

IN THIS ISSUE...

- students teaching students: an East Hartford service project
- character-based decision making: a step-by-step guide
- register for the character education conference
- student activity page

The School for Ethical Education

Ethics in Action Creates Character®

Hockanum Students Make Special Buddies

Sandi Michaelson Warren

When the fifth-grade “buddies” visit Danielle Singleton’s class at Hockanum Elementary School in East Hartford, Conn., the magic begins. Eyes light up, smiles spread across faces, hugs abound.

The special needs students in Danielle’s class are in grades K-2, most of whom have been identified as autistic. The fifth graders are “buddies” to the students in Danielle’s class. They are one of twenty-four teams in schools across Connecticut taking part in The School for Ethical Education’s *Youth: Ethics in Service*, or *YES*, program (formerly called *Building Ethical Communities*). *YES* is a teacher education and youth leadership program that employs service-learning to encourage the ethical and character development of youth. Service-learning is a teaching method that links community service projects to academic learning.

Once a week fifth graders LaTasha, Amanda, Emily, Luz, Ashley, Hector, Jalissa and Elizabeth, all students in Mrs. Ciganik’s fifth-grade class, spend 45 minutes with their buddies. They play movement games like Ring Around the Rosie, do art projects and build towers. But the fun and games have a purpose. These activities are designed to help the special-education students with sensory integration.

To teach the fifth-graders about sensory integration, occupational therapist Maureen Pollard conducted an in-service for them. The students plan to purchase educational materials – with a small grant provided by SEE to *YES* teams – to work with their buddies on sensory integration. They have used team-building skills acquired through *YES* to come to a consensus about which items they will purchase and, with the remainder of their fifth-

Continued on page 2

Upcoming Events and Programs

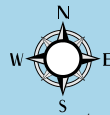
Register Now! Connecticut’s Assets-Based Character Education Conference is **May 1, 2003**. For further information see page 2.

Summer Character Institute: Two graduate courses will be offered June 24-27. Visit www.ethicsed.org for more information.

Youth: Ethics in Service (YES): Are you interested in beginning a character-based service-learning project with your students next year? *YES* is recruiting for the 2003-2004 year. Please contact Anika Knox at (203)783-4441 or aknox@ethicsed.org for information.

Character-Based Decision Making

David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.



As we were growing up, how many of us heard the adult exhortation, “Make a good choice!” This statement is meant to help promote reflection and ultimately, a wise decision with positive outcomes. Now as adults, we probably find ourselves making similar statements to students who are on the verge of making a choice. How often do we get a blank look in response? Let us consider an example of a student with a choice.

Michael is a nice kid with above-average potential who enjoys athletics more than academics. His parents have recently increased their attention to his grades and have threatened loss of some privileges if Michael’s next test scores do not improve. On an errand to the school copy room for his coach, Michael happens to notice copies of his upcoming history test on the copy machine. No one is in the room. He could take one copy and not be noticed.

Clearly, Michael is faced with a choice. Does it help him to remember “Make a good choice”? He may feel obligated to honor his parents by practicing trustworthiness; however, he may feel a more immediate pressure to improve his grades and may believe that stealing the test would be a good choice to help him study.

How do we teach the skill of making positive choices? Students and adults are confronted with choices every day. Our values, family training, organizational rules, emotions and/or self-interest sometimes guide us.

As character educators, we recognize that universal values can further help guide our choices. Universal values typically include respect, responsibility, honesty and caring. If you add the principle of the Golden Rule (do unto others...), you have a powerful reasoning device that can become a compass for character-based decision making.

Character-based decision making is a profoundly simple life skill that can become a powerful guide for choices. It has ethical roots in Plato and Aristotle and avoids some of the ethical difficulties associated with a focus solely on rules (Kantian ethics), maximization of benefits (utilitarian ethics), selfish goals (egoist ethics)

Continued on page 2

Hockanum (continued from page 1)

grade peers, have used math skills to figure out what they can afford.

Each week the fifth-graders reflect on their project in a journal developed by SEE. “The reflection portion of this program is essential because you need to know how your older buddies are feeling. You want all of the children to leave this experience feeling empowered and good. Reflection activities can also be the perfect opportunity for you as the teacher to offer guidance and make suggestions when they are needed,” says Danielle.

Danielle is delighted with the program. “It has been so exciting to watch the looks on the faces of my children as the fifth-graders enter my class. They smile and make wonderful eye contact with their older buddies and often initiate the interaction by walking right up to them. These children, who are often reluctant to share themselves, give their fifth-grade friends hugs and share a general level of trust that is miraculous and beautiful.”

“The students in my class know that there are eight older children who recognize their beauty and love them for who they are,” she continues. Staff who work with Danielle’s students have commented that the students seem to listen and behave better when they are with their buddies.

Danielle appreciates the opportunity and support given to her by SEE. And she has advice for others who want to initiate a similar project. “Keep the numbers low – with one-to-one ratios if possible. It allows the students to get to know one another better and avoids creating an environment that might be overstimulating for the students.” She adds: “Allow your buddies to choose one another if possible. Sometimes the kids know more than we do about good matches and the ‘right fit.’ Offer a lot of modeling for your older buddies, and plan well.”

Clearly, the students in Danielle’s special-needs class are benefiting from the buddy program. But what about the older students? “The fifth-graders have developed a strong sense of leadership, genuine care and love and kindness towards others,” says Danielle. “They look forward to our sessions as much as the children look forward to their visits.”

The fifth graders are eager to articulate what they like about the program. “I wanted to do this project because I want to be a role model,” says Luz. Other students remark that this project has helped them learn about differences among people and how other people learn. Adds Luz, “We have all become a family, but we aren’t related.”

For more information, contact Danielle Singleton at Hockanum (860) 622-5440 or Anika Knox at SEE (203) 783-4441 or aknox@ethicsed.org.

Character Education Conference

When: Thursday, May 1, 2003 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Where: New Britain, Connecticut

Who: Educators, administrators, social workers, counselors, community youth workers, parents and students (grade 5 to undergraduate)

Why: Hear from national leaders in character education, learn about new strategies, build relationships, share success stories.

For more information and a registration form visit our Web site at www.ethicsed.org. or contact SEE at (203) 783-4438.

See you on May 1!

Decision Making (continued from page 1)

or subjective relativism, by which no one can judge a good decision anyway.

Let us apply a four-step character-based decision making process to this dilemma. Step 1 for Michael would be to stop, recognize he has a choice and consider his options. He could steal the test and study from it, or he could leave the test alone and complete his chore for the coach. Step 2 for Michael is to identify what character traits he would demonstrate by acting on each choice. If he steals the test, would the potential short-term gain of having the test as a study guide represent a positive demonstration of character? Michael could argue that by having the test as a study guide, he is being responsible to himself, but this ignores the principle of the Golden Rule. If Michael were the teacher, would he want a student stealing the test? Would Michael’s parents want him to steal the test? Step 3 requires Michael to act on his choice. This step often requires the supporting character traits of courage or self-control. Step 4 asks Michael to reflect on his decision and compare outcomes with the consequences that were anticipated at the time of the choice. This step can help reinforce the value of practicing character-based decision making.

Character-based decision making thus provides a simple four-step process to help guide students and adults with a compass to make a “good” decision. How can this be taught? Teachers can introduce and practice this life skill in their classrooms. Students need to learn the steps, practice the steps with role modeling and be reminded of them with adult encouragement and with visual aids such as room posters or written class procedures.

Practice can be accomplished with age-appropriate scenarios found in class stories or literature, current events or with circumstances students face at school. Character-based decision making is a great life skill that can help students apply a compass of character to put ethics in action.



Student Activity Page: Overcoming Problems & Obstacles

Quoting Albert

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.
- Albert Einstein

In a small group, reflect and discuss Mr. Einstein's quote using the questions below.

1. What does this quote mean to you?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the idea that overcoming obstacles helps strengthen our character? Explain.
3. Can you think of an example from your life that relates to this quote? Explain.

Bonus: Write your responses in a short paragraph and share them with your class.



CHARACTER - BASED DECISION MAKING

Read the following story and find a solution to the dilemma. A dilemma happens when you have to make a difficult decision between two or more choices. The four questions after the story are steps to help you make wise decisions. Practice these steps whenever you are faced with a dilemma.

The \$10,000 Question

You were just given \$10,000, but there is a catch. Within three days, you have to give all the money away. Write one paragraph about what you would do with the money.

1. Is there a dilemma? What are your choices?
2. List the character traits you think are important to demonstrate and decide if your choices display those character traits. Ask yourself if your choices follow the Golden Rule.
3. What would you decide to do?
4. What results can you anticipate from your choice?

Go around the room and discuss how each person would spend the money.

So Many Choices

Spring is a great time to get out and help your school or community. What can you do?

1. Get into groups of 2-4 students. With your group, pick one of the following situations and brainstorm ways that you or a group could help solve or reduce the problem.



- People who have no food
- A senior citizen who cannot leave his or her house
- A local park that is littered with trash or has overgrown vegetation
- A teacher or fellow student who is sick
- People who cannot afford to buy clothes
- A school lunch room with a lot of wasted food
- An animal shelter that does not have enough money
- A school with tension among groups/cliques

2. After you have identified ways people could help reduce or solve the problem, present your ideas to the class.
3. Discussion questions for your class: Do one of the problems listed above exist in your town or school now? Could you or your class help solve or reduce this problem? How?

Lemons into Lemonade

Below are several problems or obstacles. On a separate sheet of paper write how it could become an opportunity.

1. You want to go to the movies with your friends but don't have any money.
2. You want to volunteer at the children's hospital but are assigned to volunteer at the senior-citizen center.
3. You are all set to go out, and your mom tells you that you have to babysit for your little brother.

**For more activities call us or visit our
Web site at www.ethicsed.org**



The School for Ethical Education

440 Wheelers Farms Rd., Milford, CT 06460

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BRIDGEPORT, CT
PERMIT NO. 520

Please share with

Principal

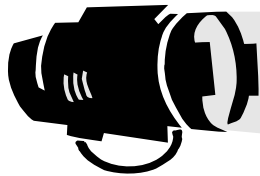
Character Ed. Comm.

Teachers

Counselor/Social Worker

PTA/PTO

Post in Teachers Lounge



Character Spotlight



Dr. Al Scopino – or Dr. Sco, as he is known – is a true scholar and gentleman. He is a role model to students and staff at Captain Nathan Hale Middle School in Coventry. “It is truly an experience to see Dr. Sco working with middle-level students,” states his principal, Marie Castle-Good. “He is caring and respectful to all of his students.”

Four years ago Dr. Scopino wanted to work with SEE and his students to create a school-based “Schweitzer Club.” The plan was to create a mentoring program that would help not only students in the middle school but in other countries as well. Dr. Sco’s first mentoring group chose a little village in Haiti as a community in need. Working together, they were able to send money and books to help pay for room, board and salary for a Haitian teacher. This April, Dr. Sco’s very first group of Schweitzer students, now juniors in high school, will travel to Haiti to work with the students and the teacher they began to help in 1999.

Each year the Schweitzer club grows. This year’s mentors tutor fifth-graders and read to and collect food for the children at a local shelter. Dr. Scopino always gives the credit to the students, but the truth is without him they would not have this learning experience and determination to serve others. Captain Nathan Hale Middle School is very proud of their eighth-grade social studies/language arts teacher, Dr. Al Scopino, who demonstrates ethics in action.

For a FREE subscription to *SEE NEWS* or for information on how you can assist students in these changing times, visit our Web site at www.ethicsed.org or complete the following form and mail it to:

SEE, 440 Wheelers Farms Road, Milford, CT 06460 or fax to (203)783-4461

Name (Please Print) _____

School or organization _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

E-mail _____

Check here to receive newsletter by e-mail

Please check the SEE programs for which you would like to receive information:

- Laws of Life Youth: Ethics in Service
- Consulting Character education conference

SEE STAFF

David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Anika Knox
Program Director

Sandi Michaelson Warren
Program Director

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

440 Wheelers Farm Rd., Milford, CT 06460
(800) 232-0013
www.ethicsed.org

© 2003 The School for Ethical Education
All rights reserved.