

Comprehensive School Reform and the Bell Network

By Dr. Frances Harris-Burke, President
Bell Reform Network

Ask any elementary school administrator, "what is the primary goal of school?" and you will likely hear about the need for schools to produce outstanding student achievement. Identifying this goal is easy; however, all educators understand that producing outstanding student achievement can be difficult. One strategy used by schools to improve student success is to replicate programs documented to help raise student achievement. The **Terrell H. Bell School Reform Network** has been established to help educators and community members strategically identify programs that will help produce meaningful academic improvement. The Bell process requires a team approach to pursue thoughtful, comprehensive, and long-term school reform.

The Bell Network is a private, non-profit corporation working closely with school boards, parents, and community representatives to achieve the goal of excellent student performance. The Bell Network has been recognized by U.S. Senator Christopher Dodd and Connecticut Commissioner of Education Theodore Sergi for its success in helping increase student achievement in participating schools.

What is the Bell process all about? Bell's Comprehensive School Reform targets a cluster of major components common to high performing public elementary schools. The Bell Network research team identified eight essential components for school reform that lead to increased student performance. These eight components include: 1) challenging academic standards in reading, math and writing; 2) school-wide character education programs; 3) site-based professional development of teachers; 4) parent and community engagement; 5) instructional technology support; 6) integrated school support services; 7) student assessment and adult accountability; and 8) school-site governance by the principal and management council. These eight components also create the framework of a series of workshops which results in school reform blueprints.

The workshops are designed to engage participating school teams to work with a professional facilitator for over 100 hours in designing their own school reform blueprint. This highly interactive process results in grassroots ownership of the unique blueprint for transforming the school over three years. Each representative team reviews nationally recognized, research-based school reform models and best practices during

See **Comprehensive** on pg.2

Celebrating Laws of Life

Connecticut students celebrated their laws of life in the first statewide **Laws of Life Essay Contest** during the 2000-2001 school year. The School for Ethical Education (SEE) piloted a bi-level Connecticut Laws of Life Essay Contest with a project grant from the John Templeton Foundation. Almost 2,500 students participated in local contests last year.

The statewide Laws of Life Essay Contest was administered by SEE to serve as a catalyst and support for local contests throughout Connecticut.



Winners and sponsors of Connecticut's
2001 Laws of Life Essay Contest

The Laws of Life Essay Contest provides students a meaningful opportunity to reflect upon their values and recognize how those values help them make choices in life. Additionally, the contest provides an effective strategy to incorporate character education into language arts. Helping students to think and write about their values is also a great strategy to develop the skill of ethical decision-making.

Students who participated in the contest expressed how valuable their experience was and believed that more students should have the opportunity to participate in writing about their laws of life.

The contest helped connect students to issues and people beyond the traditional classroom experience. Cathy Jablonski,

See **Laws** on pg.2

Bring Laws of Life to Your School

"... it is an essay contest like this can change a student, a class, a school."—
Adult Sponsor, Connecticut Laws of Life Essay Contest

"Do what fits!" is the contest motto from the Templeton Foundation's Laws of Life Essay Contest. Organize your own essay contest event (grades 6-12) and make it work for your school or community. This contest is an excellent strategy to connect character education to essay writing. Use this contest to help students reflect and write about their values and encourage community connections with your student writers. Participating schools are eligible to receive grant awards and coordinator stipends. For more information on how you can start a contest, contact SEE by telephone: (203) 783-4436 or e-mail: LawsOfLife@ethicsed.org or via our website: www.ethicsed.org.

Moral Discipline to Promote Character Education

by David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.

Educators generally agree that appropriately implemented discipline policies are vital to establish a positive school climate. Yet while agreement about the importance of maintaining a positive disciplinary process is widely recognized, discipline policies are often overlooked or poorly implemented during the hectic pace of school life. Updating a school-wide disciplinary process to match the goals of **moral discipline** is a powerful strategy for character education.

Implementing moral-discipline policies require a meaningful commitment of time and effort. A committee representing school-wide interests can assist in the process. While the administrative effort that is required is substantial, the results can be quite profound. The following narrative is a brief outline that suggests how to write behavior expectation statements, procedures, and rules to support policies consistent with moral discipline.

Clear statements describing behavior expectations such as; *All members of Webster School will demonstrate respect*; should be written and published widely throughout the school. A broad expectation statement should explicitly include a reference to the school's character vocabulary and elevate student and faculty vision to a high expectation of positive character.

Expectation statements can be written for school wide application or for more specialized application such as computer labs, art rooms, or school buses. Some schools create expectation statements in the form of acronyms; *All members of Webster School will work to demonstrate CARE (Cooperation, Appreciation, Respect, & Ethics)*. The acronym helps provide links to meaningful character goals for students and adults throughout the school.

After completing a school-wide expectation statement, the next step in revising a school disciplinary process is to **write up procedures** for specific school settings (lunchroom, hallways...). Procedures should provide a clear, simple, and detailed pathway for students and adults to follow in order to help everyone reach school expectations. Students need to be taught these procedures thoroughly at the start of the year. Instruction should include age-appropriate practice of new procedures. If procedures are not followed, it means students need more practice, reminders, or in the case of repeated willful violations, a consequence. However, for the specific process of moral discipline, procedures are not defined as rules. There should not be the weight of consequences assigned to students who make mistakes in procedures. Procedures are guides and should help us reach our expectations by remaining well within the rules. This is an important distinction in developing a moral discipline process. Students should understand this distinction and play an active role in supporting procedures to help reach our expectations. Educators sometimes confuse their

Continued on next column

procedures with rules, and then fail to consistently teach and practice their procedures or enforce rules.

Rule writing should follow the development of procedures. Rules should be limited in number and clearly published. Rules should define the outer boundaries that fail to meet our expectations. Rules are typically related to student emotional and physical safety as well as good stewardship of the school. After rules are written, the staff must consistently enforce them with consequences. Consequences should attempt to be restorative and fair. Most educators recognize the moral discipline process breaks down when consequences are not consistently or fairly enforced.

The start of any school year is a great time to revisit the moral discipline process at school. Revising the disciplinary process school wide will take a dedicated committee several weeks of interactive dialogue. Properly administered, the revision and maintenance of a moral discipline process can unite adults and students in the creation of a positive school climate. Character-based expectations support procedure statements that are protected by clear rules with consistently endorsed consequences. For a worksheet to assist in the process described here, you are invited to visit SEE's website at www.ethicsed.org/consulting/promote.htm. The following texts are also recommended to keep ethics in action through the development of moral discipline plans.

Charney, R.S. (1995). *Teaching children to care*. Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character*. New York: Bantam.

Novak, D.E. & Strohmmer, J.C. (1998). *You don't have to dread cafeteria duty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Vincent, P.F. (1998). *Rules & procedures for character education*. Chapel Hill: NC: Character Development Group.

Wynne E. A. and Ryan, K. (1993). *Reclaiming our schools: A handbook on teaching character, academics, and discipline*. New York: Merrill.

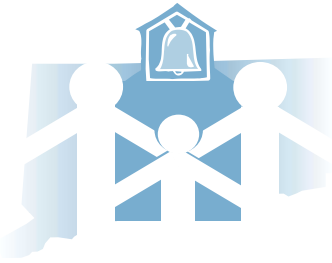
Comprehensive continued from pg.1

Bell workshops. Teams work together to assess their school performance against high-performance school models, examine new academic standards and identify proven, third-party state and national providers of technical assistance.

There are many advantages for participants in Bell's program which includes receiving a model process that qualifies schools for help by outside state and nationally-recognized technical assistance providers. Schools in the Bell Network also qualify for additional state and federal grant opportunities. Connecticut participants in the Bell Network are currently being recruited. For more information contact the Bell Network

Laws continued from pg.1

Contest Coordinator for Westbrook Middle School noted, "students truly enjoyed delving into themselves. [This] sparked much debate on the state of society . . . Overall, I was very impressed with each step and process of the contest." Grace Polivka, Contest Coordinator for North Branford Intermediate School observed, "the themes and issues highlighted by this character-development essay contest tap right into my program focus. This connection gives students an opportunity to write for an audience beyond the teacher and for real reasons." To have your middle or high school students participate in a 2001-2002 Laws of Life Essay Contest, see the contest advertisement on page one.



Call for Presenters!

Connecticut's Assets-Based Character Education Conference

The School for Ethical Education is pleased to announce the dates and call for presenters for Connecticut's Fourth-Annual Assets-Based Character Education Conference. The conference will be held on May 1 and 2, 2002 at the Waterbury Sheraton. We anticipate this conference will draw over 400 educators, youth workers, students, and parents interested in character education.

If you are interested in presenting a workshop demonstrating excellent assets-based character education, please contact Ellen Almeida at SEE by email: ealmeida@ethicsed.org, or by writing to SEE, 440 Wheelers Farms Road, Milford, CT 06460. Plan to attend to extend your professional network and gain valuable experience with others committed to positive character development.

For further information about SEE visit our website at www.ethicsed.org.

From our website you may also subscribe to this newsletter, learn more about the comprehensive approach to character education, identify character education publishers and consultants and stay informed about upcoming events.



CHARACTER IN PRINT

Titles referenced by *Books that Build Character: A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories* by William Kilpatrick and Gregory and Suzanne M. Wolfe, Simon & Schuster: New York (1994).

Grades 3-6

The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories (Edited by William Bennett, Simon & Schuster, 1993)

This book is divided into ten virtues: self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, and faith. From Greek myths to Chinese Taoism, from the Founding Fathers to the heroes of the Underground Railroad and the civil rights movement, from Aesop to William Faulkner—this huge treasury is a library unto itself. Bennett's brief introductions to each section and his notes are succinct and to the point.

Character traits: compassion, courage, perseverance

Anansi Finds a Fool (Verna Aardema, Dial Books for Young Readers, 1992)

Anansi has never done an honest day's work in his life! Bonsu resolves to teach Anansi a lesson and succeeds in making Anansi work for the first time in his life. Anansi learns an important lesson: there is no such thing as something for nothing.

Character traits: cooperation, initiative, honesty

Barry, The Bravest Saint Bernard (Lynn Hall, Random House, 1992)

Before the days of automobiles and highways, a special dog named Barry became known as the greatest Saint Bernard of all time. Among Barry's feats of heroism were the thwarting of a robbery and carrying a baby on his back to safety after the child's mother died.

Character traits: courage, loyalty

Character Educators Suggest . . .

Over 200 character educators have been asked to respond to the question "**What character education projects will I see in a school known for its excellent character education program?**" Here are some of their responses:

- Students share in the decision making process and help develop classroom procedures, rules and consequences.
- Character education lessons and vocabulary are regularly integrated into the curriculum and daily activities.
- Students are encouraged to emphasize character related topics when assigned projects and papers.
- Students are highly involved with their community and engaged in service-learning projects.
- The school encourages and supports peer conflict mediation programs.
- Students and staff develop a school website and newsletter that includes information and ideas to support character education.
- The school conducts assemblies with school-wide recognition of students, staff, and community accomplishments of character.



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

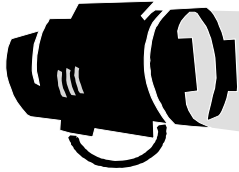
Principal

Character Ed. Comm.

Health Teacher

Counselor/Social Worker

PTA/PTO



Character Spotlight "The McMunchies"

Combine three enthusiastic staff members, stir in six students replete with respect for ethnic diversity, add a school vibrant in culture and you have "A Taste of the World," a collection of ethnic recipes. This cookbook was created by students and staff from **Multicultural Magnet School** in Bridgeport. **Adronica Bica, Nadirah Langston, Madison McManus, Tiffany Teixeira, Kyle Vilanova, Dean Wright**, 5th grade students, **Lynora Lichvar**, 5th grade teacher, **David Stach**, School Counselor, and **Sue Vilanova**, known as the "McMunchies," were interested in working on a service-learning project that would be fun and benefit a large number of people.

The students learned the meaning of teamwork and cooperation by involving the entire school in their project. Over 200 ethnic recipes were collected from students and staff to create their cookbook which was sold as a fundraiser for a local hospital. Although the project required much hard work, the students learned that through patience and perseverance, they could overcome challenges. The cookbooks were sold and over \$1,500 was donated to the pediatric unit at Bridgeport Hospital. In June 2001, a check was presented to Peggy Parniawski, Clinical Services Manager for Bridgeport Hospital Emergency Room Department. Ms. Parniawski stated the money would go towards buying new equipment and toys for children in the emergency room. Asked why they chose to donate to Bridgeport Hospital, Kyle Vilanova stated, "we wanted kids to feel comfortable and at home while at the hospital." Congratulations, McMunchies, for a superb job, and keeping those "ethics in action!"



For a FREE subscription to SEE NEWS or further information on how you can assist students in these changing times, please complete the following information, tear off and mail to:

SEE, 440 Wheelers Farms Rd., Milford, CT 06460

(Please Print)

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

E-mail _____



**Check here to receive
newsletter by email**

School or organization name or affiliate: _____

School District, City or Location: _____

Title: (circle one) Administrator, Teacher, Principal, Social Worker, Psychologist, Community Member, Parent,

Other: _____

see STAFF

David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.

Executive Director

Ellen Almeida

Program Assistant

Anika Knox

Project Leader

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, post-secondary school located at:

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

© 2001 The School for Ethical Education