1998 and 2004 the COE engaged in a reflective process, involving faculty, staff, administration, school partners, and business community leaders to form a coherent shared vision and action plan to move the COE into the 21st century. The following COE Futures II statements support a character education agenda:¹

- “Preparing caring educators who are able to use diverse strategies to provide for the individual needs of all learners is important and worthwhile.” (p. 9)
- “Professional educators practice and model ethical behavior.” (p. 9)

This 2002 Knowledge Base statement also highlights perspective-taking and ethical professional practice:²

- "An emerging concept of ‘moral, ethical knowledge’ (Goodlad et al., 1990; Noddings, 1993), together with a research oriented concept of ‘expert professional knowledge’ recognize and respect the value of multiple perspectives and experiences that necessarily contribute to understanding and constructing optimal teaching/learning environments for students."(p. 8-9)

The COE has revamped the undergraduate curriculum over five years to be field-based, technology rich, and with a strong emphasis on diversity issues within urban settings. A social justice faculty group has been working for two years with outside facilitation to identify and work on issues relating to differences within a social justice framework. By collecting and analyzing data from students and faculty of color, participating in a two-day retreat, and discussing selected texts, this group of faculty developed a set of parallel activities that indirectly support our CE agenda to model culturally appropriate teaching within caring communities.

A third ingredient in our efforts to infuse CE into the curriculum was a Character Adventure Day (CAD) for student teachers, supervisors, and mentors. A set of experiential team-building activities was modeled as effective character education pedagogy. So the soil was already tilled

¹ For full document texts, go to <http://coe.umsl.edu>

² For full document texts, go to http://coe.umsl.edu/public_coe/aboutcollege/knowledge_base.pdf:

as we plotted strategies to use the CEP funds to increase character education dialogue with COE colleagues, to insure that CE readings and activities were integrated into seven core courses, to institutionalize Character Adventure Day for student teachers and mentors, and to design feedback assessment systems to document outcomes.

Developmental Levels within a Teacher Education Program

The teacher certification programs at UM-St. Louis are designed around three developmental levels. The three Level I foundation courses, taken before official acceptance into the COE, can be taken at the Community College. The four Level II courses focus on knowledge and performance skills that reflect a more defined philosophy of teaching/learning. Level III includes special methods courses and a student internship, involving approximately 20 hours per week in schools, that is followed by a student teaching semester. Several targeted curricular strands are integrated into core courses: diversity, fieldwork, technology use, classroom management, and assessment. Our goal is to have Character Education become the sixth strand.

Level I, called Exploration, involves coursework on learners, teaching, and schools. Readings and field experiences scaffold a social justice framework to inquire about the role of poverty in student learning and to challenge unreflected uses of deficit language and labels. Each course has a lead instructor who oversees 5-6 sections each semester. Virginia functioned as lead instructor for the course on learners (child and adolescent development) and also was Level I Leader, working to keep the three courses coordinated across sections. David worked with Tom Hensley, a retired high school principal, to oversee the course on schools. Kasey Sindel, the clinical coordinator with a strong CE orientation, coordinated the syllabi for the course on teachers, so Level I courses already had many CE components to build upon.

Level II, called Analysis, marks formal entry into the COE and consists of four courses: instructional methods, educational psychology, literacy, and disabilities studies of inclusive practice. The instructors in Level II have not been as cohesive as Level I instructors but by individually interviewing lead instructors and initiating informal dialogue and sharing materials, Level II courses gradually began to reflect a stronger CE focus. Several full-time doctoral students and non-regular instructors played key roles in developing ideas and activities for Level II CE curricula. Karen Hagrup, the disabilities studies teacher, pushed all of the team to identify CE materials relevant to inclusive practices; more CE materials for children that reflect disabilities awareness are needed. A search for a new literacy professor is underway and we will work to identify someone who is interested in CE goals.

Level III, called Professional Praxis, is an intensive field-based year that focuses on specific methods courses, applied learning in the field, an electronic portfolio, and passing the Praxis II exam. Feedback from student teachers attending our Character Adventure Day over the past few years indicates that our students think CE is important in teacher education, but they are not making strong connections between course content on moral and ethical issues and becoming a character educator. Hopefully, the added CE content in courses because of the grant initiative will support a more consistent and unified CE lexicon across the program. A long-term goal for CE advocates should be to lobby for the addition of a state standard on CE with indicators that reflect CE knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Goals and Action Plans

Our first goal was to collect syllabi from each course in Level I and Level II for CE content analysis. Pat Suess, the CEP project's research assistant and technology guru, who also teaches two sections of educational psychology, documented CE elements already in core course syllabi. Pat's dissertation topic analyzes the integrated technology strand in the teacher education program, so she was already familiar with the core course syllabi. Our second goal was to complete a personal interview with each lead teacher using a protocol of CE questions (Appendix A) developed by Virginia, David, and Marvin who also conducted the eight in-depth interviews with colleagues. These interviews were audio taped and transcribed to identify definitional concepts, current practices, and generative ideas to expand the CE course content.

Our third goal was to plan a professional development day for interested staff. We invited Merle Schwartz, CEP director, to visit December 10, 2004, to instruct interested faculty about the *Eleven Principles for Effective Character Education*³, and the related *Eleven Principles Sourcebook* developed under Character Education Partnership's auspices, as well as to share CE research and findings. A total of 16 higher education faculty attended the Workshop, including instructors from each core course from Level I and from Level II. The day sparked lively debate and dialogue on the nature of and appropriate scope for CE in higher education. Links to service education, civic responsibility in a democratic society, and spiritual growth were unearthed and analyzed. Copies of course syllabi were worked on in small groups, so participants could get a broad overview of present practice and brainstorm ideas for CE additions.

A fourth goal was to engineer consultation sessions with Marvin and Wolfgang to get assistance in identifying CE materials, media, and activities for specific courses. The opportunity for instructional conversations about pedagogy, activities, and course content generated innovative ideas for developing courses. Seven instructors met with Marvin, Wolfgang, and Virginia to brainstorm ideas for core course CE content. A final goal was to find ways to continue the Character Adventure Day that had been offered for three years in collaboration with the YMCA with great success. How could we find creative ways to fund this effective leadership and character day when soft grant money ended?

To facilitate communication among the growing number of interested faculty, Virginia and Pat set up an organizational site within Blackboard, the campus course software tool. This site allows us to post announcements, minutes from meetings, CE articles, bibliographies of relevant materials, web links, short video clips, and feedback from our research initiatives (See Appendix B for one example of such resources). Presently there are 35 people on the organizational site roster. New instructors for the seven core courses are invited to join this CE information site. Technology simplifies the task of continuing CE conversations and providing informational resources to multiple instructors in an efficient way.

While reviewing the December to July monthly team minutes posted on our organizational site, it became apparent that each of the accomplished goals grew from a set of iterative steps negotiated by a team of thoughtful and committed colleagues. To encourage fellowship and

³ The 11 Principles are available on the CEP website:

http://www.character.org/site/c.gwKUJhNYJrF/b.993263/k.72EC/The_Eleven_Principles.htm

community while furthering the CE agenda, two luncheons were hosted in Marvin's conference room on April 1 and May 10, 2005. A display of the CE books purchased for distribution at the Character Adventure Day was set up in the CE lending library so instructors could preview and/or order potential texts for their courses or personal use. The minutes summarized the conversation at the April 1 luncheon in this way:

Marvin and Vic led a discussion from contrasting perspectives about the issue of how to evaluate student character in ways that might result in us refusing certification if there was reasonable doubt about a candidates' attitude toward children or ability to model ethical practice in schools, etc. Open-ended dialogue around issues of character, character education, and program development stimulated our thinking and deepened our understanding of issues.

These luncheon events, attended by 12 and 14 faculty members respectively, engaged us in lively dialogue about issues of ethics in teaching, rights of students, and the need to screen for character when preparing future teachers. CEP grant resources definitely helped expand the circle of those debating CE issues in the College of Education. Each regular monthly planning meeting had five to seven people in attendance and the many ideas recorded in minutes provide evidence of increasing CE activity as well as a wish list for future work:

- Completing a lexicon of CE words with conceptual definitions to help us be more consistent with terminology across courses
- Requesting a library display of CE topics
- Establishing a CE Bulletin Board with examples and pictures of "best practices"
- Creating a CE award as part of the COE annual banquet recognition
-

Such future action items can be addressed through our new Center for Character and Citizenship, an umbrella organization for multiple CE initiatives and partnerships.

Four of the primary initiatives will be reported on below with more detailed elaboration of the activities and/or the assessment results. First will be an overview of the interview data with eight lead instructors. Next we will report on the Efficacy Survey results from 105 education students in Level I or Level II classes. The third section will discuss the impact of the Character Adventure Day on student teachers and mentors drawing on three years of evaluation feedback. Finally, we will report on the syllabi audits, both the original findings and also CE additions that instructors wrote about when asked to share what CE components are in the syllabi in fall 2005.

CE Themes in Interview Data with Lead Instructors

Analyzing transcriptions of in-depth interviews with the lead instructor for each of the teacher education program's eight core courses reveals that many instructors already had components in place that closely align with a CE strand. We will report here on the instructors' definitions of CE and then discuss the suggestions they made to develop and expand a Character Education focus more fully. According to (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005), CEP describes character as "understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values"(p.65). Alternatively, a "moral anatomy" includes the following psychological domains: moral behavior, values, identity, moral

personality, moral emotions, sociomoral reasoning, and foundational characteristics (i.e. nonmoral aspects of personality such as perseverance) (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Instructors were probed about which of these domains they considered connected to a CE agenda, as well as what elements in their courses might support the preparation of future educators of character.

Defining CE meanings

When instructors were asked to share definitions of character education, various themes emerged including responsibility and respect. Sample responses from the data for each of these words appear below:

- "I always think in terms of responsibility, responsibility to and for oneself and responsibility in how we interact with others."
- It's (character) a place where we are personally responsible for developing and making choices about what we believe and what we value."
- "I think building openness, respect, communication, this idea of social justice."
- "It encourages them to be open to new ideas, to realize that for meaningful change to occur, there has to be an openness to ideas, and overcoming fear. And if you are going to overcome fear, then we're going to have to treat people with respect."

Some other emergent ideas linked character to the broader concept of moral development.

- "I think it (CE) relates to the dispositions and virtues that are internal to practices and values."
- "I think of character almost interchangeably with moral development."

Besides discourse about values and beliefs linked to CE, several instructors saw close ties between CE and issues of diversity.

- "And there are certain things that it (CE) includes to me: openness to and acceptance of diversity, the worth of every human being, no matter how they live their life, integrity, to be yourself in different situations and not be swayed by short-term benefits to you."
- "(CE) includes developing a belief system that honors differences."

What is apparent from this range of definitions is that faculty members do have developed notions of what their role is as a teacher-educator vis-à-vis a belief system about character education. They share a general sense of the scope of the CE domain but are in less agreement about including explicit curriculum about CE in course content.

Current Process and Practices

A developmental approach to character and morality goes beyond simplistic recitation of definitions that do not correlate with lived actions and can trivialize the complex and demanding work of becoming educators of character. CE should focus on concept development through a

consideration of moral themes and problems that are not reducible to right/wrong conclusions (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005).

Our instructors described their current practices and speculated about how to expand the CE theme in our teacher education curricula. Many course activities connect the CE agenda to opportunities for personal reflection. For example, students in Level I interview family members to learn about their own social history; they then reflect and write about how their individual stories shape identity. Students also learn about personal teaching styles by completing the Gregoric Inventory. In some courses students are asked to set personal learning goals and to assess work quality by utilizing self-checks with guided rubrics, practices that model self-directed learning skills. Other Level I assignments involve active listening to peers, discussion about ethical issues teachers face and strategies to create caring communities as part of a classroom management component. Students also write a philosophy of teaching that will be revised for inclusion in their final portfolios.

In Level II courses skills for working in cooperative learning groups are analyzed. Student groups also complete a developmental case study that informally assesses a child's cognitive, social/emotional, and moral development. Readings and films on gender, race, class, and disabilities are woven into several of the core courses since diversity is already an identified and developed theme. One instructor said he invited Marvin Berkowitz, the endowed professor of CE, to speak directly with his class as a guest lecturer. The importance of modeling the behaviors that we are trying to inculcate into preparing teachers is raised in several of the interviews: "(W)e're saying {to university students, 'Inclusive education is to go and make every student feel welcome in your classroom, no matter what they are like.' So if I say that, I need to do it. I need to live what I am preaching." The importance of walking the talk in order to be an effective educator of character came up in multiple ways.

Creative and practical ideas emerged when we asked our interviewees what ideas they had to further develop a CE strand in the teacher education program. One person advocated for adding service work with children. They felt that this would provide evidence that students are coming to the role of teacher with a commitment to developing children, not as a default career because they did not succeed in another major. The implication is that teachers impact people in significant ways and they need to take the high road morally as a role model for students. Some interviewees commented that faculty need to be educated about CE research. Three instructors noted that the COE is increasingly addressing social justice issues and that the social justice committee members are strong allies in CE work.

One interviewee suggested getting the lead professors from the seven core courses together to sit down and map out which core course components are meeting CE goals. This person also acknowledged that CE work in Level I and II courses needs to be communicated with instructors teaching in Level III, Professional Practice, so they will know "what we are doing and where we think it could go next." Building a CE strand across the curriculum will necessitate ongoing efforts to educate and motivate instructors at all three Levels of our program. Another interviewee suggested weaving ethical case studies into courses to provoke more CE conversations. Yet another person argued for a modular approach to CE curricula, utilizing individual faculty's expert knowledge in areas such as moral development, citizenship, and CE. Participation in campus initiatives that might align with CE goals, such as Kids Voting, civic

responsibility, and service learning were also mentioned as resources to expand CE awareness across campus.

Character Education and Efficacy Beliefs Survey

In our monthly discussions about how to better prepare Future Educators of Character, the grant team decided to get feedback from our students about their current knowledge and beliefs about CE practice as baseline data. Marvin remembered a research study published by Andrew Milson that used a survey that might meet our needs (Milson, 2000; Milson & Mehlig, 2002). After getting permission to use Milson's survey, we realized that the phrasing of the questions targeted student teachers or our Level III students. Since our goal was to learn about the CE beliefs of our Level I and Level II students who were not yet teaching, we had to modify the instrument. After getting approval for this research with our Institutional Review Board (IRB), we decided to create a web-based version of the survey in Flashlight, a licensed software tool out of Washington State University.

The resulting measure of efficacy beliefs about character education was administered to 105 education students during April and May of 2005 (Survey adaptation in Appendix C). This sample was 75% female and 84% white. All but 7 of the students (7%) were enrolled in one or more undergraduate courses at the time they completed the measure. Twenty-nine of the students (28%) indicated that they had had no previous training in character education; 40 (39%) indicated that they had had “a little” training; 29 (28%) indicated that they had had “some” training; and 6 (6%) indicated that they had had “a lot” of training”. The most common source of training was Level 1 education classes (32%).

Psychometric Properties

Analyses of these data were undertaken to determine the measurement quality of the 26 attitudinal items included in the instrument since we had modified the original survey developed by Milson. A principal components analysis showed that, with the exception of three items (Nos. 11, 13, & 15), the remaining 23 items formed a single overall dimension, as expected, that accounted for approximately 25% of the variance in student responses to the items. Item analysis revealed that this 23-item composite scale (average inter-item correlation = .22) had an internal consistency .86, suggesting that it is a reliable measure of students' overall beliefs about the efficacy of character education.

Further analysis suggested that this overall scale included four meaningful subscales (item numbers followed by an R indicate items whose responses were reverse-scored prior to computing subscale and total scale scores):

1. ***General commitment to good character and developing students' character.*** Seven items (Nos. 1, 3, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26), average inter-item correlation = .39, internal consistency reliability = .80 (e.g., *I need to continuously work on my own character to become a better role model for my school community; In my university coursework, I would like to learn more about effective ways to promote good character; I am continually finding better ways to develop the character of my students*).

2. Know how to teach character.

Four items (Nos. 6R, 7, 8R, 21R), average inter-item correlation = .41, internal consistency reliability = .73 (e.g., *If I were teaching today, I would be at a loss as to how to help a student become more responsible; If I were teaching today, I am not sure I could teach my students to be honest*).

3. Belief in the efficacy of character education.

Four items (Nos. 5, 9, 12, 18), average inter-item correlation = .44, internal consistency reliability = .76 (e.g., *When a student shows greater respect for others, it is usually because teachers have effectively modeled that trait; If parents notice that their children are more responsible, it is likely that teachers have fostered this trait at school*).

4. Home/external factors are NOT more influential than character education.

Eight items (Nos. 2R, 4R, 10R, 14, 16R, 17R, 20R, 22R), average inter-item correlation = .21, internal consistency reliability = .69 (e.g., *If responsibility is not encouraged in a child's home, teachers will have little success teaching this trait at school; Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous; Teaching students what it means to be honest is unlikely to result in students who are more honest*).

Subscale 1 has good reliability. The other three subscales have lower reliability, but are still reliable enough to use in further analyses. These psychometric analyses suggest that, prior to future use, the three poor items (see above) should be deleted from the measure. It also is recommended that the remaining 23 items be presented in a random order in the measure to minimize possible response sets.

Relationships of Scores with Demographic Characteristics and CE Training

There were no statistically reliable differences in subscale or total scale scores by gender, ethnicity, or whether students were planning to teach at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. Curiously, student reports of the amount of training they had received in character education (“none” to “a lot”) were *negatively* correlated with total scale scores ($r = -.19, p < .05$) and scores on the *Belief in the Efficacy of CE* subscale ($r = -.24, p < .02$). This is corroborated by the finding that students who indicated that they had received any CE training (e.g., in a Level 1 or Level 2 course, as part of student teaching or a religious program, and/or from any other source) had significantly lower scores on the *Belief in the Efficacy of CE* subscale ($M = 2.20$) than those who indicated that they had not received training ($M = 2.44; t[102] = 2.26, p < .03$). This same pattern was found for total scale scores ($M_s = 2.06, 2.21$ for those with any versus no CE training). Perhaps those students with a broader knowledge about the complexity of becoming educators of character may self-identify as having feelings of lower efficacy in enacting CE in their classrooms. Novice naiveté may account for the high self-efficacy scores of students with no training in CE. After all, CE is not easy to implement and beginning training should make that clear. More research will be needed to understand these findings.

The survey will again be administered through Level I and Level II classes in November 2005, so a comparison of pre- and post-test results will be possible. Our hope is that because of the increased awareness of CE in teacher education through the grant activities, more students will

report exposure to CE curriculum in their classes. Focus groups with students may help clarify why those with more training scored lower on feelings of efficacy.

Character Adventure Day: Experiential Team-Building

A CE initiative called Character Adventure Day targeted Level III student teachers, supervisors, and cooperating teachers. Progressively more difficult team-building activities demonstrated the salience of participants' own behavior choices in solving problems and contributing to a caring community. As part of a Teacher Workforce Replenishment (TWR) grant, Virginia teamed with Marvin, the experiential learning experts at the local YMCA, and a group of interested faculty to design and deliver a professional development opportunity that combined instruction on character education with experiential pedagogy (See Appendix D for a list of activities).

Through participation in a variety of small group activities that became progressively more challenging as the day progressed, participants had the opportunity to show character. While each activity was underway in a small group, process observers kept track of the ways that individuals within each group modeled the five character words introduced at the beginning of the day: Cooperation, Communication, Problem-solving, Consensus, and Trust. The option to not participate in a specific activity was named Challenge by Choice to allow for individual limitations. Trained facilitators helped groups deconstruct CE meanings in the activities and encouraged making connections to classroom practice. The activities chosen for Character Adventure Day can easily be adapted for use at multiple grade levels. Equipment for these activities was purchased so student teachers could check out materials if they wanted to replicate the CE learning in their classrooms.

Just before or after a simple lunch, Marvin led Character Adventure Day participants through a set of reflections on CE including asking them to imagine a person who represented exemplary character and to then generate a list of descriptors about what made that person admirable. The group then focused on the most challenging child they had ever encountered and thought about what *reasons* might explain the source of the behaviors. Marvin helped participants see the connection between adult choices in dealing with children and the behavior outcomes that result when we can not love children in ways that will contribute to healthful growth and development. A third strand of Marvin's presentation focused on various school programs in CE and resources within districts and the community. Throughout the dialogue, he emphasizes the complexity of doing CE well and cautions teachers about the ineffectiveness of simplistic programs that will not accomplish the harder work of changing school culture and fostering positive youth development. Each participant in a Character Adventure Day was given a book about CE to expand ideas about how to implement CE effectively.

The CEP grant helped us to continue offering Character Adventure Day as the TWR grant ended. Additionally, we now have a partnership with CHARACTER*plus* in St. Louis to offer the program twice a year to teachers in 42 CHARACTER*plus* member school districts. The evaluation feedback indicates to us that this event does have a positive impact on teachers' understandings of CE. Besides the Character Adventure Day equipment purchased for the teacher education program, additional equipment is available through Jim Wilson, E. Desmond Lee Professor of Experiential and Family Education, who teaches experiential education courses

and helps facilitate the program. We have held five Character Adventure Days at the Forest Park Educational Center in St. Louis because of Jim's participation and support.

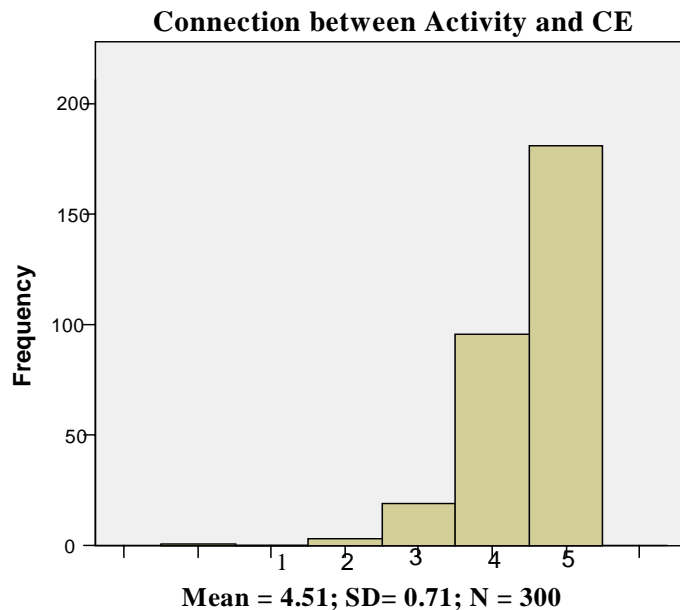
Since we began the Character Adventure Day, we have collected 300 evaluation sheets from participants. The evaluation sheet includes approximately 15 Likert scale items as well as four qualitative questions. Responses indicate that participants learned a great deal about themselves personally and professionally as well as learning about CE practices. A specific question directed to student teachers was added in 2004 to probe how well they felt they had been prepared as educators of character. The majority of students claimed little formal course training in CE. However, many comments made links between class work in moral and social development and CE. Students also mentioned exposure to texts and activities about diversity and social justice when asked about CE preparation.

Below are Figures that illustrate the response frequencies from a few key questions.

Question #2

To what extent did you see connections between the activities and character issues?

12345: Weak links ↔ Strong links

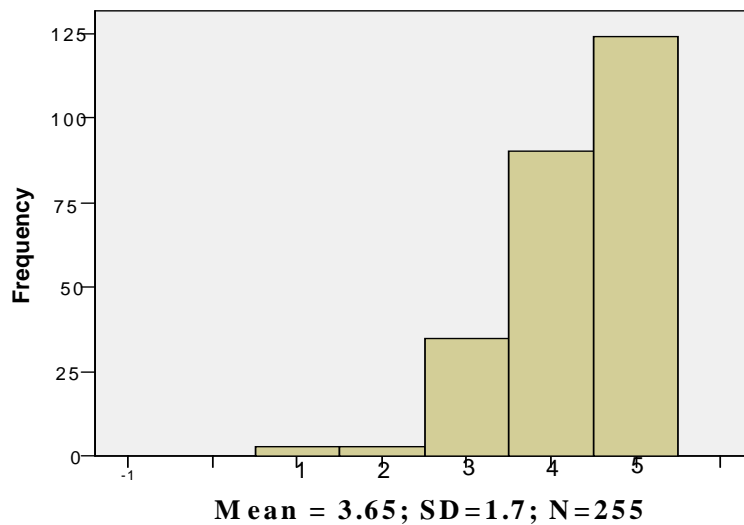


Identifying activities that make connections between theoretical ideas and practice may contribute to the power of the overall Character Adventure Day experience.

Question #3

To what extent did your ideas about character education develop as a result of the Character Adventure Day? 12345: Not at all ↔ Quite a bit

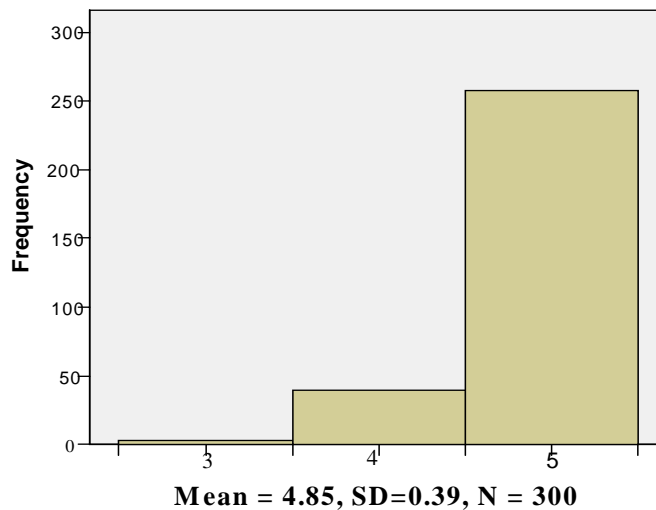
Development of CE ideas



Question #5

How important do you feel character education is to classroom teachers' work?
12345: Minimal focus \leftrightarrow Critical focus

Importance of CE to teacher work?

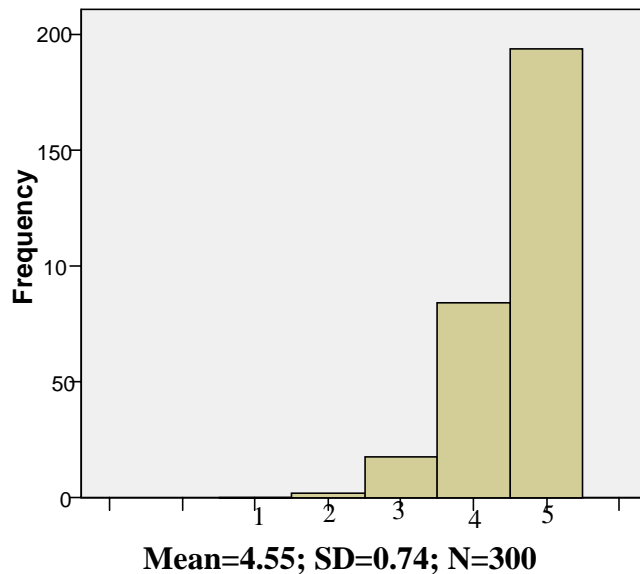


We clearly learned that student teachers and mentors overwhelmingly believe that character education is important to classroom teachers' work as seen in the 4.85/5 mean.

Question #6

How likely is it that you will follow up with character education activity in your work?
12345: Low \leftrightarrow High

Likely to follow up with CE activity in work



So not only do teachers feel that CE is within the purview of their jobs, they indicate a strong intention to put their professional development in CE into applied use.

In the open-ended evaluation questions participants were asked to share their learning and insights; 250/300 responses were coded as positive. Some preferred the physical activities, other liked Marvin's presentation, still others commented on the opportunities to reflect throughout the day. One student teacher commented,

This day started very badly for me, with my Cooperating Teacher putting me down in front of a professor that I really respect. I felt like the pits. Through the activities, I began feeling accepted, respected, worthwhile, a contributing member of the group. As my mood improved, my participation increased and I was positively reinforced by my group leader and co-members. This whole experience was a realization of all that the main presenter expressed -- how through our modeling and facilitating a conducive and safe environment we can turn our students around and overcome negative backgrounds.

Making connections about how the micro and macro communities within educational systems interrelate is an important insight. Teachers cannot develop as character educators if they are treated badly by peers and administrators, etc. Many acknowledged the complexity of CE in comments on the survey: for example, "Character development is complex - it can work on many levels and the whole school level is most difficult, but individuals can make a difference." Other insights brought in the leadership aspect of teaching:

I learned that my willingness to take a leadership role has increased. I learned to slow down and be more considerate of other's contributions. I learned that character education is much more involved than I realized.

We were in general impressed with the self-knowledge that individuals revealed: "I learned that I am losing my fear of speaking up in a group." "I talk too much." "I'm a true follower." or "I learned as a teacher that I have to focus on facilitating my students' learning, not just 'telling'." There were a few negative responses that suggested that activity-based learning did not meet everyone's needs equally: "Not enough focus on curriculum integration." "More concrete ideas for building character education and how to teach it." Overall, we feel that integrating experiential teambuilding with a CE knowledge base offers a dynamic program that supports CE development for educators, particularly through modeling strategies for community teambuilding and problem-solving.

Core Course Syllabi Audit 2004-2005

An initial audit of course syllabi in 2004-2005 revealed more overt references to preparing culturally competent teachers with a social justice orientation than to preparing character educators. However, many phrases in the syllabi resonated with the goals of our CE agenda, such as "Identifying needs of diverse populations," "Understanding the impact of biological, socioeconomic and cultural differences on teaching and learning," "Understand how to support optimal physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development, at home, in daycare, schools, and after-school programs," and "Learn how to build tolerant, safe, and caring environments in classrooms." Here are a few core course objectives listed in fall 2004 syllabi that directly support related CE goals:

- "To develop democratic citizens for the 21st century within the stresses and strains of contemporary American life requires that all of us understand and advocate for environments conducive to each child's healthful growth and development."
- "To assist student introspection and reflection concerning personal beliefs about people with disabilities and other traditionally oppressed and neglected groups."

The strategy to increase the CE course content involved providing resources, consultations, and feedback to instructors. Seven instructors took advantage of e-mails encouraging collaboration and scheduled a conference with Marvin, Wolfgang, and Virginia in February and March of 2005 to brainstorm ideas about ways to creatively increase CE course content.

2005 CE course additions

When asked to send an e-mail detailing changes made to fall 2005 syllabi to integrate more CE into courses, instructors indicated a variety of intensification efforts:

- "I continue to model characteristics as an instructor with high expectations for the students to follow the same. Although I have implemented some self-regulatory activities in the past, in the future I plan to have the students develop and implement a character education plan (action plan) for themselves. I believe our future educators must first display those skills and behaviors in order to teach their students."
- "I have added "character education" as an explicit topic in the list of themes that I cover in my 2211 course. I will add to the list of course objectives the following sentence: *Reflect on the role of the teacher in promoting character and citizenship development, along with academic learning.*"

- “From our revised objectives in 2210:
 1. The students will examine the roles, responsibilities and ethics of effective teachers through classroom observations, research and coursework.
 2. The students will understand the impact of biological, socioeconomic and cultural differences on teaching and learning.
 3. The students will learn how to build tolerant, safe, and caring environments in classrooms.
 4. The students will examine classroom management models and how they can lead to positive change in student performance.”

A Level III instructor noted his focus on CE integration this way: "I will work extensively with one student teacher and five social studies interns on Blue Screen presentations (in which I specialize), centered on Character - Value Clarification- Social Responsibility Topics."

CE connections were also made on course syllabi with statements about plagiarism and civility policies such as the following reported statements:

- "Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without crediting that person. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment in the class"
- "Students are responsible for being attentive to and observant of campus policies about academic honesty as stated in the University's Student Conduct Code"
- "Civility: beepers and cell phones should be turned off during class. The buildings on campus are smoke-free."
- "Act according to established norms of a learning community to include demonstrating mutual respect, engaging in respectful listening, participating and contributing, and setting aside judgment."
- "While not required of students, a community service component has been added to 2211 to encourage students to become aware of community resources and the importance of service learning. Students may earn points that count toward their course grade."
- "A goal for the 2005-2006 year is to review and incorporate some character education media (videos/DVD's) into the course, and this will be accomplished through resources made available through Marvin Berkowitz's resource center."

We plan to do a more complete audit on the syllabi for 2005-2006 to document other ways that the invitation to learn more about CE, review CE materials and scan annotated CE bibliographies on texts, web sites, and videos has borne fruit. In summary, key instructors did communicate increased commitment to CE goals as a result of our yearlong campaign to infuse CE into core courses.

Since the core literacy and special education courses are being redesigned this year under new leadership, we will continue to find opportunities to share potential CE materials and activities for consideration by these teams. Institutionalization the CE strand within our core curriculum is closer to reality than it was a year ago, but advocacy for the importance of CE course components is a continuous process as new instructors constantly join the staff. The Blackboard

organizational web site for instructors in the COE interested in CE will continue to serve communication needs as a tool for sharing resources and initiating dialogue, auditing syllabi, and identifying instructor needs.

Center for Character and Citizenship

Even more exciting is the recent University of Missouri-St. Louis approval for a Center for Character and Citizenship within the College of Education. Projects and programs under this organization range from a Leadership Academy in Character Education, a Summer Institute in Character Education, Citizenship Education Clearing House, Kids Voting Missouri, the Local Government CECH-UP Program, and the Sport, Character & Citizenship Program that will include a "sport and character" day in conjunction with the regular 2006 CHARACTER*plus* conference in St. Louis. Other programs under the Center for Character and Citizenship include a Visiting Scholars Program, Professional Development In-Service, Consulting, the *Journal of Research in Character Education*, co-edited by Marvin Berkowitz from UM-St. Louis and Andrew Milson from the University of North Texas. A resource center, syndicated column on parenting and character, and numerous grants and contracts represent yet additional initiatives that will likely continue to grow and expand in the next few years. Many doctoral students are now studying CE as a result of a critical mass of faculty and courses to support such work.

Character Education has flourished in St. Louis through the incredible work and vision of Marvin Berkowitz and many active partnerships, especially CHARACTER*plus* under the leadership of Liz Gibbons, and the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C. We especially appreciated CEP's Merle Schwartz spending a day with faculty, to discuss the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education. The character education luncheons hosted in 2005 have generated new ideas and concerns, including how to ethically screen teacher education candidates for their capacity to become skilled educators of character.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

A community model of teacher preparation in character education designs experiences beyond the borders of university classrooms; it includes readings that challenge stereotypes; and it develops a critical consciousness about the structures and systems in schools that can reproduce unjust social relationships in hegemonic ways. Engaged citizenry begins with advocacy for the rights of children to quality teachers and instruction, including spaces, materials, and supports for learning. Communities of care can accommodate individual and group needs by clearly linking social skills and personal bonding to cognitive outcomes in teachers' minds. Today's public school systems are focused on test outcomes as a matter of survival, exacerbated by shrinking state budgets and NCLB demands for adequate yearly progress (AYP). As a result, teachers committed to developing emotionally safe classrooms must develop capacities to subvert the negative messages of failure into a climate of hope and possibility. Developing children can not optimally grow when they repeatedly fail.

Next steps in developing the CE agenda in teacher preparation programs and schools should more explicitly integrate a social justice agenda. As the correlation between poverty and negative school outcomes becomes clearer, we need to reach out to the wider communities to address school issues. It is not enough to blame teachers for test outcomes that are aggravated by high

student mobility, lack of stable housing, and/or inadequate family income and medical coverage. Teacher quality should be as much about character as high stakes test scores.

Yet one faculty interviewee acknowledged that the recent success of CE in schools is partly due to avoiding topics that are politically controversial:

I think because it's (corporal punishment) a controversial conversation, I would say it generally falls outside of CE, simply because CE has to be the consensus area. This is how it got back into schools in the 1990s, by NOT dealing with sensitive issues.

As CE becomes a more integral part of schooling and teacher preparation, perhaps we can imagine ways for civil discourse in schools to address matters about which people passionately disagree. If schools have a mandate to prepare democratic citizens as well as competent workers, we can not avoid teaching students the art of authentic dialogue. Teachers who have credibility with students walk the extra mile to find ways to engage them in learning.

What we have learned through this past year's efforts to integrate CE into preservice teacher education is that our instructors do believe that they have a role to play in helping future teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of character educators. Feedback on surveys and evaluation sheets from university students also indicates that future teachers believe it is their job to help shape the character of their students. Additional professional development opportunities are needed to teach instructors and students how to practically translate CE ideas into best practice and to feel competent in designing and implementing CE activities and lessons. On the efficacy beliefs survey 74% (99/103) of our preservice students agreed or strongly agreed that they knew "how to use strategies that might lead to positive changes in students' character"; 83% (85/103) believe that they can "positively influence the character development of a child who has little direction from parents."

Finally, we learned that we have a clear mandate from students to increase our CE curriculum since 97 % (99/103) agree or strongly agree that "In my university coursework, I would like to learn more effective ways to promote good character." We have repeatedly experienced the power of Character Adventure Days to provoke self-knowledge and renewed hope. The value of CE is learned through activity-based and reflective problem-solving. Preliminary evidence also indicates that the time invested in consultations with colleagues about specific course content and assignments have increased both the amount and quality of CE integrated into core courses. The workshop, organizational site, and CE luncheons have contributed to establishing an extended network of instructors interested in CE and in improving teaching and learning opportunities for students across Level courses.

We are hopeful that the many opportunities in our area for staff and students, partner schools and leaders to learn more about effective character education will result in more caring, sane, and challenging learning environments for all of us. If in 12 months, supported by a small budget, a group of faculty can create a vision, set goals, gather resources, implement change, and evaluate outcomes, then other teacher education institutions can also be effective in mapping such a journey. It is important to focus on potential allies and situated resources to implement change, so future teachers will develop a repertoire of appropriate attitudes and skills to become

committed character educators. The children in classrooms across America will then have a better chance of reaping the rewards of public education in a democratic society that respects and cares for all its citizens.

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