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Grants to Expand Great Service-Learning

By Anika Baumstone

SEE celebrates the award of \$300,000 in funding over the next three years to sustain and expand our service-learning program entitled Building Ethical Communities which emphasizes ethical reflection. The Calder Foundation and the State of Connecticut's Learn & Serve program have each awarded SEE and our partner, Albert Schweitzer Institute (ASI) money to support student-leadership workshops, student project grants, follow-up technical assistance, and project evaluation. The program will expand to include 24 student teams for the 2000-2001 school year.

This great news follows the completion of a wonderful project year during 1999-2000. Ten school teams representing Branford, Bridgeport, Coventry, Ellington, New Britain, Norwalk, Wallingford, East Hartford, Trumbull, and Wolcott completed service-learning projects that were initiated during the previous fall workshops. The students and teachers of Wolcott High discovered a shared interest in the needs of the elderly and connected with the senior citizens in their community. To advance "Opening Doors and Windows - Bridging the Generation Gap", fifteen 9th grade students focused on getting the community to donate computers to the senior center and then wrote a basic computer literacy curriculum for the seniors. The mayor's office donated eight computers to the program and the students were able to secure additional money to buy a printer and software programs. The project was a great success for the students and senior citizens. "This project brings out (our) leadership and citizenship skills," reflected one Wolcott student. In this Connecticut town, the generation gap has suddenly become a little smaller.

Using a multiple-project approach to service-learning, the staff and students at West Rocks Middle School in Norwalk can look back on a year full of successful activity. Originally led by one teacher and five students,

See **Grants** on pg.2



Conference Connections

By Ellen Almeida

Informative! Inspirational! Spiritually Moving! All that from a conference? Yes! That is how one participant described Connecticut's Second Annual **Assets-Based Character Education Conference**. The conference attracted over 340 educators, parents, and students from all across Connecticut. The mission of this event was to provide an opportunity for participants to connect and explore a variety of character-education strategies.



Students from Tyl Middle School (Montville, CT) prepare for their workshop presentation at Connecticut's Assets-Based Character Education Conference.

An evening leadership reception on April 12th opened the conference. The audience was delightfully entertained by a choral music presentation of **The Elm City Girls' Choir**. This was followed by Connecticut's Commissioner of Education **Theodore S.**

Sergi who presented a dynamic speech to encourage the integration of character education into the everyday life of school. In addition, a service award was presented to **Mr. and Mrs. John Winthrop Wright** to acknowledge their contribution to character education in Connecticut through the founding of **SEE**. Mrs. Wright

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Presenters Requested !!!

The School for Ethical Education is proud to announce the dates for Connecticut's Third-Annual Assets-Based Character Education Conference. The conference will be held on March 19 and 20, 2001 on the campus of Central Connecticut State University in New Britain. 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 on excellent assets-based character education, please contact Ellen Almeida at SEE by email-ethics@wisi.com, or by writing SEE, 440 Wheelers Farms Rd., Milford, CT 06460.

Ethical Reflection and the Power of Practice

by David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.

“**T**he students have been profoundly changed because they have seen how important these kinds of acts are for people who are less fortunate.” A teacher in **SEE’s Building Ethical Communities (BEC) Program** made this comment at the end of their school project last year. This was a positive observation as it provided evidence that our project goal of ethical reflection was being practiced (see Grants...pg 1).

Ethical reflection is a powerful tool to develop a respect for the concerns of others and has long been recognized as an important goal of character education. Thomas Lickona summarizes his own observations about ethical reflection and notes the ability of children with greater maturity in ethical thinking to help those with less maturity to develop their ethical awareness¹. This process requires sustained practice and is assisted by well-designed reflection activities. Mature ethical reasoning is generally defined by those who recognize the concerns of others as opposed to those with less mature thinking who focus on punishment and rewards. Employing the ethical thinking of mature students can be achieved during guided classroom discussion, reflection on in-class activities, or reflection during and after service activities.

Practicing ethical reflection is a necessary requirement to promote maturity in ethical thinking. During **BEC**, teachers recognized that improvement of ethical reflection skills required multiple practice sessions. The application of a practical ethical decision-making framework also assisted the reflection process. The framework used during **BEC** included values such as respect, honesty, and caring stated as behavior goals along with the principle of the Golden Rule.

Guided discussion using good literature is another useful strategy to cultivate moral thinking. Robert Coles describes some of the reflection activities which have followed the reading from a short story *The Old Grandfather and the Grandson* by Leo Tolstoy². Coles notes, “In time, after we’ve talked, I’ve asked the students to write an essay about the Tolstoy story, about its meaning to them, about what they imagine themselves doing with the story if they were parents or teachers. Soon enough,...I am reading introspective memoirs or suggestions for this or that course of action – all of us become witnesses, with Tolstoy’s help, to the moral imagination at work.”(pg 12)

Class discussion within the traditional curriculum along with well thought out questioning strategies can also help cultivate moral thinking. Phil Vincent in *Developing Character in Students* provides excellent examples of graphic organizers to link ethical reflection to academic content³.

Ethical reflection can be employed during and after service-learning activities, class discussion about literature, or during a variety of academic subjects. The skill becomes more powerful with practice and a focus on core values as outcome goals. Parents and teachers are encouraged to include reflection about character issues to cultivate ethical maturity. Regular ethical reflection can help all of us put our ethics in action.

¹ Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character*.

² Coles, R. C. (1997). *The moral intelligence of children*.

³ Vincent, P. F. (1999). *Developing character in students*.

Grants continued from pg.1

the “Sharing is Caring” project expanded over the year to include 35 additional students and two more teachers. Students completed projects ranging from a holiday gift program to designing a conflict resolution presentation. In addition, the students at West Rocks also conducted a drive that helped to buy supplies for women at the local Domestic Violence Crisis Center. The projects had a profound impact on the students and many stated during ethical reflection that they “like the feeling of being part of something that helps others with their personal problems.”

Although Wolcott and Norwalk are only two of the programs highlighted, eight other schools from across Connecticut participated in service-learning projects. Many students who participated in projects finished the school year with a high degree of project satisfaction and accomplishment. SEE and ASI applaud the dedication of all the school teams who put ethics in action! The measure of this program can be seen in the smiles of the participants and the words of an Ellington teacher who summed up her project experience by saying, “once you get kids out doing these kinds of things they really feel good about themselves. Therefore it’s very important to provide...these kinds of experiences. You hope that it will stick with them throughout their lives.”

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accepted the award and spoke eloquently about her late-husband’s dedication to helping children develop good character.

The conference on the following day offered something for everyone involved in character education. The event served as a forum for both students and educators to present successful assets-based character education strategies. Students made some outstanding presentations about their experiences related to topics such as service-learning, peer mediation, and school meetings.

Other workshop topics included— teachers from **Lebanon** demonstrated strategies for seamless integration of character education throughout the school day; the award winning program from **Greenville School’s** Peer Mediation Program explored healthy ways to encourage student-led conflict resolution strategies; **West Hartford** students gave a powerful demonstration of their Community Fishbowl Forum which helps foster meaningful dialogue between adults and teens; and finally, those interested in assessment learned strategies for evaluation from a **Central Connecticut State University** (CCSU) class team led by **Dr. Marc Goldstein**.

Keynote speaker, **Dr. Kevin Ryan**, delivered a thought-provoking historical presentation on character education which provided a useful framework for reflection. Conferees were also fortunate to have the talented **Peter Yarrow** of Peter, Paul, and Mary present a mini concert which introduced his new character education program, “Don’t Laugh at Me.”

The conference was a huge success! Participants left inspired by the many success stories and variety of program ideas. With continued sponsorship from the Connecticut Department of Education, Webster Bank, CCSU Continuing Education, and the Connecticut Assets Network, we look forward to planning Connecticut’s Third Annual Assets-Based Character Education Conference.

Planning Professional Development or Youth Leadership Seminars?

Contact The School for Ethical Education

TWO TO TWELVE-HOUR WORKSHOPS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE FOLLOWING TOPICS

- ✓ Identifying shared values and character goals to unify a school, district, club or community
- ✓ Teaching character development principles for the head, heart, hands and feet
- ✓ Creating classroom or club meeting strategies for a caring learning environment
- ✓ Developing moral discipline by using character goals to set positive expectations
- ✓ Integrating character goals throughout the academic or activity curriculum
- ✓ Using cooperative learning to promote positive character
- ✓ Developing a service-learning program that highlights ethical reflection
- ✓ Modeling ethical decision making with character goals
- ✓ Connecting conflict resolution to character outcomes
- ✓ Strategic planning and program implementation for comprehensive character education
- ✓ Program evaluation

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 Kipatrick and Gregory and Suzanne M. Wolfe, Simon & Schuster, New York (1994).

Grades K-3

Zinnia and Dot (Lisa Ernst, Econo-Clad Books)

Zinnia and Dot are two hens who are too vain to get along. One day a weasel steals all but one of their eggs. They each claim the remaining egg as their own. When the weasel returns, though, they are forced to cooperate in protecting the egg. They learn that friendship is not always easy but is more rewarding than pride.

Character traits: cooperation, compassion, caring

Where Once There Was a Wood (Denise Fleming, Henry Holt & Co.)

Beautiful color illustrations invite young children to consider the consequences to nature when development destroys the habitats of animals and plants. Suggestions are offered on ways to create natural habitats for wildlife and plants in backyards, schoolyards and communities.

Character traits: respect, thoughtfulness, caring

The Meanest Thing To Say (Bill Cosby, Scholastic)

Michael, a new boy at school, tries to impress Little Bill and his friends by getting them to play a new game in which each player has 12 chances to say something mean to someone else. The winner is the one who says the meanest thing. Little Bill discovers a way to play the game without being mean.

Character traits: Self-control, courage, confidence

Character Educators Suggest . . .

Over two hundred character educators have been asked to respond to the question "What documents and statements will I see that define the school's character education mission?" Here are some of their responses:

- ⇒ Partnerships with community businesses where hiring policies are developed together with the school to focus on character.
- ⇒ Posters around the school encouraging behavioral guidelines consistent with character goals such as honesty, respect, and caring.
- ⇒ Personnel and student handbooks that include acknowledgment of core character goals and guiding principles.
- ⇒ A published mission statement for the school as well as for each individual classroom, which includes explicit character expectations.
- ⇒ Journals and writing prompts that emphasize positive character.
- ⇒ Posters depicting heroes and heroines that note their positive character traits.
- ⇒ Student statements concerning their obligations and commitments to home, school, and community.

Please share with

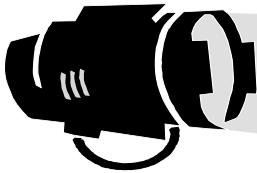
Principal

Character Ed. Comm.

Health Teacher

Counselor/Social Worker

PTA/PTO



Character Spotlight Jacqueline Roberson

Jacqueline Roberson is school social worker at **West Rocks School** in Norwalk, Connecticut. She is described as being a school social worker’s dream. Through participation in **The Building Ethical Communities Through Service-Learning** program, Ms. Roberson engaged students in projects that encouraged the development of positive character traits such as responsibility and caring. Ms. Roberson strives to help students gain problem-solving skills and pursues initiatives that afford this opportunity. Student counseling groups and meetings organized by Ms. Roberson serve as formats to explore students’ concerns and discuss solutions. She is open, honest, direct, and helpful to staff and families. Ms. Roberson has a passion for helping others succeed in life and conducts home visits. Her knowledge about community resources enables her to assist families in locating appropriate support services. Ms. Roberson hosts award ceremonies to recognize students for their efforts, achievements, and improvement in school. She sponsors extra-curricular activities such as an annual food drive, a holiday gift program, and a Human Relations Club. Students frequently hear Ms. Roberson say, “You must be accountable for your behavior. You must face the consequences for your behavior. Attitude determines altitude.” Ms. Roberson is viewed as an individual who works for all students. We commend Ms. Roberson for her efforts to “keep ethics in action!”



For a FREE subscription to SEE **NEW** 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 or fax (203) 783-4461

(Please Print)

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ **State** _____

Zip code _____

School or organization name or affiliate: _____

School District, City or Location: _____

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

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