

Annual Report

September 1, 2001 – August 31, 2002



Ethics in Action Creates Character

440 Wheelers Farms Road • Milford, CT 06460
www.ethicsed.org

The School for Ethical Education is grateful to the organizations that have funded our mission to advance *ethics in action* in 2001-2002.

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Building Ethical Communities
Through Service Learning

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Laws of Life Essay Program

Ellen Almeida
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Introduction

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) is pleased to report its progress in advancing ethics in action during its seventh year of operation. Nearly 8,000 students and adults participated in SEE programs during the 2001-2002 school year. SEE administered four different programs last year. More than 550 students from 24 schools completed service projects and practiced ethical reflection as they participated in SEE's Building Ethical Communities Through Service Learning program. The service-learning projects included environmental improvement, peer mentoring, service to the needy and the elderly, and school improvement. Approximately 340 teachers and students attended SEE's one-day character-education conference, which helped disseminate successful ideas and practices in modern character education. Also, nearly 2,000 participants completed classes or workshops led by SEE staff. In addition, 5,300 students wrote essays for SEE's Laws of Life Essay Contest. Laws of Life provides students with the opportunity to reflect on and write about the values, principles and character goals – their "laws of life" – that they believe will help them live productive lives.

The following annual report is provided for those interested in the history, progress and mission of SEE. SEE welcomes inquiries for more information and looks forward to expanding its base of support in order to advance ethics and comprehensive character education.

History

John Winthrop Wright founded The School for Ethical Education in 1995. As a nonprofit organization recognized as tax-exempt by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, SEE provides courses and seminars for teachers, parents and students to advance ethical behavior in schools and communities. Mr. Wright's vision for school improvement focused on expanding opportunities for teachers and students to learn how *ethics in action creates character*. This phrase became the school's motto and recognizes the power of positive ethics in the creation of character. The core ethical concepts or virtues Mr. Wright desired to promote included respect, responsibility, caring, justice, honesty, truthfulness, courtesy, citizenship and the principles of the Golden Rule.

Mr. Wright's timely initiation of SEE coincides with the education reform movement's recognition that success in any academic program rests on the existence of positive student character. The goal of positive character development is integrated into all programs offered by SEE.

Vision

The School for Ethical Education teaches strategies to put ethics in action. SEE encourages

learning experiences that foster positive character and advance responsible and caring communities.

Mission

The School for Ethical Education affirms the need for an increased focus on ethical behavior for the 21st century. It also recognizes the contribution of sound ethical reasoning for the advancement of positive character. To teach ethical reasoning for positive character development, SEE provides courses and seminars for teachers, parents, children and community leaders in collaboration with school districts, parent organizations, day care centers, professional education centers, institutions of higher and continuing education and other like-minded organizations. SEE instructors teach, administer programs, write, speak and host events and meetings, and consult with education organizations as the primary methods of disseminating strategies to promote ethics in action for the creation of character.

The following report is a 2001-2002 summary of SEE's four program areas. In addition, SEE's year-end financial report and a description of future program plans are provided.

Teaching, Consulting and Communications

Consistent with its designation as a 501(C)(3) school, SEE continues to focus all of its programs on teaching strategies to put ethics in action. SEE reached more than 2,600 participants during the 2001-2002 school year through teaching, consulting and its Building Ethical Communities program. Since 1996 SEE's participant total has exceeded 15,600 individuals, most of whom were from Connecticut.

SEE's teaching mission is anchored by an ongoing relationship with the University of Bridgeport. In collaboration with the university, SEE offers regular graduate-level courses on character education, conflict resolution, service-learning and ethical leadership. The courses were one- to two-credit classes. In addition, Dr. Wangaard served as a guest lecturer at the university. All classes were held on the Bridgeport, Stamford and Waterbury campuses of the university. More than 400 students participated in these classes in the past year. Dr. Wangaard also served on the doctoral dissertation committees for two University of Bridgeport students in the Division of Educational Leadership.

During the summer of 2002, Dr. Wangaard was also invited to participate as a guest lecturer for a graduate-level character-education class at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). Thirty-nine students were enrolled in this 3-credit course.

Other teaching and consulting highlights for 2001-2002 include a collaboration between SEE and Connecticut's Newspapers in Education Consortium to publish character education lessons in Connecticut newspapers; a character-education class (Character, Assets, and Resiliency Education) offered in collaboration with RYASAP, a prevention agency in Bridgeport; workshop presentations on SEE's Building Ethical Communities Through Service-Learning program at the Character Education Partnership's national conferences; and an overview of character education presented

for the Bell Reform Network, a national organization whose mission includes character education.

SEE also continued to publish its newsletter, SEE News. SEE staff produced three issues, which featured successful character-education initiatives, current SEE program offerings and provided links to resources for character educators. SEE News is circulated to more than 3,000 subscribers at no charge. Most subscribers are schools and teachers in Connecticut; approximately five percent of subscribers are from other states. The newsletter is also available on SEE's Web site.

SEE's Website (www.ethicsed.org) offers visitors historical and background information about SEE, a description of program offerings and consulting services, resource links to character-education publishers, a bibliography and a growing file of activities for teachers and youth workers. The Web site is hosted by Wright Investors' Service and maintained by a private Webmaster.

Building Ethical Communities Through Service-Learning

BEC is a teacher education and youth leadership program designed to encourage the ethical and character development of youth using the strategy of service-learning. Service-learning is a teaching method that links community service projects directly to academic learning so that each strengthens the other. Service-learning is a method through which citizenship, academic subjects, skills, and values are taught. For students, service-learning is an opportunity to enrich and apply classroom knowledge; explore careers or majors; develop civic and cultural literacy; improve citizenship; develop occupational skills; enhance personal growth and self-image; establish job links; and foster a concern for social problems, which leads to a sense of social responsibility and commitment to public/human service.

The goal of the BEC program is to increase students' ethical awareness and help them to

become positive and socially responsible community members. To achieve this goal, BEC trains teachers so that students 1) develop reflection skills, 2) practice community-building skills, and 3) apply reflection and community-building skills during the planning and implementation of service-learning projects.

The BEC program uses three methods to meet its objectives: a) students engage in activities designed to stimulate the discussion of shared values and the principles behind the Golden Rule; b) students use cooperative work, team roles and consensus building as they practice community-building; and c) students follow the guidelines of effective service-learning. Guidelines for effective service-learning state that students are engaged in planning, academics are linked to service, the service is meaningful (addresses a need in the community), students make some connection to the broader community and reflection occurs before, during, and after service.

BEC began the program year with a one-day workshop for participating teams. School teams were provided time to select a project idea and learn concrete steps for planning, implementation and reflection. After the workshop, teams were given individual journals to help them reflect on their project experiences and asked to complete a project grant proposal. Qualifying proposals were awarded a small grant of \$500 to help the team implement their project.

SEE staff conducted a minimum of two site visits during the year to aid with project development and reflection practice. Teams were invited to present their projects at Connecticut's Asset-Based Character Education Conference in May. Evaluation questionnaires were distributed and focus groups were conducted during the months of April and May. The project year culminated with individual team celebrations.

More than 500 students and 60 teachers donated 20,916 hours of service during the 2001-2002 program year. An evaluation

completed by third-party consultants noted, "...elementary school groups...were the most consistent in following BEC objectives regarding student involvement and participation in decision-making and planning of the service projects. ...Students at all levels generally perceived their service work as helpful to the community...Overall, it appeared that students were quite satisfied with their service-learning experience, ...the BEC program seems to have been successful in providing a powerful learning experience to the students who participated."

SEE anticipates that as a result of BEC, students will continue to serve in the future and practice reflection and community-building. Nearly 80 percent of adult participants have indicated that they will continue the strategy of service-learning in their future teachings.

Project highlights from the 2001-2002 program year include:

- Fifth-graders in Milford, Conn., planned a community garden on the school grounds. Parents, teachers, students and community members worked together to clear the area, till the soil and raise money for flower bulbs and plants. The students planned to donate the flowers and plants they grew to a local homeless shelter.



BEC students celebrate their service to a local senior living facility.

- Fifth-graders in Norwich, Conn., interviewed a group of 30 World War II veterans monthly throughout the year. The students then created biographies about the veterans, which were compiled into a book. The book was published and can be found at the the Norwich town hall, local libraries, school libraries and the Library of Congress.
- Sixth and seventh graders in Mystic, Conn., made quilts for newborn babies at the pediatric ward of a local hospital.
- Students in grades 10, 11 and 12 in a construction class designed and built a utility shed for the Connecticut Institute for the Blind. The institute did not have the resources to buy a shed or to hire carpenters to build one.

It is encouraging to note the engagement of students and teachers with the BEC process. Each year SEE has made progress in teaching the basic BEC skill sets of reflection, community building and service-learning to both teachers and students. BEC staff has learned that although service-learning is a important and useful teaching method, few teachers are knowledgeable about how to integrate service-learning into their classrooms. To address this need, future BEC program goals include continuation of the current BEC program as well as development and dissemination of curriculum materials such as BEC facilitator manuals and student reflection journals to a national audience.

Connecticut's Assets-Based Character Education Conference

Connecticut's fourth Assets-Based Character Education Conference was held May 1 and 2, 2002, at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Meriden, Connecticut. Nearly 340 participants from 92 Connecticut towns attended, along with educators from New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Canada. Positive comments about the conference included "Very

inspiring!" "Nice to see so many students," and "I really learned a lot and plan on sharing with my co-workers." More than 97 percent of the responses provided on conference evaluations noted agreement or strong agreement with the following statements: "I will be able to apply skills/information from this conference in my school, community or home" and "I am pleased that I attended this conference."

Betty Sternberg, the State of Connecticut's associate commissioner of education, provided welcoming remarks for a leadership reception on May 1. Dr. Sternberg spoke about the personal experience she faced when confronted by a teenage mugger. She noted the need to cultivate character through the connection of youth to their families, schools and communities.

Eric Schaps was the keynote speaker for the leadership reception and the conference. He is the president and founder of the Developmental Studies Center (DSC) and the president of the Character Education Partnership. Dr. Schaps and DSC have worked to support positive youth development by integrating academic, social-emotional and character goals in all of their program activities. Dr. Schaps highlighted the need for schools to include a focus on positive student character development through the creation of caring learning communities. He noted that DSC research affirms that academic and character growth can flourish together when students recognize a sense of belonging and empowerment.



Eric Schaps emphasizes a point as conference keynote speaker.

Theodore Sergi, Connecticut's commissioner of education, welcomed conferees on May 2. Dr. Sergi emphasized his support for schools to include a focus on character while maintaining high academic standards.

Twenty-four workshops were presented during two breakout sessions. Workshop presenters were recruited who could provide strands for elementary, middle, high school and community participants. Nationally recognized workshop speakers included Dr. Philip Vincent, director of the Character Development Group, Chip Wood, co-founder of the Northeast Foundation for Children, and Larry Dieringer, executive director of Educators for Social Responsibility. Regional and local presenters hosted 21 other workshops. Among the workshops presented were "Character Development: The High School Opportunity," "Exploring Conflict and Character Through Literature," "The Responsive Classroom Approach to Character Education," and "Building Ethical Communities Through Service-Learning."

The results of 148 evaluations completed after the workshops indicate that participants averaged 1.3 (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly agree) to the statement: "I would recommend this presentation for future conferences."

Connecticut's Laws of Life

The need to promote positive school environments and the events unfolding in the United States business sector make it more imperative than ever to offer students a vehicle to discover, articulate and live by positive values. The Laws of Life essay program gives young people a vehicle to do this, while maintaining a focus on students' academic progress.

With generous funding from the John Templeton Foundation, SEE introduced Connecticut's Laws of Life program in 2000. Laws of Life is a unique character-education initiative that gives students in grades 6-12 the invaluable opportunity to reflect on and write about their "laws of life" – values and ethics that they believe will help them live successful and productive lives.



Statewide winners of the 2001-02 essay contest are honored at an awards ceremony held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Meriden, CT.

SEE completed its second year of administering the Laws of Life essay contest in Connecticut. In the past two years 7,774 students across the state have written about their "laws of life." The student essays have been inspiring, well crafted and have demonstrated a high level of personal reflection.

SEE recruited public, private and parochial schools across Connecticut, which integrated Laws of Life essay writing into their curriculum. Schools received grants for student awards and modest stipends for contest coordinators. Each participating school organized its own contest and sought to involve the community in judging, supporting and celebrating the student essayists. The top essays from the local contests were entered into a statewide competition with judges from around the state. The top ten student essayists were honored at an awards ceremony held in conjunction with Connecticut's Assets-Based Character Education Conference.

In addition to recruiting schools for the program, SEE provided technical assistance to school contest coordinators, distributed contest materials and grants to the schools, and administered the statewide contest.

The second year of the contest was characterized by growth in several areas. In 2001-2002, 5,299 students in 34 schools participated, which represents a 214 percent increase in the number of students and a 188 percent increase in the number of schools over the previous year.

Due to a concerted effort in 2001-2002 to reach inner-city youth, approximately 30 percent of the participating schools were public schools in urban areas, compared with 11 percent the year before. Growth was also experienced in the number of students writing essays in each school: the average number of students participating in the contest at each school was 156 in 2001-02, compared with 138 students in the 2000-01 contest.

Evaluations conducted by SEE indicate that participation in Laws of Life results in many positive outcomes. Among these were ethical reflection by the students, enthusiasm for writing and productive dialogue among teachers, students and family members. Coordinators, teachers, and judges were struck by the powerful insights of the young people who wrote essays and by their ability to reflect on their values and write from their hearts.

Having completed two full years of the program, it is evident that Laws of Life is a valuable character-education strategy. SEE's qualitative assessment of Laws of Life suggests the program advances a vision for character development, excellent writing, and a sense of community by fostering student and adult dialogue regarding shared values.

SEE Financials

SEE continues to receive meaningful operational funding from Wright Investors' Service (WIS). Forty-six percent of SEE's budget of \$308,493 came from direct donations by WIS. SEE's flagship program, Building Ethical Communities, received grant income during the fiscal year totaling \$55,000. An additional \$50,000 for BEC was received from the Calder Foundation; however, this grant was credited in the 2000-2001 financial year and thus is not reported in this project period. Grants from the State Department of Education (administrator of federal Learn and Serve funds), in addition to The Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation and The Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut, completed funding for this project.

Laws of Life received a grant of \$48,000 from The John Templeton Foundation. The Assets-Based Character Education Conference was supported by a variety of funders, including Webster Bank, State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, State of Connecticut Department of Education, SNET, Ensworth Family Foundation, Connecticut Assets Network and the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, and participant registration fees.

Teaching and Communication income of \$17,060 represents fees for contracted services provided by SEE. Donations to SEE came in response to a single year-end donation request mailed to past and potential individual supporters of SEE's mission.

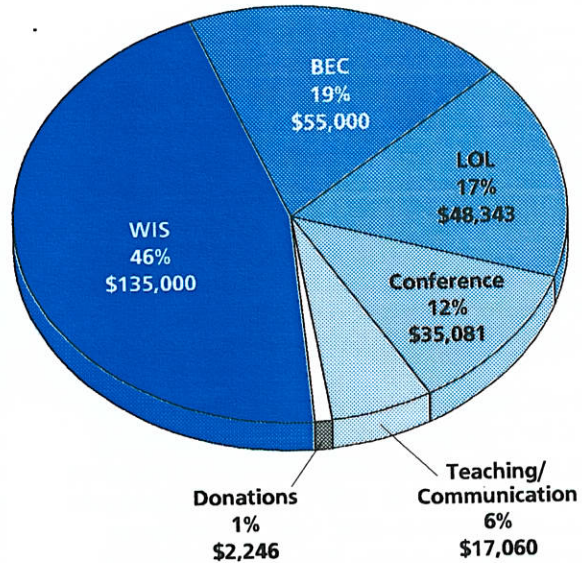
Strategic Plan for 2002-2003

SEE looks forward to the coming year with a focus on putting ethics in action to create character. Financial challenges are at the forefront of SEE's strategic plan for the coming year. To maintain current programs, it will be essential for SEE to continue and expand its funding support.

Teaching, Consulting, and Communication

SEE will continue to provide classes regularly through its affiliation with the University of Bridgeport and other education institutions. A summer institute is planned for June 2003 in collaboration with two Regional Education Service Centers, or RESCs, (Cooperating Educational Services in Trumbull and Area Cooperating Educational Services in Hamden) and the University of Bridgeport. The summer session will offer continuing-education credits and the option of graduate credit. Two classes will be offered and jointly advertised through the University of Bridgeport, the RESCs and SEE.

**Summary
of
SEE
Income
2001-2002**



**The School for Ethical Education
Profit and Loss Statement
For the Fiscal Year ended August 31, 2002**

	Consolidated	Conference	Service-Learning	Laws of Life	Teaching/Communication	Non-Cash Charges	Other
INCOME							
Grant Income	124,843.96	21,500.00	55,000.00	48,343.96			
Registration, Vendor, Other	13,581.00	13,581.00					
Tuition Income	17,060.00				17,060.00		
Donations – TWC	135,000.00					14,850.00	
Donations – Others	2,246.61						2,246.61
TOTAL INCOME	292,731.57	35,081.00	55,000.00	48,343.96	17,060.00	14,850.00	2,246.61
EXPENSES							
Personnel Expenses							
Salaries & Benefits	205,341.60	11,040.20	51,645.99	22,774.49	119,880.92		1,911.19
Office Expenses							
	21,458.06	9,126.07	9,817.17	6,868.17	8,585.19	(14,850.00)	
Travel Expenses							
(inc. conf. rooms, catering)	28,293.72	16,642.79	8,838.69		2,812.24		
Outside Services							
CES Administration	3,070.40	887.70	1,060.99	250.00	650.00		221.71
BEC Contract with ASI	4,583.00		4,583.00				
Speaker Fees	9,500.00		9,500.00				
	5,617.75	5,617.75					
Other Expenses							
Project Grants	20,361.15		8,238.40	11,262.00	1,110.75		(250.00)
Consulting/Evaluation	6,000.00		6,000.00				
Teaching Materials	4,268.00		4,268.00				
TOTAL EXPENSES	308,493.68	43,314.51	103,952.24	41,154.93	133,039.10	(14,850.00)	1,882.90
NET SURPLUS (SHORTFALL)	(15,762.11)	(8,233.51)	(48,952.24)	7,189.03	(115,979.10)	20,700.00	363.71

SEE staff will continue to work with Connecticut's Newspapers in Education Consortium to write and publish monthly character education inserts for Connecticut newspapers. Currently, there are more than one million potential readers of these newspaper inserts. The activities SEE staff have completed for this project have the potential of serving as the basis of a stand-alone character-education workbook that SEE can seek to publish and distribute to elementary and middle school teachers.

SEE will continue to seek consulting roles to meet income goals, while working meaningfully to disseminate comprehensive character-education practices. SEE staff will cultivate its consulting relationships with the Character Education Partnership, Bell Reform Network, State Department of Education, area RESCs, New England League of Middle Schools, and Connecticut schools in order to stimulate the development of successful character-education programs for schools.

In an effort to reduce budget overhead, one issue of SEE News will be eliminated in 2002-2003. The newsletter distribution was expanded from a circulation of 3,000 to 5,000 for the fall issue in September. Circulation of an online version of the newsletter is under consideration; however, some schools and many teachers are not wired for Internet distribution.

Continued development of SEE's Web site remains a strategic goal. It is SEE's goal to regularly update student activities provided on its Web site for educators to use for reflecting, teamwork and decision-making. A long-term goal is to create meaningful traffic on the Web site that would interest a potential sponsor of the site.

Building Ethical Communities Through Service-Learning (BEC)

BEC is in the final year of funding of its start-up grant from The Calder Foundation and the

Connecticut State Department's Learn and Serve grant. To perpetuate the program, it is essential that BEC obtain new or continued funding. SEE staff are pursuing available grant opportunities and outreach to agencies that might contract for this program.

At the start of the 2002-2003 program year, SEE staff renamed the program Youth: Ethics in Service (YES). The YES acronym was chosen to assist in the strategic marketing of this service-learning program. In addition to this administrative change, YES also has the following strategic goals: 1. Continue to develop a YES curriculum to support program implementation in schools and after-school programs. SEE is piloting a student reflection journal in 2002-2003 to study its effectiveness in providing students with a vehicle to think about and learn from their service experiences. SEE is also drafting a facilitator's manual, which, along with the reflection journal, will enable teachers to implement the YES program without the direct oversight and support of SEE staff. 2. Continued outreach to school and after-school participants to recruit new YES participants and follow up on progress of existing projects. 3. Continued research into potential quantitative assessment instruments to measure outcomes in YES participant attitudes and skills.

Assets-Based Character Education Conference

SEE has supported this event for the past four years with meaningful expenditures of staff time and energy. The event has been seen as a rallying point for character educators in the region and built program recognition for SEE's character-education programs. However, due to the absence of an additional \$20,000 for support beyond that provided by Wright Investors' Service, SEE's board of trustees chose to place the conference on hold for the 2002-2003 school year. The primary goal for the conference program in the current year will be to identify additional sponsors or hosts for future conferences.

Laws of Life

Support from the John Templeton Foundation will end in 2002-2003 for Laws of Life. Currently, SEE is implementing a reduced program without the teacher incentives that have been provided in the previous two years. Laws of Life provides SEE a wonderful tool to introduce a character-education strategy into schools. SEE's goal is to find additional sponsors for this program and expand implementation into Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The Opportunities

While the challenges to maintain and implement SEE programs are formidable, the staff welcomes the opportunity to promote strategies for character development in Connecticut and beyond. There is certainly a clear need in our culture to reflect upon and practice the character traits John Winthrop Wright believed were essential for a democratic society. He recognized these character goals as fundamental to the success of the family, school, business, and community.

The programs currently developed by SEE provide students and adults with the opportunity to recognize the important goal of character development, implement strategies to promote ethics and character, and practice social skills to demonstrate positive character. The next year will clearly define SEE's success in sustaining its programs and disseminating these programs to a wider audience. SEE welcomes all those who would join the mission to advance ethics in action.

