



The White House Conference on Character and Community

hosted by
Laura Bush



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White House Conference on Character and Community

June 19, 2002

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Mrs. Bush's Introduction of President Bush

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As prepared.

Thank you all once again -- thanks to our presenters, and the students who show that service has no age limit or minimum. Every voice in this room deserves a national audience.

I've known our final speaker of the day for about 25 years -- 24 -- of those we've been married. I've seen him in times of great joy and through times of sadness. I sat by his side during some winning and a few losing baseball seasons.

Through the peaks and valleys, I have witnessed one constant in my husband's life, and that's his steadfast belief in the values we discussed today: Love your neighbor as you'd want to be loved. Be kind to one another. Remember that your family is the greatest responsibility you'll ever have. Treat your children like they're the most important people in the world, because they are. And last, but not least, listen to your mother.

To quote the hymn that inspired his book, President Bush believes that we all have "a charge to keep," -- a responsibility to use our different gifts to serve a cause greater than self.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome my husband, President George W. Bush.

Remarks by President George W. Bush

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June 19, 2002

3:30 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Well, thanks for that warm welcome. Welcome to your house. (Laughter.) We're glad you're here. And I really appreciate the theme of this conference and the importance of the conference.

I know you've heard from some really impressive people, and I want to thank all the speakers and students who are here. You even heard from a member of my family, and I want to thank the First Lady for doing such a great job and being so patient with the President. (Applause.)

The thing I appreciate is that you understand education should prepare children for jobs, and it also should prepare our children for life. I join you in wanting our children to not only be rich in skills, but rich in ideals. Teaching character and citizenship to our children is a high calling. It's a really high calling. And I'm grateful for your work.

I appreciate Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Mr. Secretary, thanks -- thanks for joining on this important cause. You know, here in Washington there's a lot of people who are good on theory and not so good on action. So when I picked a man to be the head of the -- Secretary of Education, I wanted somebody who had been on the front lines. Rod had been the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, and I figured that's a pretty good definition of front lines. (Laughter.) And he had done a great job -- Mr. Secretary, and I appreciate your concern and care.

I understand Colin Powell spoke here earlier. I'm -- right after this brief speech, he and I have a meeting. He is doing a fabulous job for our country, too. I'm proud to call him a member of our team.

I appreciate Michelle Engler and Hope Taft for being here. Thank you both for coming. I know you all are very much involved in your state of Michigan and Ohio for not only making sure every child can read, but teaching children the difference between right and wrong.

I appreciate the members of Congress who are here -- Wamp, Lucas, Edwards, McIntyre and Moore. Thank you all for coming. My Congressman -- as you know, I'm a voting resident of Crawford, Texas. My Congressman Chet Edwards is here. I appreciate you answering my mail, Mr. Congressman. (Laughter.) I won't write you if you don't write me. (Laughter.)

I believe that public schools are the most important institutions in democracy. And a good education is the birthright of every American child. Every public school must be the pathway to a better life. And because public schools are America's great hope, making them work for every child is our nation's greatest duty.

We passed good education reform here in Washington, D.C. This wasn't a Republican bill, it wasn't a Democrat bill, it was an American bill. It really was. We worked together to get a good piece of legislation out. Here are the principles. It says, every child can learn. In other words, we believe in high standards. I'm one of these fellows that believes if you lower the bar, you get lousy results. If you believe in the best and raise the bar, you can get high standards.

It also says that if you receive money from the federal government, you must show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. For the first time, the federal government is asking the question, is every child learning? I don't mean a few children; I don't mean a group of children -- I mean, is every child learning to read and write and add and subtract. And if we aren't, we must correct problems early, before it's too late.

In other words, we've had high standards, we demand excellence, we're willing to challenge failure to make sure that not one single child is left behind. And I firmly believe the reforms we put in place, when fully enacted, will make sure that no child is left behind in America.

It is more than -- we've got to do more than just teach our children skills and knowledge. That's one part of education, and it's an important part, no question about it. We also want to make sure they're kind and decent, compassionate and responsible, honest and self-disciplined. Our children must learn to make a living, but even more, they must learn how to live. And that's a big responsibility. But I love what Martin Luther King Jr. said about this. He said, "Intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education." And I want to thank you for joining that true goal of education.

Americans believe in character education because we want more for our children than apathy or cynicism. We've got higher aspirations for every child in America. We want them to understand the difference between right and wrong. We want them to live lives of integrity and idealism. Family is the first place where these values are learned. Our parents expect schools to be allies in the moral education of our children. That's what they expect, and that's what we must give them.

The lessons of the home must be reinforced by high standards in our schools. Schools should be safe and orderly; they should be decent and drug-free; and they should teach character by expecting character. They should be places where rules are set and, as importantly, where rules are enforced. And schools should also teach the basics of character to children. This is why we tripled the funding for character education in the budget I submitted to Congress.

Now, I know there's a debate about values and character. I've heard it before -- as you might remember, I was the governor of a great state at one time. I've heard every excuse why we shouldn't teach character. It always starts with religion, as to why we shouldn't teach character. Well, look, we should never promote a particular religion, I agree. That's not the -- that's not the reason to have character education.

But we've got to recognize in our society that strong values are shared by good people of different faiths, and good people who have no faith at all. These are universal values, values we share in all our diversity: Respect, tolerance, responsibility, honesty, self-restraint, family commitment, civic duty, fairness and compassion. These are the moral landmarks that guide a successful life. And we should teach them with confidence and we should teach them with conviction.

There are many good programs around the country that show how values can be taught in a diverse nation. I want to thank you for sharing your wisdom on those programs. As a matter of fact, one of the useful functions of the Department of Education is to serve as a clearinghouse for good ideas, as a place where people can come and ask the question, what works? What can I do to make a difference in somebody's lives.

There are schools in our country where children take pledges each morning to be respectful, responsible and ready to learn -- it's an interesting idea -- where virtues are taught by studying the great historical figures and characters in literature; and where consideration is encouraged and good manners are expected.

I think it's safe to say we're making progress in America. We're not ashamed to teach values. We recognize the importance of character. And I want to thank you all for joining here to figure out how we can do more and how we can make a continued difference in the lives of our children. One goal of character education should be to prepare our children for community service. This conference, I understand, is focusing on community service for a good reason -- helping somebody else gives purpose and meaning in life.

I think it's particularly important in a day and age where some question the value system of America that we teach people to serve a neighbor -- people to love a neighbor like they'd like to be loved themselves. There's a question in our society as to whether or not we're so self-absorbed and materialistic that we won't fulfill our obligations as a nation.

That's not the America I know, and the America I believe exists. I've seen an amazing America since September the 11th -- people who recognize that serving something greater than yourself in life is an incredibly important part of life; that while -- focus on the stock market is, I guess, okay, but there's something more in life than just profit in loss; that somebody can profit in life by caring for a neighbor. I like to tell people, if you're interested in helping to define America, to show a side of America the world may not see, do some good, help somebody in need. And that needs to be taught to our children early in life.

I gave a speech at The Ohio State University -- thank you for inviting me, Hope. And I was pleased to see that 70 percent of the graduating class of Ohio State University had at one time or another volunteered, one time or another served something greater than themselves. Perhaps the culture is changing, from one that has said, if it feels good, just go ahead and do it, and if you've got a problem, blame somebody else, to a culture in which each of us are responsible for the decisions we make in life -- responsible for loving our children, responsible for loving our neighbors, responsible for serving a nation by helping somebody in need.

The poet William Wordsworth wrote this. He said, "What we have loved, others will love, and we'll teach them how." And that's what you all are here to discuss today. On behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for teaching them how. May God bless you all, and may God bless America. (Applause.)

Opening Remarks by Mrs. Laura Bush

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As prepared.

Thank you, and welcome to the White House Conference on Character and Community.

We all agree that education opens the door of hope for all of America's children. Education is a broad topic. Some people think of education in terms of the Three R's reading, writing, and arithmetic but another R is essential: responsibility.

Most of us have learned the Four R's. The bedrock lessons and values that shaped our lives as children continue to make our lives meaningful as adults. Good parents and teachers try to instill these values in children.

Gwendolyn Williams, a third-grade teacher at Manatee Elementary School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida said, "My students are at school for six hours each day. Most of them spend more (awake) hours with me than they spend with their parents. Therefore, I see my class as a family. It's the perfect environment to teach responsibility, respect, honesty, fairness, sharing, trust, diversity, tolerance and caring. Character education is a major part of my curriculum."

Children want to experience the joy of helping others. They should learn at an early age that helping others makes them feel good.

Think about when you were in second grade and your teacher asked you to draw a picture of someone you wanted to be when you grew up. You drew a firefighter, a police officer, an athlete, a doctor, an astronaut, a teacher or sometimes even a president.

These are people whose actions make them heroes. We drew them because we wanted to be heroes like them.

But you don't have to walk into a burning building or wear a badge to rescue someone.

You don't have to score a touchdown to win points with someone. You don't have to go to medical school to help a person feel better. You don't have to walk on the

moon to change this earth.and you don't have to sign a bill to change your state or country.

Kindness and heroism can't always be drawn in a picture. But they can be taught in our classrooms and churches; clubs and other places where children gather.

Today's Conference on Character and Community gives us the opportunity to share our stories, experiences, and perspectives for the good of our country and our children. In doing so, we recognize that character and service are national priorities. Service rises from strong character; and strong character compels us to serve. We all have the responsibility to promote strong values. And we know that character education is important and can be effective.

Our next speaker personifies the concepts of duty, honor, and country. His record of service is marked by a deep commitment to the values we were talking about today. He spent 35 years of his life serving his country as a professional soldier in the Army a career of distinction and success.

He retired from the Army at the top of his game, but he never stopped serving his country. In fact, Colin Powell had a promise to make America's Promise. And, he continues to keep his promise of service today. Americans are proud to have him serving our country. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Remarks by Secretary of State Colin Powell

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Thank you so very much, Mrs. Bush, for that very generous and warm welcome. And it's a great pleasure to be with the group this afternoon at this very important conference on character and community.

I'm here both as a former soldier who sat through many character guidance classes—or gave them in the course of my 35-year career, and then, as the first lady noted, spent a few wonderful years of my life working with America's young people before coming back into service as Secretary of State, recognizing that even as Secretary of State, all of the members of my State Department team have a responsibility to now reach out internationally to young people in need and, through discussions of character, through making character a central part of the philosophy of the department, it helps us take our value system of democracy and the free enterprise system and the individual rights of every boy and girl, man and woman on the face of the Earth and to take that value system to the rest of the world.

Mrs. Bush, I want to thank you for conceiving of this conference this afternoon. And I want to say to you and to everyone here that the example of character that you and the President have given to us over the last nine months is Exhibit A and B for character education.

I want to say a special welcome to all of my friends here from America's Promise, as well as other youth-serving organizations here. America's Promise means a great deal to me. It was launched five years ago in January really at a conference that was held in this room, where we said we would be holding a summit on America's future, the young people, in April of 1997. And I was privileged to be asked by all of our living Presidents to serve as chairman of that summit meeting, Summit on America's Future. And subsequently, we formed an organization called America's Promise to carry forward the goals of that summit and to go after five specific areas that are so related to what we're talking about this afternoon, character and community.

And the five goals were simple. They were common-sensical. And that's how we arrived at them, not through a great deal of study, but just looking at what young people needed, looking at what we had as we were growing up. And the first goal was to make sure that no boy or girl in America was growing up without having

present in their life responsible, caring, loving adults; responsible, caring, loving adults who could pass on to them the value systems that had made them responsible, caring and loving.

We also wanted to make sure, secondly, that no child was growing up without having the opportunity to be in a safe place in which to learn and to grow, ideally the home, the school, the community' where the home wasn't enough, or to supplement the home, clubs and other healthy activities to keep kids away from the temptations of the street.

And the third thing was to make sure that all of our youngsters had a healthy start in life, which is one of the baseline rights that we believe every child should have. No child should be in want for health care.

The fourth was to make sure that youngsters achieved a marketable skill, something that would make them useful to society when they became adults. And then fifth was to give each youngster an opportunity to give back, as the first lady noted earlier, understand the value of giving to others, the ethic of giving to others.

And these five things taken together became the hallmark of what America's Promise was all about. And we had a little red wagon that captured the essence of it, a little red wagon that shows you what a pleasant childhood should be like and look like, something you could put your dreams into.

And we tried to find an expression that would bring this all together. We said that what we were about in America's Promise was to build character and to build competence. Competence is self-explanatory, to get the skills and education needed in order to be successful, but building character, notice we always use it in that context, "building" character. It's something you build. And when you think about it, first what is it we're trying to build? What is it, these things we call character? It's simply nothing more than teaching youngsters and, for that matter, ultimately adults to do the right thing when no one is looking, when you don't need to, when there is no reward for doing the right thing; knowing and acting, and acting on the simple difference, that is always inside your head, between right and wrong.

Character means having a conscience, a conscience that is always present, that is always acting, that is always guiding you. It's an internal moral compass that is always pointing in the true direction, always keeps you on track, gives you the strength to stay away from the temptations that come along. It reflects a set of

ethical values that we believe in and we want all of our children to have, a set of ethical values that begins with honesty. If you can be trusted always to be honest, to do the right thing, you can then be counted on to be a fair person, always considerate of others, always doing unto others as you would have done unto yourself.

Fairness, honesty, caring respect for others, selflessness, willing to give to others, as the first lady noted a moment ago, self-respect, believing in yourself, loyalty to others, all of it adding up to creating something that young people need, and adults need even more: a reputation. A reputation that your word can be counted on.

It meant so much in my career as a soldier. An officer's word was his bond. An officer's word reflected his reputation. An officer's word was a reflection of his character and reflected all of the ethical values that I just described.

How do you do that? How do you put all of that in a child? And there's only one way: you build it into the child, you teach it to a child, and then the child learns it. Teaching, learning character begins in the home. Just as a child learns language only from those immediately around him or her, his family and her family, the child also learns behavior, what is expected from that child, from the adults who are around that child in the earliest months and years of life. A family is a tribe. A family is a pack, a den, which passes on the accumulated knowledge, and the mores and the taboos and the standards of all the generations who have gone before. All the experience that has gone before in that family comes to bear on that child. And that child has passed on to him or to her the expectations of all those previous generations. If those expectations are high, the child will learn early in life that he must reach, she must reach toward those expectations.

It's done in simple ways, simple ways that we all know so well. Teach a child how to behave: yes, no. This will hurt you. Naughty, naughty. That's a good boy, that's a good girl. Sit still. Be quiet. All of this a child needs as you draw the box for that child of what is acceptable behavior, what is right in that family, in that tribe, in that den. Behavior in which the child can feel happy and secure and loved inside that box of behavior, and within that box develop what ultimately we will call character—strength, character. A child who will want not to be in trouble, not to be outside.

All of us in some way were exposed to this. I had it in my neighborhood in the South Bronx. It was given to me by my parents, given to me by that extended family that came from the island of Jamaica many years ago. All of you had

similar experiences. My wife, Alma, who's here today, got it from her family in Birmingham, Alabama, a family that said, "You will not embarrass this family." I've told many audiences, I didn't mind getting hit when I misbehaved. I didn't mind getting sent to my room. Just don't come in there and give me that, "You shamed the family" bit. Because that was devastating. Tell me anything, but don't tell me I shamed—"You've shamed the family!"

How many of you heard, "Young man!"—"Young woman, we do not do that in this family"? And how has that caused tears to flow? That's all part of that mindset, heartset, soulset each child must have if we want that child to have strength of character and to build upon that character that they get the confidence that they need to go forward.

Remember, the word character comes from a Greek word—*charassein*—I'm pronouncing closely—which means to engrave, to scratch, to make indelible upon a piece of metal, or upon a child—to put these traits there forever. And character is like coral—it grows slowly, one layer at a time, the development of the conscience that will always keep you on course.

And it's interesting what happens when this is not there. A funny story I enjoy telling, it comes from a National Geographic thing I watched once, and it told a story about this game reserve in Africa where the rhinos were being killed.

Nobody knew why the rhinos were being killed. They had no natural enemies. And then they suddenly discovered that a few years earlier, they had put into this game reserve some teenage male elephants that had been taken from somewhere else. And after a bit of study, they discovered these teenage male elephants were killing the rhinos. It was aberrant behavior. Shouldn't have happened. And they thought about it. "What do we do? We're going to have to kill these teenage male elephants. We can't have this." And then they had a great idea. They went and got some adult male elephants, introduced them into the game reserve, and in less than six months, everything was fine. The teenage male elephants simply hadn't been taught how to be an elephant. Why would we have expected them to know? And the male elephants, as you were taught by your aunts and uncles and parents and cousins, essentially communicated in their own direct way, with a swat of a trunk or a bellow, this is not what is expected of you. This is not the way we behave.

This was for me a wonderful experience in my South Bronx neighborhood. But sooner or later, you have to leave the family and go out a little bit. In my case, it

was a matter of living in Law and Kelly Street, but I was okay because I had an aunt living in every other tenement building in the South Bronx of New York.

All up and down Kelly Street, block after block, there was always an aunt. And the aunt was always hanging out the window, looking down in the street to catch me and turn me in. And that's all they—you could talk about the speed of the auntnet. I mean, this was the fastest net in the world, much faster than any Internet operation you have ever seen. And it was community responsibility. That child was the responsibility not just of the immediate family, but of the community because that child was carrying the hopes and expectations of the whole community.

A child not only has to be taught, a child has to learn the teaching, and the learning isn't just from listening to the adults. The real learning comes from watching the adults. I hate to shock so many of you here today, but your children really aren't listening to you that closely. But they're watching you. They're watching you intently. They're watching to see if you are living the values that you are preaching. They're watching for something else. They're watching to see if those values of character that you talk to them about all the time work. Do they see people who are happy? Do they see contentment? Do they see love? Do they see success? Do they see reward? Does it all work? If it works, if they're taught it and if they see it in action in their family, in their community, it'll be scratched, engraved on their hearts forever.

And once they start to grow and get older and they are able to move out from the family and even a little further from the community, they will be in school in due course, as we all know. And that's why it is so important in this conference that we talk about the responsibilities of the school. The school must be that same kind of place as the family was, where youngsters are exposed to these values and where youngsters see these values in operation in the way in which they are dealt with by their teachers and principals, and because you have specific programs that talk to this, just as you have specific programs that talk to the three Rs that the First Lady made reference to.

And so character education in schools is an essential feature of the character education program that we want for our society. And then there's the role played by churches and synagogues and temples that lay the moral basis for character development. They must all be used to provide the firm foundation of character upon which the life of these children will rest.

We draw our national character from all of this. It flows up from individuals, from families to communities, to schools, and ultimately becomes our national character, the sum of all our individual characters, because America, at the end of the day, is a family. And we never saw a better demonstration of the strength and character of our national family than we did in the dark days following September 11th. And we saw what we were made of, and the world saw what we were made of. We responded with a sense of purpose and with a spine of steel. And our President and First Lady led us with character and with compassion so that we will come through this troubled period even stronger than we went into it.

And so character, at the end of the day, is the foundation block for our society, foundation block for a happy childhood. Nothing else substitutes for it, nothing else substitutes for it. And if we fail our children in teaching them and giving them examples from which to learn, then we are doing a disservice not only to those wonderful children, we are doing a disservice to our nation as well. And I know we will not fail because we are that kind of people that understand this clearly and are willing to make the necessary investment.

I'm reminded of a quotation from Horace Greeley. He said, "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take winds, and only character endures."

Thank you very much.

Remarks by Secretary of Education Rod Paige

White House Conference on Character and Community

June 19, 2002

As prepared.

Thank you, John. And thanks to our young volunteers for what you're doing in your communities. You – and all volunteers like you – are putting the UNITY back into *community*. We need more like you, and I hope when you go back to your schools you'll recruit others to follow your lead.

I also want to thank my friend Secretary Powell – who had to leave – for his very eloquent reminder that the times demand a greater commitment from each and every one of us.

And I especially want to thank Mrs. Bush for creating this forum for us to talk about what we can do to better help our young people develop not only their brains and brawn, but also their hearts and their sense of responsibility to community and country.

And it all starts in the home.

When I was a boy growing up in Monticello, Mississippi, my family didn't have a lot. My school had even less. In fact, there weren't even enough textbooks to go around.

But what we lacked in things, my parents – who were both teachers – made up for with unconditional love and a strong faith. By day they taught other children. But on nights and weekends, they taught me and my sisters and brothers.

Books filled our house, and so did love – for learning, for our faith, for our country and for each other. Their example inspired me to become a teacher, too.

Even now – at the age of 69 – I still draw strength from my parents and the values they taught me. Even now.

I was also blessed with outstanding coaches and other educators who were great role models. To this day, I still draw upon lessons learned on the football field and during band practice.

Yes...in high school I played trombone.

And look where it led me.

Don't worry. I didn't bring it today.

Football and band taught me a whole lot more than just how to play an instrument or run the ball. They taught me key lessons –like discipline and focus....and setting goals.... and working hard to achieve them.

My own experience taught me what the research shows: Strong character is not just something you just sit down and learn – like algebra or French. It's something that is formed in pivotal moments, large and small, private and public – with parents, friends, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, neighbors and even those of us in public life.

The seeds of character are planted in moments so fleeting we hardly notice. But children do. Young people do.

For they are always watching. On the ball field or the balance beam...in the classroom or after-school programs...at swim practice or music lessons – they are taking their cues from us – about not only *how* to do the right thing – but *what is* the right thing.

The research says loud and clear that, in the business of character-building, the *showing* is more important than the *telling*.

Will Rogers put it bluntly: Live in such a way that you wouldn't be afraid to sell the family parrot to the town gossip.

Instead of just hearing us *say* “love your neighbor,” youngsters will *see* that value when they *see* us treating others with kindness and respect – or when they *see* us volunteering to help those less fortunate.

Instead of just hearing us *say* “don't lie, cheat or steal,” they will *see* that value when they *see* us being honest and truthful.

Instead of just hearing us *say*, “you are responsible for what you say and do,” they will *see* that value when they *see* us taking personal responsibility for our own actions.

And part of taking responsibility is owning up to the simple fact that what young people see us do is very often reflected in what they do.

One of America's greatest educators, Booker T. Washington, said, "Character is power."

Nowhere is that power more potent than in how we model good character for our children. Or how we teach it in our classrooms.

In the Houston Independent School District – the 7th largest in the country – we trained more than 11,000 teachers how to infuse their instruction with bedrock values like honesty, trust and self-discipline. Students got the message in all aspects of their learning.

And teachers thanked us – because they know what President Bush knows: The success of future generations hinges on how well we – as a society – instill the qualities of that one little noun: character.

In his first year in office, President Bush tripled the funding for character development grants for our schools – to \$25 million. And the Department of Education is proud to be partners with him in his commitment to helping young people understand that consequences matter. That making the right choices matters.

And – as we heard from our experts today – we have science to guide us. We know what works when it comes to teaching the principles of good character because there's research to tell us. And we must listen.

That is the only help our children grow and learn and become the strong leaders Nelson Mandela had in mind when he said: "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."

Again, thank you for coming. God bless you all. And God bless America.

The Roots of Character and the Role of Community by Dr. William Damon, Stanford University

White House Conference on Character and Community

June 19, 2002

How do young people acquire good character? What can we, as adults, do to promote their character development? Because of recent advances in research on character development, we now can provide some solid answers to these questions. My purpose today is to summarize what today's research tells us about character development, and about the role of community in educating young people for character.

The first message is that every child begins life with the building blocks of character already present in rudimentary forms. Of course there still is much learning that needs to take place for these building blocks to become mature character, but the basic elements are present from the start. This means that a basic moral sense does not need to be forced down a child's throat like unpleasant medicine - it is part of the human system. To be sustained and expanded, the child's moral sense requires lots of nurturing by parents, schools, and communities, but not force-feeding.

What are these early building blocks of character? Four that scientific studies have identified are: *empathy*, *fairness*, *self-control*, and *self-awareness*. *Empathy* is the capacity to experience another person's pleasure or pain, and it provides the emotional root of caring about other people, the heart of compassion. Newborns cry when they hear sounds of crying and show signs of pleasure at happy sounds such as cooing and laughter; and by the second year of life it is common for children to comfort a peer or a parent in distress. An awareness of *fairness* begins as soon as children begin playing with friends. When a playmate hogs a plate of cookies or refuses to relinquish a swing set, the protest "That's not fair!" is a highly predictable response, because even young children understand that they have an obligation to share with others. The child's interest in *self-control* can be seen in an eagerness, as early as infancy, to regularize behavior through repetition, rituals, and rules. *Self-awareness* begins as soon as infants notice that their experience is distinctly their own and not the same as that of their caregivers - usually in the first months of life.

For these early moral capacities to become fully formed character, empathy must grow into sustained *concern for the well-being of others*; fairness must grow into a

real *commitment to justice*; self-control must grow into a strong *sense of personal responsibility*; and self-awareness must grow into a *determination to be a good and honorable person, free from subjugation, and dedicated to noble purposes beyond the self*. This is precisely the kind of character development necessary for sustaining a democracy, because it leads directly to a love of liberty balanced by a commitment to the well-being and rights of others in the broader community.

None of these developments can happen by itself. Children need certain kinds of support and guidance from adults in their lives if they are to turn their early positive inclinations into the mature virtues that constitute character. Adults can influence children in a number of ways and places: first and foremost in the family, but also importantly in schools, in community settings such as sports leagues, libraries, and religious institutions, and in the mass media.

Based upon everything we have learned from research, there are three things that I can say about adult influence on children's character. Adults promote good character in young people under the following conditions:

When adults communicate high expectations and standards to children, urging children to fully maximize the tremendous potentials that *all* children are born with.

When adults from all spheres of a child's life - family, school, community - are "on the same page" with one another regarding the core moral values that they profess to the child.

When adults encourage young people to develop strong moral identities of their own by setting good examples in behavior, by acquainting young people with admirable examples from history and public life, and by introducing children to noble purposes that inspire them.

Unfortunately these conditions are not always met in today's society. Adults sometimes have low standards for children and do not hold them to their responsibilities, out of the mistaken assumption that expecting too much of a child can wound a child's self-esteem. Yet research indicates just the opposite: a youngster builds self-confidence by accepting responsibility, even when it is difficult to do so. Adults sometimes present conflicting values to children - such as when a teacher says don't cheat but the sports coach says that breaking a rule is OK if you can get away with it; or when a T.V. show glamorizes behavior that any parent would disapprove of. Yet research shows that children take values seriously only when they perceive at least a rough consensus on them among the adults

whom they respect. Adults do not always make the effort to present admirable examples to the young; nor do they regularly discuss with young people the deep questions of meaning, purpose, and what really matters in life. Yet research shows that youngsters learn moral truths by seeing them enacted in the real lives of flesh-and-blood exemplars, and by reflecting on how this informs their own search for personal direction, not through abstract injunctions about right and wrong.

These conclusions lead directly to some guidelines for character education in our schools and communities. In a recent book that I edited for Hoover Institution Press, *Bringing in a New Era in Character Education*, I (and other people who are here today) have presented a set of suggestions for an informed, effective approach to character education. Briefly, they include:

In order to present children with coherent messages from all the important people and settings in their lives, character education must be a community-wide endeavor. Of course it is essential that these messages promote core elements of moral character, such as caring, fairness, self-control, and a respect for rights and liberty. Schools should join with all other institutions - family, civic, recreational, religious, media - to create a community where young people can find these consistent standards, high expectations, social support, and opportunities for learning and growth wherever they go. Research has shown that young people do far better in communities characterized by shared moral values than in communities where the young receive conflicting messages - and this is true whether communities are rural or urban, wealthy or modest in means.

Character education must consist of more than skin-deep programs that ask students to merely recite virtuous words such as honesty, tolerance, respect, courage, and so on: such words do little more than pass in one ear and out the other. Character education needs to have a real-life side that engages students in activities, either within the school or in the broader community, that help them acquire regular habits of virtuous behavior. Active engagement not only ensures that young people will invest themselves in the program; it also nurtures the capacity to make moral choices freely, and the love of liberty, one of the defining virtues of citizenship in a democracy.

Character education, in addition to teaching children what *not* to do (don't lie, don't cheat, don't act disrespectfully, and so on) also must have a positive side, inspiring young people to dedicate themselves to higher purposes. In the long run, it is a sense of positive inspiration that sustains good character. A young person who is committed to truly noble purposes does not need external injunctions to

walk the straight and narrow path: as they say in sports, a good offense is the best defense.

Charitable work is one way to introduce students to a larger purpose. Research has found that community service programs, especially when combined with reflection about the moral and personal significance of serving others, are powerful inducers of character development. The sort of community service programs that are promoted by the Freedom Corps are excellent examples of this, and the inspirational nature of this initiative sends exactly the right kind of message to young Americans.

Work as a sense of *calling*, a means of contributing to the betterment of the world by using one's personal skills and talents, is another character-inducing source of purpose for a youngster; as is the wish to establish and nurture a thriving family. Faith and spirituality, too, offers young people positive experiences with transcendent purposes. Another transcendent purpose is love of country and a selfless dedication to it. In the case of a country that stands as a beacon of democracy and freedom for the world, this is a noble sentiment. The age-old term for this spirit of dedication is *patriotism*, a term that in recent years has not always been promoted in our educational settings; yet now, when our society has been called upon to combat the evils of international terror, patriotism has assumed its rightful place as a source of inspiration for the young.

In order to fulfill their character education missions, our schools and communities must make special efforts to provide young citizens with all these sources of inspiration and more, becoming places where all young people can discover their own callings and noble purposes.

Preventing Chronic Violence in Schools, by Dr. Kenneth A. Dodge, Duke University

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Chronically violent and delinquent adolescents represent one of the most costly and vexing problems in American society today. Economic analyses suggest that each career criminal costs society over 1.3 million dollars, in costs to victims and costs of incarceration and treatment. No government or professional group knows what to do with these youth. Public schools expel them. Juvenile courts incarcerate them. Mental health agencies often put these youth in large groups where they simply learn from each other to become more deviant. Almost all professionals and government agencies have come to the same conclusion about chronically violent adolescents: By the time that they get to us, it seems too late. And, why couldn't someone have intervened earlier?

It should not come as a surprise that we have so few solutions for this problem, given how little our nation has invested in research and development on education and children. In most private industries, companies spend 5 to 10 percent of their resources on research and development. In the pharmaceutical and computer industries, the research and development investment has been up to 20 percent of all dollars, and the return on that investment has been striking. Of all federal expenditures in areas such as health, transportation, and energy, 2 to 3 percent are spent on research and development. However, when it comes to education and children, only .2 percent of all dollars that are allocated are spent on research and development. It is as if when it comes to education and children, we feel that we do not need to develop a science and an evidence base. The methods that are used in education and children's programs today have not changed much in the past 50 years, and the results have been disappointing. Fortunately, what I will report to you today is an exception. It is a program of research that HAS been supported by federal research dollars, and it has led to positive results in preventing chronic violence among our highest risk youth.

The solution has required a different approach toward violent youth than the approaches we have taken in the past. It is an approach that we have borrowed from education and public health. Consider some analogies. About 100 years ago, we had a major problem in this country with illiteracy. When our economy moved away from exclusive reliance on agriculture, too many of our young adults were

ill-prepared to contribute to the new economy. As a society, we solved that problem through universal public education. We had a theory about literacy, namely, that one must be taught systematically over a long period of time in order to become fluent at reading. And so we developed a system, called public education, that is charged with delivering those services to every child in America. We do not wait until age 18 to see which children have failed to learn to read and then try to provide remedial help.

Let's try another analogy. About 75 years ago, our society also had a major problem with dental caries and tooth decay. We solved that problem with a public health approach based on scientific theory and research about the cause of this problem. And so we solved that problem by creating a system of putting fluoride in the water and providing access to toothpaste at an affordable price that enables children to prevent tooth decay. We did not decide to wait until children lost teeth and then replaced those teeth. We solved the problem through prevention.

Now let's look at the problem of chronically violent behavior among adolescents. We all agree that this problem should not be tolerated and that action by government must occur to protect others once violence has occurred. But do we have a system to prevent these children from growing up to become chronically violent? There is no fluoride in the water for violence prevention, and there is no 12-year system of training and education to prevent violence. In my few minutes, I will summarize the scientific research that provides the basis for preventive intervention. Then I will describe a program that my colleagues and I have developed and evaluated, called Fast Track.

The scientific rationale for early prevention comes from longitudinal studies like the Child Development Project. My colleagues and I began studying a community sample of 585 preschool-aged boys and girls back in 1987 through annual interviews, tests, observations, and review of archival records. Those children are now 19 years old. Some of them have graduated from high school, and others are in prison. By following these children across their childhoods, we have learned a great deal about how chronic violence develops.

The first point that we have learned is that we can identify high-risk children by the time they complete kindergarten. Screening of children through teacher and parent reports of who is poor, behaves aggressively at home, and has difficulty getting along with peers at school can identify a group of children who have better than a 50 percent chance of being arrested 12 years later.

Second, we have learned that this early identification is *not* destiny. Chronic violence *develops*, and development depends on life experiences during the school years. The children who become violent in adolescence are those who have received harsh parenting, have been physically maltreated, or have parents who have not been able to supervise them. Next, the children who become violent are those who have had social and academic problems at school. They have been socially rejected by their peers, have failed academically, or are unfortunate enough to go to a school where the classroom environment fails to support nonviolence.

Furthermore, we have learned how these life experiences lead to violence. We have learned that harsh and rejecting environments lead children to develop deviant ways of processing social information, which, in turn, leads them to react violently when they are provoked. For example, children who have been maltreated become hypervigilant about other people and tend to attribute hostile intentions to others even when others have not acted in a hostile manner. This hostile attributional bias, in turn, leads a child to react aggressively when he or she is provoked. In contrast, children from warm and nurturing home and school environments tend to learn social-cognitive skills such as how to read others' intention accurately and how to solve problems nonviolently.

Third, we have learned that it is possible to change those harsh life experiences, so that even high-risk children need not grow up to become violent. It is this premise that guided the creation of the Fast Track Prevention Program, which began in 1990 through the support of the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the Department of Education, and which continues today.

Colleagues at four sites across the country began Fast Track by screening 10,000 kindergarten boys and girls back in 1991. We identified 891 children who were at high risk for adolescent violence. These children tended to come from mostly poor, single-parent-headed families with multiple problems. We randomly assigned them to receive the Fast Track intervention or not. Those children who were assigned to the control group were allowed to receive whatever intervention might be offered to them by the community, but we did not supplement those efforts.

The Fast Track Prevention Program lasts 10 years and costs about \$40,000 per child. We provide group training in behavior management for their parents and supplement that training with biweekly home visits to help with family management and with family-school relationships. We provide training to the

children in social-cognitive skills such as understanding emotions and intentions and in solving social problems. We provide phonics-based tutoring in reading skills. We support the development of positive peer relationships through coaching. Finally, we train the teachers to deliver a classroom curriculum in social and emotional development.

Delivering the Fast Track Program has required a committed team of education and family specialists, community volunteer tutors and mentors, and school teachers. It also requires hard work from the parents. One of the lessons that we learned is that no matter how difficult are the circumstances of the families of these children, the parents genuinely want their young children to grow up to graduate from high school, get a satisfying job, and stay out of jail and off drugs. We relied on those dreams to get parents to let us in the door. With effort, we were able to get 99 percent of the 445 families to agree to participate, and then, over 75 percent of the parents and 88 percent of the children attended more than half of the sessions that we offered.

We have tested the efficacy of the Fast Track Program by comparing the 445 children who had been assigned to receive intervention, even if they rarely attended, to the 446 children in the control group. Our findings are modest but statistically robust and very striking.

First, we were successful in improving the competencies of our targeted children and their parents. The parents in the intervention group reduced their use of harsh discipline, and their children improved their social-cognitive and academic skills, relative to the control group.

In turn, these improvements led to improvements in aggressive behavior in the elementary school years. Compared with children in the control group, children in the intervention group displayed less aggressive behavior at home as reported by parents, less aggressive behavior in the classroom as reported by teachers and peers, and less aggressive behavior on the playground as directly observed by our observers who did not know which children had received intervention.

By the end of third grade, 27 percent of the control group had become free of conduct problems, in contrast with 37 percent of the intervention group. By fourth grade, 48 percent of the control group had been placed in costly special education classrooms, in contrast with 36 percent of the intervention group.

In middle school, the group differences continued. By eighth grade, 42 percent of the control group had been arrested, in contrast with 38 percent of the intervention group. Finally, psychiatric interviews in ninth grade revealed that the Fast Track Program has reduced serious Conduct Disorder by over one third, from 27 percent to 17 percent.

Although these effects may seem modest in magnitude, our initial economic analysis suggests that the differences will prove to be cost-beneficial. For example, if each career criminal costs society 1.3 million dollars, and if the Fast Track Program costs \$40,000 per child, the program will prove to be a wise economic investment if just 3 percent of the children are saved from careers of violent crime.

We have begun to disseminate the Fast Track Program in several school systems across the country through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program of the Department of Education, and it is being implemented in several schools in Great Britain, Australia, and Canada. It is by no means the only way to prevent chronic violence, but it has been one of the most rigorously evaluated programs ever. We appreciate the financial support of research funds from the federal government that enabled this program to get developed, implemented, and evaluated.

*This research was conducted in collaboration with: John E. Bates, Karen L. Bierman,, John D. Coie, E. Michael Foster, Mark T. Greenberg, John E. Lochman, Robert J. McMahon, Gregory S. Pettit, Ellen E. Pinderhughes.

The Expertise of Moral Character by Dr. Darcia Narvaez, University of Notre Dame

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For the past several years my colleagues and I, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, have been developing a model for character education in the middle grades that we call “Community Voices and Character Education.”¹ Our work has been guided by four considerations. First, we adopt a skills-based understanding of moral character. This is not a new idea. Plato, for example, in *The Republic*, repeatedly draws an analogy between the training and practices of the just person and the training and practices of skilled artisans and professionals. A just person is one who has particular, highly-cultivated skills that have been developed through training and practice.²

Second, like Plato, we believe that character development is a matter of nurturing skills towards high levels of expertise. Our work is guided by recent advances in cognitive science regarding the nature of expertise and its development.

Third, the pedagogy driving our model holds several educational advantages. Here I mention just three. (1) Our model assumes an active cognitive approach to learning, which is central to best practice instruction. (2) Our model opens character education to greater accountability in that skills are teachable and their progress can be measured. (3) Our model insists that character development be

1 The project director is Connie Anderson at the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. The University of Minnesota was subcontractor for design and evaluation. My role is project designer. My colleagues in this project are Leilani Endicott, Tonia Bock, and Jim Lies. The project is funded by grant #R215V980001 from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

2 “Then this turning around of the mind itself might be made a subject of techne...what are commonly called excellences of the mind...are not in fact innate, but are implanted by subsequent training and practice;” (*Republic*, book six, part seven, 518: d-e).

embedded within standards-driven academic curriculum, for this is the only way character education can be sustained.

Finally, we contend that a curricular approach to character education must be in collaboration with “community voices.” The implementation must reflect the commitments of the local community and the needs of its citizenry. The issue of “whose values will be taught?” is best approached by embedding educational goals within the value expressions of particular communities.

All four of these orienting assumptions have guided our work in Minnesota. I would like to flesh out some of these ideas by briefly addressing five questions. (1) How do children learn? (2) How are experts different from novices and how did they get that way? (3) What do people of good character know? (4) How do we nurture good character in schools? (5) How can a program be sustained?

How Do Children Learn?

One approach to instruction essentially assumes that the child is passive in her own learning. The child’s job is to attend, receive, store, and recall. In this approach, the teacher “pitches” information and the student must “catch” it. Learning is a matter of catching what the teacher pitches. This conception of learning is inaccurate. Children learn from their interactions with people and objects (Reed & Johnson, 1998; Piaget, 1970); they formulate a set of individualized representations of the world (Piaget, 1952); they construct networks of conceptual associations or schemas (Rumelhart, 1980; Taylor & Crocker, 1981). With experience, schemas increase in complexity (Schank & Abelson, 1977) and if a person becomes very good at performing and solving problems in a particular area, we call that person an expert.

How Are Experts Different From Novices?

Experts are different from novices in three significant ways. First, there are differences in the size, complexity, and organization of knowledge schemas (Chi, Glaser & Farr, 1988; Sternberg, 1998). Those with more complex schemas in moral judgment are able to say more about a moral dilemma and recall more from a moral story (Narvaez, 1997; Narvaez, 1998).

Second, experts see the world differently (Neisser, 1967). Their deep and vast pattern matching capabilities allow experts to notice things that novices miss. For example, among auditors, those with more complex moral judgment schemas are more likely to find questionable entries in financial statements and they are more likely to report them (Poneman & Gabhart, 1994).

Experts also possess well-developed sets of procedural skills. Unlike novices, experts know *what* knowledge to access, *which* procedures to apply, *how* to apply them, and *when* it is appropriate (Abernathy & Hamm, 1995). More generally, experts approach problems conceptually. They look for the underlying grammar or structure in a problem, while novices get bogged down or distracted by surface appearances (Novick, 1988). For example, expert classroom teachers can recognize the pre-conditions for misbehavior and have a set of tools they can employ to circumvent it. In contrast, the novice teacher often misses the cues until the classroom is well out of hand (Berliner, 1992).

Expertise is a notion that has gained prominence among educational researchers. Indeed, some contend that intellectual abilities are best viewed as forms of expertise (Sternberg, 1998; 1999). Children move along a continuum from novice-to-expert in each content domain that they study. We adopt this perspective for moral character.

How do experts become experts? To develop expertise, one must master the defining features and underlying structures of the domain and focus on them during extensive practice. These conceptual tools and general principles enable them to detect meaningful patterns and solve problems (Abernathy & Hamm, 1995). Further, their practice is focused, extensive and coached (Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Roemer, 1993).

What Do People of Good Character Know?

In Minnesota, we spent several years in consultation and collaboration with educators to construct a framework for character development that draws on reviews of research (Bebeau, Rest, & Narvaez, 1999; Rest, 1983; Narvaez & Rest, 1995) and builds on the foundations I have just outlined (Narvaez, Mitchell, Endicott & Bock, 1999). Persons of good character have better developed skills in four areas: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, and ethical action. Each of these four processes has seven skills, along with suggestions for subskills (Narvaez, Endicott & Bock, in press). The skills and subskills are the schemas that students need to build for good character and for good citizenship. For example, experts in the skills of Ethical Sensitivity are better at quickly and accurately ‘reading’ a moral situation and determining what role they might play. Experts in the skills of Ethical Judgment have many tools for solving complex moral problems. Experts in the skills of Ethical Motivation cultivate an ethical identity that leads them to prioritize ethical goals. Experts in the skills of Ethical Action know how to keep their “eye on the prize,” enabling them to stay on task

and take the necessary steps to get the ethical job done. Our model is appropriate for understanding character development because it provides a wholistic, concrete view of the moral person. Yet identifying the skills, or the curriculum, is not enough for a successful character development program.

How Do We Nurture Good Character in Schools?

What not to do. Like many experts, some teachers forget what it is like to be a novice (Hinds, 1999; Whitehead, 1929). Some educators believe that presenting a list of virtues is nearly as clear to the students as it is to them. Although the label, ‘honesty,’ is convenient for the adult in chunking all sorts of experiences in memory, a child has few experiences to draw on. Labeling a complex set of behaviors with a single word or story does not help the novice or the child. A story’s moral theme that seems so clear to an adult is not the theme many children take away (Narvaez, 2002; Narvaez, Bentley, Gleason, & Samuels, 1998; Narvaez, Gleason, Mitchell, & Bentley, 1999). For example in one study, third graders on average extracted the intended theme only 10% of the time (Narvaez, Gleason et al, 1999). Research shows that knowledge application is necessary to build expertise.

What educators should do. Here are three recommendations.

Educators must take on the responsibility of intentional character skill instruction instead of a hit-or-miss approach.

Educators must provide authentic learning experiences based on levels of apprenticeship. Four levels of learning or apprenticeship are suggested (Narvaez et al, in press): (1) Pattern detection by immersion in relevant examples, (2) Attention to critical detail, (3) Practice procedures, (4) Integrate knowledge and procedures. Educators must present the defining features of each skill—of showing respect, of showing care, of persevering. Teachers need to make sure students have many opportunities to build their own understandings or schemas from practice while teachers guide them through the terrain of the domain. As apprentices of good character, students need to be immersed in authentic learning environments, taking on increasing responsibility, refining their sensibilities and strategies as they gain more experience (Marshall, 2000; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995). In schools that create “just communities”—where virtually all school decisions are made by the student-faculty collective, the defining features of democratic decision making are laid out and practiced. Students develop skills for participatory democracy, commitment to collective norms and personal responsibility (Power, Kohlberg, & Higgins, 1989).

Educators must arrange learning experiences in a variety of collaborative community contexts. Schools can provide opportunities for skill development by encouraging broad engagement with the community so that students can learn, apply, and hone their ethical competencies in real-life settings. The elders, leaders, and all citizens in the community are “funds of knowledge” and can be partners in coaching the students in their skill development. For in reality, students are apprentices to the community.

How Can a Program Be Sustained?

I present the ethical expertise model to teams of educators and ask that they include in their implementation design the following characteristics critical to sustainability.

- 1. Integrate ethical skill development into standards-driven instruction.*
- 2. Teach character across the curriculum in every subject and activity.*
- 3. Involve the whole community in adapting the model to local structures.*

The full spectrum of the community must be involved in the adoption and adaptation of a program. In fact, each implementation of the model is unique because it is locally envisioned and locally controlled.

What about student outcomes? Our post-test data are just now being organized. But in a pilot study comparing participating classrooms with non-participating classrooms, we found significant increases only in the participating classrooms for prosocial responsibility, ethical identity and prosocial risk-taking (Narvaez et al. 2000).

Summary and Conclusion

Moral character is best thought of as a set of teachable, ethically-relevant skills. Ethical skill instruction should be embedded in standards-driven pedagogy. Ethical skills should be taught across the curriculum. With such an education, students will develop schemas of goodness and of justice. They will learn routines of helping and of reasoning. They will learn skills of leadership and of commitment. With these skills they can take responsibility for ethical action in their neighborhoods and communities. They will be energized by memories of personal ethical action. With these skills, students are empowered to be active citizens who will make the fate of the nation their own.

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Community *In School*: Central to Character Formation and More by Dr. Eric Schaps, Oakland, CA

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In my Center's work with schools, we often survey students and ask them how much they agree or disagree with such statements as:
Students at this school really care about each other.

In my class students have a say in deciding what goes on.

I feel that I can talk to the teachers in this school about things that are bothering me.

These statements reflect the central focus of our Child Development Project (CDP)—helping elementary schools to create a strong “sense of community” in the classroom and the school at large, a community that links students, their parents or other caregivers, and the school's staff in supporting the growth and learning of every student. Through this focus on building community *in school*, CDP helps schools to foster students' ethical, social, and emotional growth, as well as their academic learning

To build community, the CDP program assists a school in modifying its curriculum, pedagogy, organization, and climate *so that the daily experience of school itself becomes the character education program, the social and emotional learning program, and the problem prevention program, as well as the academic program.* CDP's community-building components include:

Class meetings – Used to set goals and norms, plan activities, make decisions, identify and solve problems, and promote reflection, through teacher-facilitated, whole-class participation.

Cooperative learning activities – Students collaborate in pairs and small groups for academic learning and other purposes.

Buddies program – Whole classes of older and younger students pair up. Each older student is paired with a younger “buddy” for the semester or year, to engage in various academic and recreational activities.

School-wide activities – Innovative school events that link students, parents, and teachers in creating an inclusive, supportive school culture.

Parent involvement activities – Structured home conversations, mostly interviews conducted by the student with a parent or other caregiver, that link school learning to family experiences and perspectives.

Taken together, these components are intended to strengthen relationships within the classroom, within the school at large, and between home and school.

When a school becomes a stronger, more caring community, it more effectively meets basic student needs—their needs for physical and psychological safety; for a sense of belonging and connection to others; for a sense that one is a competent, worthy person; and for a sense of autonomy (sometimes referred to as “voice and choice”). Leading theoreticians and researchers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci, et al., 1985; Maslow, 1954) contend that these needs for autonomy, belonging, competence, and safety are basic to human motivation, to what drives and shapes our thinking, feelings, and behavior.

Finally, when a school helps its students to satisfy their basic needs, *because* it is helping them to do so, it prompts them to “bond”—to become affectively committed—to its goals and values, just as a mother who effectively cares for an infant causes that baby to bond to her and to strive to emulate her (Watson et al., 1989). And just as maternal bonding fosters a baby’s healthy development, as we will see below, schools that effectively promote bonding foster healthy learning and growth—of many kinds—and help students to avoid problems ranging from emotional distress to drug use to violence.

Measuring Community in School

My Center uses three questionnaire scales to measure sense of community. Beginning at third or fourth grade, we survey students about:

Classroom supportiveness –*by asking them to agree or disagree with such statements as: “My class is like a family” and “Students in my class help each other learn.”*

Classroom autonomy –*by asking them about opportunities to exercise autonomy, such as how often “Students in my class students can get a rule changed if they think it is unfair” and “In my class I get to do things that I want to do.”*

School supportiveness –by asking them to agree or disagree with such statements as: “Teachers and students treat each other with respect at this school” and “Students in this school help each other, even if they are not friends.”

Unfortunately, our research suggests that sense of community is not strong in many if not most schools, and that it tends to be significantly lower for low-income students and students of color than for their Anglo, more-affluent peers (Battistich et al., 1995). Thus, students who are often most in need of a supportive school environment (Tharp, 1989) may be further disadvantaged by the quality of their experience in school.

Evidence of CDP’s Effectiveness

The CDP program has been rigorously evaluated in three quasi-experimental studies over the last 20 years. The largest and most recent was a comparative evaluation involving 12 program and 12 matched comparison schools in six school districts across the U.S. In this four-year study, a culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse sample of approximately 14,000 students was assessed at baseline and during each of three years of implementation. In addition, students from half of these program and comparison elementary schools were followed up as they progressed through middle school.

These studies consistently have shown that when widely implemented in a school, CDP significantly increases students’ sense of the school as a community and yields a wide range of other positive outcomes without any negative effects. The favorable outcomes include significantly more positive attitudes toward school and learning, more positive attitudes toward the self, more positive social and ethical attitudes and behaviors, and reduced involvement in problem behaviors. Moreover, consistent with program theory, analyses indicate that virtually all of these positive outcomes are mediated by increases in sense of community.

Follow-up findings indicate that former program students maintain their greater tendency to bond to school during their middle school years, yielding continuing widespread, significant effects. During middle school, former program students were found to have more positive attitudes toward school and learning than comparison students, and to have higher course grades and achievement test scores. They were more involved in positive youth activities, and were rated by their teachers as being more engaged in learning, showing more leadership qualities, being more concerned about others, and being less alienated than comparison students. Former program students also were less involved in problem behaviors during middle school, including engaging in less misconduct at school

and less serious delinquency than comparison students. Finally, program students had more friends who were also positively involved in school, and fewer friends who were involved in school misconduct and delinquency. There again were no significant effects favoring comparison students.

Because of CDP's demonstrated effects, the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention has selected it as a model drug prevention program, and the U.S. Department of Education has recognized it as a promising violence prevention program as well as an "Obey-Porter" (Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration) model. Schools and districts that are interested in learning more about CDP can visit our web site at www.devstu.org.

Conclusion

In summary, the evidence is now clear that strengthening sense of community promotes school bonding, and is central to students' healthy development—ethically, socially, emotionally, and academically. Many of the positive effects of heightening community in elementary school persist through the middle school years. It is also clear that sense of community can be strengthened in feasible and affordable ways.

Finally, the importance of community, "connectedness," or "belonging" in school is also being demonstrated by other researchers, including Resnick et al. (1997), Bryk & Driscoll (1988), and Hawkins et al. (1999). We hope that this growing body of research evidence will prompt wider recognition that a focus on building community in school is central to improving education in this nation and to creating a healthy, humane, and productive society.

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The Character of Moral Exemplars by Dr. Lawrence J. Walker, University of British Columbia

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My sense of contemporary moral psychology – a field of research that has been my interest for all of my scholarly career – is that it has provided rich understandings regarding the development of moral reasoning, but has been relatively impoverished in terms of its appreciation of moral personality and character. This rather barren conception of moral functioning has, not surprisingly, often failed to provide effective means by which to foster children's moral development.

The basic goal of my recent research is to formulate a more balanced account of moral functioning that meaningfully integrates moral cognition with moral character and action – a research direction that I will illustrate today through the study of moral exemplarity. It is important to keep in mind that moral functioning is inherently multifaceted, involving the dynamic interplay of thought, emotions, and behavior; and that we trivialize morality if we focus exclusively on one component. I believe that the study of exemplary moral character has the potential to encompass the various cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of moral functioning, as well as to address the different domains of moral concern, that is, both our relationships with others and the personal development of our values, lifestyle, and identity.

What I am pursuing in my own research is a two-pronged approach to developing such an integrated account of moral functioning: One approach examines people's ordinary conceptions of moral exemplarity; the other examines the psychological functioning of actual moral exemplars, people who have been identified as leading lives of moral virtue, integrity, and commitment. These different empirical strategies should be mutually informative, providing convergent evidence regarding aspects of moral functioning that are significant in everyday life and that should be incorporated into both our theories of moral development and our approaches to character education.

Let me begin by describing my research on people's conceptions of moral excellence (Walker & Pitts, 1998). People's ordinary conceptions of morality can provide a healthy corrective to the conceptual biases that sometimes distort our perspectives and they can help to draw attention to aspects of morality that have been sidelined in our theories. This research entailed a sequence of three studies in

which participants generated lists of attributes characteristic of a highly moral person, rated how characteristic these attributes were, and then freely sorted these attributes into groups – a process which allowed us, through various statistical techniques, to derive typologies that reflect people’s implicit understandings.

Analyses identified two dimensions underlying people’s understanding of moral exemplarity: one I labeled a self–other dimension, the other an external–internal dimension. At one end of the self–other dimension are traits that emphasize personal agency and commitment, whereas at the other end are traits that focus more on care for others. Of course, the range of these moral virtues means that they are sometimes in tension. For example, strongly held moral values need to be balanced by an openness to new perspectives and a sensitivity to the circumstances of others. Similarly, the external–internal dimension reflects the fact that morality involves an orientation both to shared moral norms and to the carefully considered principles of one’s own conscience. On a related note, it is important to recognize that many virtues may be taken to excess and have maladaptive aspects to their expression in some contexts. For example, self-sacrificial care can be destructive when it involves self-denigration and over-involvement in others’ lives.

Analyses also identified several clusters of attributes in people’s understanding of moral exemplarity that have been inadequately represented in moral psychology and that now warrant more careful attention, such as the notion of integrity, for example. There is, however, one questionable implication from this research that should be flagged and that is whether there is a single prototype for moral excellence. This collection may represent an amalgamation of virtues that would be impossible, indeed incoherent, for any one person to embody. At present, we have little understanding of how these aspects of moral character interact in psychological functioning.

In any case, the suggestion pursued here is that moral exemplarity can be evidenced in quite divergent ways – think, for example, of moral heroes such as Martin Luther King Jr. in his pursuit of justice or Mother Teresa in her selfless care for the disadvantaged or Oskar Schindler in his brave protection of Jews during the Holocaust. Here the critical question is: What traits are common across different types of moral exemplarity and what traits are unique to each? So in this next project (Walker & Hennig, 2002), we explored conceptions of three types of moral exemplarity – just, brave, and caring. As in the previous project, this entailed a sequence of three studies which in the end allowed us to identify typologies in people’s understanding.

Our analyses revealed rather dissimilar personality profiles for these different types of moral exemplars. The brave exemplar was associated with traits of agency and self-sacrifice; the caring exemplar was associated with traits of nurturance and altruism; whereas the just exemplar was typified by conscientiousness, stability, and openness. Yet, many traits were found to be common to all – what we could consider suggestive of the core of moral functioning. Among these core traits were honesty, dependability, and self-control; as well as many traits of an interpersonal nature that reflect an other-oriented orientation. Other themes included personal agency, positivity, emotional stability, and openness. These common features are clearly foundational for moral functioning and warrant further conceptual and empirical scrutiny.

The major limitation to the study of conceptions of moral functioning is that it simply describes people's understandings, not the actual psychological functioning of real moral exemplars. So in another research project currently underway, I am examining the personalities, through extensive interviews and several questionnaire measures, of two contrasting types of moral exemplars: exceptionally brave versus caring people.

The sample is composed of Canadians who have received national awards in recognition of either their acts of bravery in risking their lives to save others or for their extraordinary care to individuals, groups, or communities, or their support for humanitarian causes.

For example, among the recipients of the award for bravery was a woman who at considerable danger to herself saved a young girl from a vicious cougar attack; and among the recipients of the award for care was a police officer who, in his off-duty time, developed a program to buy and deliver Christmas gifts for disadvantaged children in remote communities. These are the types of people who have made a real difference in the lives of others, who have given selflessly of themselves in aid of others and their communities.

It is anticipated that the eventual findings of this research project will yield a more comprehensive understanding of moral functioning that integrates cognition, personality, and action. Once the field has some sense of the psychological functioning of moral exemplars, then the agenda can focus on the formative factors in the development of such exemplary moral character and on programs to foster it. Certainly, there are many possibilities to consider as we chart new directions in moral psychology and character education.

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Remarks by Katie Warner

White House Conference on Character and Community
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Good afternoon, my name is Katie Warner and I am entering my senior year at C. Milton Wright High School in Harford County. It is a privilege to speak to you today about service learning and the impact it has had on me.

As a junior in high school, I started the Red Cross Club. When I decided to start the club, I did not know what to expect. I discovered that moving beyond yourself and caring about others could be a powerful tool for changing communities. Being active in the club motivated me to become more active in my community outside of school. Because of the club, I have participated in training in the areas of humanitarian law, creativity, public speaking, disaster services and crime avoidance. I also attended a youth leadership development camp last summer and will return this summer as a coordinator. This camp helps me refine my service and leadership skills as I encourage others to do the same.

Another very important result of service learning is that when you are working on a community project with another person it does not matter what social group they belong to. Everyone is working towards a common goal. It is so neat to watch the different groups of teenagers that would normally have ignored each other inside of school come together and work as a team when you take them out of school and ask them to help the community. The invisible walls that define different groups of students fade away and they just think about helping their community. In the cafeteria you can pick out every group, the athletes sit together, the musicians sit together and, the special education students sit together, but if you were to walk into a Red Cross meeting you would just see a group of youth volunteers. We become a caring community as we work toward a common goal.

In my sophomore year, I participated in the Kenya school chest initiative with my English class. The chest initiative is a project that came from the American Red Cross. In Kenya, students can not afford school supplies and cannot attend school without them. Our goal was to fill chests up with school supplies such as pencils, rulers, crayons and jump ropes. The chests were then shipped to the Kenya. The supplies were then distributed to the students so they can attend school that year. Harford County sent a total of 5 chests, 2 of them from my high school.

This year, I coordinated the chest project at school with a group of students from the Red Cross club. The students and I collaborated with the teachers in our school

and taught the introduction of the project to 15 English classes and 2 Social Studies classes. We worked to intertwine this project into the school curriculum by having an introduction, actual project, and reflection. I am happy to report that this year we were able to increase from sending two chests to sending fourteen chests to Malawi.

Students involved in service learning become positive role models for other students. They motivate others to volunteer their time and talents and participate in youth service projects that interest them. Not only do my peers respect me, but teachers look at me differently as well. I found that when you gain a teacher's respect they are very willing to support and participate in service learning activities. With support from a teacher, students can come together to complete a service learning project for the community rather than students being the recipients of community programs.

Service learning has inspired me to begin making a difference in my community as a high school student. It has been a powerful and realistic learning experience for me and has provided me with the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills that far exceed book knowledge. It has given me an early start at becoming a leader of tomorrow—part of the next generation of leaders. I would like to leave you with a quote that I feel very strongly about from the movie *Pearl Harbor*: “There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.”

Thank You.

Remarks by Theodore Wilson

White House Conference on Character and Community

June 19, 2002

Good afternoon, Mrs. Bush, and distinguished guests, my name is Theodore Wilson. I am an upcoming senior at Parkdale High School located in Prince George's County. I would like to share with you some of my service learning experiences and how they influenced my life.

As I transitioned from elementary school to middle school, a mentoring program called Kings and Queens introduced me to a mentor named Mr. Otis Harris. He assisted me in moving in a more positive direction. The mentoring program was offered as a class in my middle school and I began to take on leadership positions and more responsibility within my school. I became an anchor for the morning announcements and spoke to my fellow classmates at assemblies concerning respecting African American culture. This helped me feel a sense of pride because I was given the opportunity to show my leadership abilities.

When I entered high school, Mr. Harris introduced me to Mr. Zack Berry, who is the coordinator of Mentoring Youth Leadership Connection also known as MYLC. I continued to develop my leadership and public speaking skills as I presented workshops for Health Teens dealing with such topics as teen pregnancy prevention, suicide, AIDS, HIV, drug prevention and health awareness. What I am most proud of is our Glass Manor project. Our team adopted fourth through sixth grade students at Glass Manor Elementary School and we tutored them on the weekends, took them on cultural field trips and taught etiquette classes.

Having developed my confidence, I began participating in service learning projects at my high school. In biology class, we did environmental projects that involved cleaning up local streams and ensuring that the Chesapeake Bay would be preserved. My Student Government Class sponsored canned food drives in conjunction with the family and consumer sciences classes so that the food baskets would include nutritionally balanced meals for the needy families.

I believe in encouraging student participation in solving community needs and in helping youth see themselves as assets and resources so that their voices can be heard. I even presented a workshop to students and adults on student empowerment for service learning at the Maryland Student service alliance conference at the College of Notre Dame.

“Sankofa” is a term that comes from South Africa and means, “to give back and fetch back.” With the help of service learning and my mentors, I now have plans to attend Clark-Atlanta University in the fall of 2003 and to study education. I have become involved in service learning activities in order to give back to my community so that I can assist other young persons in the same manner that has benefited my life.

Thank you.

Remarks by N'Mah Yilla

White House Conference on Character and Community

June 19, 2002

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. As Mr. Bridgeland told you my name is N'Mah Yilla. Service learning: This has been an integral part of my high school experience. Having to juggle four AP classes, a diverse range of extra-curricular activities and interning at a Day-care center was not easy, but it did help bring out what for me was crucial to the service learning experience. At first, its significance lay in the fact that it had to be completed in order to graduate from Maryland state public schools, but I have since learned that service learning is much more than just a graduation prerequisite.

Service learning has taught me important life lessons, perhaps the most prominent being respect for educators. Working with young children has made me realize that instructing youth is indeed a difficult task and that teachers and child care providers should be admired and venerated for their patience, diligence, and dedication. In addition, as a result of service learning my organizational and critical thinking skills were strengthened. I had to figure out different approaches to solving problems, new and inventive ways of passing on instruction and different ways to keep myself from sheer exasperation. This ability to develop inventive ways to deal with stressful situations would in turn be a useful advantage in my academic classes and extra-curricular pursuits. Additionally, in a type of cycle, the things I learned at school made me better able to perform my service learning tasks. In effect, the service learning and academic spheres of my life were a sort of yin and yang to each other as the knowledge I acquired from one proved to be an invaluable resource in the other.

John F. Kennedy said it best when he said, "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." This noble truth epitomizes the spirit of service learning and has since been underscored by the sentiments of our own president Bush who recently stated that, "...In order to live in a free society, you need to give something back...through loving somebody and showing it through actual deeds." Indeed it is because of service learning that I now know that community involvement is not a chore or something to check off a graduation "to do" list, but an elevating activity that more than anything is an uneven reciprocation of work for life altering experiences and heightened community awareness. Because of service learning I know that helping even one person can indeed make the world of difference; that in giving my all for the sake of others is in reality like giving back to myself, for there is something to be

learned from every experience no matter how big or small. Because of service learning, I now know that in doing all that you can for your community and country, you acquire a certain level of respect and honesty. That can only come from the pride in knowing that you have fulfilled your civic duty.

Finally, I leave you with the words of Max Ehrmann who in his poem *Desiderata*, said this, “With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, It is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.” Indeed, this is what service learning is all about, enabling people to attain fulfillment and enjoyment, both those that are providing assistance and those that receive it.

Thank you