Lessons in Character Development

Virginia Lizette Escobar

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LESSONS IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Career and Technical Education

by
Virginia Lizette Escobar

June 2005
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Approved by:

[Signatures and dates redacted]
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ABSTRACT

Current issues facing the educational system in the United States of America and the political climate over the past 20 years have brought about many rigid educational reforms. Perhaps the most controversial reform of all, is high-stakes testing. These reforms were based on the assumptions that high-stakes testing would enhance economic productivity, motivate students, and improve teaching and learning. However, the decrease in high school graduation rates and increase in retention rates are the best measurements of the success of the present educational reforms.

The negative impact of the current educational practices on student motivation is an area that needs to be addressed by districts, school administrators, and teachers. An alternative curriculum Lessons in Character Development, was presented as a tool for increasing student motivation and student performance. Lessons in Character Development is a program that when incorporated with daily reading activities creates 'teachable moments', in which, children learn social skills, share common values, and create a universal ethical vocabulary that would serve as a foundation for academic success.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On the journey toward achieving success as a teacher, I have come across many professional speed bumps. These speed bumps, which I like to refer as challenges, have taken many forms throughout the years. In looking back and reflecting on these challenges, the realization that these challenges did not exist outside of me, but within me became clear. What existed outside were situations that challenged my method of thinking and my way of doing things. It is the people who created these "learning about myself" situations that I acknowledge. These people include my parents, siblings, friends, professors, students, colleagues, school supervisors, and the everyday people who always make a difference. With this project, I hope to create situations, for young children to challenge their way of thinking and their way of doing things in and out of the classroom.
DEDICATION

To my nieces, Celeste and Bibiana, who I hope I can inspire to pursue a masters degree after reading this project. To Anthony, my nephew, who lights up my world with his smile. To my brother and sister who have been my source of strength. To my present students, Angel, Cesar S., Selene, Aleena, Christian, Isaac, Marilyn, Brenden, Xavier, Alfonso, Priscilla, Gabriel, Cesar G., Jackie, Gustavo, Andrew, and my past students who facilitated the idea for this project. To Dr. Joseph A. Scarcella for allowing the opportunity for this project to slowly, but gradually, emerge into a final journey. Lastly, I dedicate this project to Rudy for contributing to the layout of the project and to Tim for his unlimited passion in helping students.
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Introduction

The content of Chapter One presents an overview of the project. The contexts of the problem are discussed followed by the purpose, significance of the project, and assumptions. Next, the limitations and delimitations that apply to the project are reviewed. Finally, definitions of terms are presented.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to provide first grade teachers at the Baldwin Park Unified School District with teaching approaches, tools, and strategies in instructing their students in Character development education. These approaches, tools, and strategies will excel students' academic learning as they develop a deeper comprehension of responsibility skills.

Context of the Problem

The context of the problem was to address the need to make available a handbook entitled Lessons in Character Development, a first grade teacher’s guide to teaching character development through a series of lesson plans. With an increase focus on state mandated testing, teachers
find themselves teaching specific areas from the curriculum that are relevant to the test as opposed to the complete curriculum. Although, high stakes testing assumes that rewards and consequences will motivate students to learn, research has found that students have become less intrinsically motivated to learn and less likely to engage in critical thinking (Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001). As the stakes increase for higher test scores, the curriculum has narrowed to reflect the content sampled by these high-stakes tests (McMillan, Myran, & Workman, 1999). Thus, forcing teachers to take greater control of learning experiences of their students, and denying students the path to becoming lifelong, self-directed learners is a result.

Lee and Anderson (1993) investigated how cognitive and affective aspects influence students’ engagement in academic tasks. Their studies concluded that the personal agenda and orientations that students bring with them to academic lessons influence their motivation, selection, performance, and perseverance in academic tasks. These personal agendas and orientations were identified as students’ attitudes, values, and beliefs. As schools place emphasis on students acquiring specific academic skills to achieve improved test results, the introduction of
systematic character development has unfortunately been precluded. Educational institutions have failed to comprehend that skills traditionally identified as achievement skills such as responsibility, accountability, perseverance, cooperation, self-control, work ethic, goal setting, decision making, problem solving, and critical thinking are also identifiable as character traits embodied in systematic character education (Brooks, 2002). Research literature on character education (Graham & Weiner, 1996) supports the positive impact that Character development has in the efforts to improve test scores. Therefore, the implementation of Lessons in Character Development at an early age in schools is not only desirable; it is crucial.

Significance of the Project

The significance of the project was to provide first grade teachers a curriculum that would incorporate character skills necessary for the success of students throughout their academic life. This curriculum uses selections found in Baldwin Park Unified School District’s first grade adopted language arts text. These selections are used to organize a carefully set of grade-level learning activities that increase positive character
assets and skills within the core curriculum area of literacy. The lessons align easily with standards in language arts. This curriculum was not intended to be an add-on; it is simply a way to enhance the lessons already taking place in the classroom with an emphasis on character development.

It is the intent of Lessons in Character Development to provide teachers with a set of carefully crafted lessons in character development that might assist them in transforming their students into lifelong, self-directed learners.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding the project:

1. Students in these classes need character development instruction.
2. These lessons will succeed in teaching character development to targeted group of students.
3. Teachers will implement the lessons as specified.

Limitations and Delimitations

During the development of the project, a number of limitations and delimitations were noted. These
limitations and delimitations are presented in the next section.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to the project:

1. The project was to be offered only to first grade students in the Baldwin Unified School District.
2. The curriculum was to be administered only by a classroom teacher.
3. The curriculum was to be used only in conjunction with district adopted language arts curriculum.

Delimitations

The following delimitations apply to the project:

1. The project was to be offered to all students in grades K-12 in other districts.
2. The curriculum was to be administered by other trained school personnel.
3. The curriculum was to be used independently of the district adopted language arts curriculum.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they apply to the project.
Academic content standards - Standards designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student, by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level (California Department of Education, 2004).

Attitude - Is a predisposition to respond positively or negatively to things, people, places, events, or ideas (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

Caring - Is showing understanding of others by treating them with kindness, compassion, generosity and forgiving spirit (Lickona, 1991).

Character Education - Teaching children about basic human values, including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect. The goal is to raise children to become morally responsible, and self-disciplined citizens (Lickona, 2004).

Citizenship - Being law abiding and involved in service to school, community and country (Lickona, 1991).

Courage - Is doing the right thing in face of difficulty, and following ones conscience instead of popular consensus (Lickona, 1991).

Curriculum - Is the course of study at a school, a college, or other educational institutions (Dewey, 2001).
Fairness - Is the practice of justice, equity and equality
- Cooperating with one another - Recognizing the uniqueness and value of each individual within our diverse society (Lickona, 1991).

Honesty - Is telling the truth, admitting wrongdoing (Lickona, 1991).

No Child Left Behind Act - President George W. Bush signed into law on January 8, 2002 this act for the purpose of ensuring children in every classroom the enjoyment and the benefits of well-prepared teachers, research-based curriculum and safe learning environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Perseverance - Is pursuing worthy objectives with determination and patience while exhibiting fortitude when confronted with failure (Lickona, 1991).

Respect - Is showing high regard for an authority, other people, self and country. Treating others as you would want to be treated. Understanding that all people have value as human beings (Lickona, 1991).

Responsibility - Is being accountable in words and deeds - Having a sense of duty to fulfill tasks with reliability, dependability and commitment (Lickona, 1991).
Self-discipline - Is demonstrating hard work, controlling your emotions, words, actions, impulses, and desires (Lickona, 1991).

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis portion of the project was divided into four chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the context of the problem, purpose of the project, significance of the project, limitations and delimitations and definitions of terms. Chapter Two consists of a review of relevant literature. Chapter Three documents the steps used in developing the project. Chapter Four presents conclusions and recommendations drawn from the development of the project.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter Two consists of a discussion of the relevant literature. Specifically, how the current standards based curriculum and standards based testing trends in American education coupled with the competitive labor conditions have made character development, primarily, a responsibility of the school instead of the home. Teachers and schools are now being faced with having to teach and instill traits, such as responsibility, honesty, and respect, to students as a prerequisite to academic teaching. As the number of high school graduation rates decrease, and the number of high school drop out rates increase, educators cannot afford to prioritize character development over academic development any more. This project aims in assisting teachers in achieving equilibrium in the social and academic development of their students.

Current Trends in American Education

In January 2002, President Bush signed into law the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) titled No Child Left Behind Act
(NCLBA), this reauthorization of the ESEA is the most stringent one to date.

ESEA was originally passed in 1965 as a commitment by the federal government to the equality of educational opportunity. Most specifically, through the Title One funding of the ESEA was the support for remedial programs to educationally disadvantaged elementary students. According to Effects Studies (Carter, 1984), these fiscally compartmentalized programs proved to achieve short-term benefits for children only near the assigned cut-off grade points.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan attached the accountability factor to Title One programs in order for the assurance of their funding. ESEA was re-authorized in 1988 with changes that reflected the growing political consensus about the importance of statewide standards and assessments. Based on the revised 1988 Title One programs ESEA ordered a comprehensive recent study of Title One’s effectiveness with disadvantaged students. In addition, ESEA required states to identify specific academic achievement benchmarks for schools serving Title I students, and to identify schools that failed to make progress toward meeting these goals. States and districts were also obliged to assist schools that were unsuccessful
until these schools demonstrated successful academic gains.

Until the re-authorization in 2000 by President Clinton, Title I programs had been considered as primarily helping students achieve basic skills in academic areas. However, the Goals 2000 Legislation changed the objective for Title I to reflect the same academic content as intended for the rest of the student population. The re-authorization also introduced the term Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools and districts were now required to show adequate yearly progress in the movement of students toward proficiency levels in all academic areas. This progress was left up to the individual states to define. A number of states began to develop their own versions of state mandated assessments in order to satisfy the AYP stipulation for the Title One funding.

The No Child Left behind Act (NCLBA) further raised the standards for Title I. It requires that schools achieve adequate AYP as measured by test scores in specific areas. NCLBA assigns monetary rewards to schools that meet AYP goals and places sanctions on schools that fail to meet them.

This behavioral approach of sanctions and rewards is based on the premise that these sanctions and rewards will
serve as incentives to refocus resources toward student performance. NCLBA stipulates the reduction of 10 percent of failing students every year for all schools (with 100 percent of all students being proficient on state tests by the year 2014). The failure of schools to demonstrate, and meet the AYP improvements result in various sanctions, sanctions such as a school being identified for 'improvement', to restructuring of both the school personnel and curriculum, to the school being taken over by the state.

The adaptation of student performance as the primary social objective of schooling by political systems has led to the development of content and performance standards, high stakes assessment systems, and school report cards according to Adams and Kirst (1999, p. 464). Districts, schools, teachers, and students are experiencing a tremendous amount of pressure by the current trends for accountability. Specifically, pressures made by the federal government mandated annual state assessments for grade levels 3-8. McNeil (2000) reported an increase in dropout rates due to high stakes testing exams.

More than 6 million students are considered at risk of retention and less than 75 percent of eighth graders are graduating from high school in five years. Graduation
rates are less than 50 percent in urban areas. Supporters of NCLBA argue that accountability for student achievement is leading to the closure of the academic gaps between the 'educationally disadvantaged' and the rest of the student population. Opponents of NCLBA argue that its accountability is leading to what Wise (1979) referred to as legislative learning and teaching; instructional teaching that is directly linked to testing and comes at the expense of higher substantive learning and critical thinking.

High Stakes Testing

State and district testing systems have created constraining conditions for teachers and students. Interviews conducted by Perreault (2000), of teachers from across the nation, revealed desperate measures being used by districts and principals in an attempt to meet the current school reform requirements. Teachers reported that they were being told not to introduce any new material 6 weeks prior to testing; and that only the review of the material being tested, should take place. Reports of low performing students being placed in special education, in order for these students' scores not to be counted as part of the school's AYP, is also being reported (Jones et al,
The expansion of high stakes testing is outpacing the expansion of resources devoted to enabling every child to pass those tests. Therefore, the expansion of high stakes testing is maintaining the achievement gap.

Supporters of high stakes testing claim that improvement of test scores is a reflection of improvement in teaching and learning. Critics argue that when instruction is tailored to a particular test, test scores will improve, but they question the actual learning going on. This test-driven instruction discourages risk taking, experimentation and innovation within the learning environment (Madaus, 1991). According to Madaus (1991), educators are disputing over whether the current approach in teaching is succeeding in leaving no child behind or whether the current approach is succeeding in leaving public education behind.

Relying solely on the level of academic performance of students on one test is emphasizing the results of an all ready fragile American educational system instead of emphasizing the resources that go into the system. It is the restructuring of resources, such as equitable conditions and circumstances in which better results are prescribed, fostered, and measured.
The National Council of Educational Standards and Testing has proposed looking at the opportunity to learn (OTL) offered to students. OTL shifts the emphasis from the result-oriented approach of high stakes testing to an inputs and equity of resources approach. OTL considers whether a school’s improvement and equity adequately support the state’s curriculum framework and assessment. Equitable conditions and circumstances within the school and classroom that promote the learning for all students are at the core of OTL.

In targeting the provision of curricula, learning materials, facilities, teachers and instructional experiences that enable students to achieve high standards, OTL practices leave the barriers that have prevented equitable learning behind. Following the inputs and equity of resources approach, educational accountability should include multiple measures of academic performance. These include, but are not limited to, classroom observations, attendance indicators, dropout rates, graduation rates, post graduation success, measures of teacher preparation, and both parent participation and satisfaction.

OTL offers all students the educational opportunities needed in today’s society to prepare for their role as
participants and as potential competitors in today's marketplace of ideas. President Bush in his speech, during signing of NCLBA, stated "These forms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America (Department of Education, 2002)."

Character Development

Although President's Bush mission to build the mind of every child is being questioned by educators, his mission to build the character of every student is being overlooked by the focus on testing at both legislative level and school district level. A student of character exemplifies such traits as a strong work ethic, a sense of responsibility, the willingness to persevere, and an appreciation of learning; habits normally fostered at home.

In order to avoid lawsuits, from parents who claim their rights are being violated when their children are suspended and expelled, districts and schools are ignoring many disciplinary problems. Beyers (1997, B1) reported in 1996 that out of the 1,090 students recommended for expulsion in Montgomery County, Maryland only 3 students
were expelled. The current increase in security, weapon searches, and metal detectors throughout the nation is a clear indication of how ill equipped our schools are in handling unruly and dangerous students. Schools across the nation are resembling jails instead of learning facilities.

Presently, school counselors provide the little instruction, in the area of character development education in schools. It has been a counselor’s task to serve as a bridge between character and academic success. However, elementary school counselors are not utilized in all states to promote the overall growth and development of students. Hardesty and Dillard (1994) found that elementary school counselors performed more consulting counseling, and coordinating functions and fewer administrative-like functions compared to both middle and secondary school counselors. The above study indicated that elementary school counseling may be viewed as more expendable to school administrators and legislatures and more likely to be eliminated from school budgets during tight budget times. Personnel whose job has been that of building a strong, positive, personal identity, a strong school, a strong community, and ultimately a strong society are now being utilized to serve as disciplinarians
and security officers or are being eliminated all together.

Counselors that provide instruction in character development have reported positive results. Stone and Dyal (1997) report on a counseling program aimed at improving character development in students at Alimacani School in Florida. The counselors in conjunction with teachers and other school personnel attempted to build a repertoire of behaviors and found that, when repeated, these behaviors become habits. These habits facilitate formation of good character. The Alimacani school’s fun and age appropriate approach, during the use of this counseling program, has been successful.

Ninety-five percent of teachers in Alimacani school reported having observed positive behavior changes in students throughout the targeted areas of the program. For example, after a series of lessons on responsibility, 94 percent of teachers observed an increase in the completion of homework assignments.

One hundred percent of teachers reported satisfaction with the implementation of character education in schools. Similar studies reported positive effects of character development education on students. The Monk Study, Thorfinnson Study, the Lein Study and the Wulf Study are
small-scale studies that have been conducted within a number of school districts in order to evaluate the overall impact of their character education programs (Brooks, 2002). All studies reported gains in academic work habits targeted by programs. How are character and academic success linked to one another? The link exists in the affective domain.

The Affective Domain

Snow, Corno, and Jackson (1996) differentiated the mind into three types of processes: cognitive, affective, and conative. According to the authors, the cognitive domain is defined by mental operations such as reasoning, remembering, and symbol manipulation; temperament and emotions identify the affective domain, while the conative domain refers to motivation and volition.

Recently, much attention has been placed in domain-specific motivational factors that influence cognitive functioning in formal and informal learning environments (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Graham & Weiner, 1996). The research conducted in these areas has yielded results that both conative and affective factors can alter the outcome of cognitive efforts. According to Richard E. Snow’s theory of aptitude (Snow, 1989),
Performance in academic tasks is a process involving a continuous stream of person-situation transactions. Students bring to the performance situation, a repertoire of aptitude resources. These resources represent cognitive and motivational propensities such as knowledge. During performance, situational tasks demands and opportunities interact with these propensities to produce observable responses.

Snow contended that both conative and affective factors alter the perception of situations and ultimately the cognitive efforts. Studies in epistemological beliefs by Pintrich et al., (1993) explored how cognitive and affective responses acted as 'mediators' and 'filters' in conceptual change. Data that supports how affect (emotions and feelings) and cognition seem inextricably interwined can be traced back to studies by Benjamin S. Bloom. Bloom (1956) stated that domain-specific motivational factors, may be placed in one of the mentioned domains, but are not devoid of some components of the two other domains.

Bloom (1956) went on to state that “each person responds as a ‘whole being’ whenever he responds.” According to Spielberger (1979), “affective and conative responses in a particular situation or context constitute
psychological states; when such states are consistently observed across different situations the label trait may be used.” As these responses are positive in the case of efficacy, confidence beliefs, and engagement with learning the outcome in observable responses. It is the lack of these positive responses in students, which teachers are being challenged to amend.

Duglos (2003) maintains that the inclusion of learning in the affective domain is vital to the development of personal and social skills needed for proper interaction with others. Ralph W. Tyler (1949) asserts that learning objectives should be a statement of changes to take place in students. Appropriate learning experiences need to be purposely planned and instructed to teach skills related to affective development.

Teaching solely the standards, and teaching to the test, has failed because this type of experience is outside of the student. In order for students to evolve instructors must teach to the individual and to his/her collective experience. Dewey (1931) argued:

...with our lack of imagination in generating leading ideas. Because we are afraid of speculative ideas, we do and do over and over again, an immense amount of specialized work in

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the region of facts. We forget such facts are only data; that is, are only fragmentary, uncompleted meaning, and unless they are rounded out into complete ideas - a work which can only be done by hypotheses, by a free imagination of intellectual possibilities- they are as helpless as are all maimed things and as repellent as needlessly thwarted ones. (p. 11)

According to Dewey, a child's imagination is a connection to the education of feeling, and a part of intelligence. Teachers must eliminate the feelings of futility that children experience and which often blocks any intention to learn by creating a community that fosters dialogue for shared memories, open communication and empathy. It is by these means that children will be drawn together to undergo both an individual and collective experience. Affective education furthers not only the development of the whole human being, but also the development of the whole community. Students need to understand that they can use reading, writing, and math skills to bring about change in their own lives, their families and their communities.

This type of critical thinking applied to everyday circumstances and decisions characterizes someone who has
reached high levels of personal development, someone with character.

The Curriculum

Lessons in Character Development purpose were to introduce first grade students to a character development curriculum through the enhancement of an already established language arts curriculum. Lessons in Character Development consisted of lessons with learning objectives that are a statement of changes to take place in students' thinking and feelings (character) as well as in their overt actions (performance). Lessons in Character Development, however, was to challenge students to take this information and apply it to everyday circumstances as well as decision-making. Using literature and various instructional strategies, students will be exposed to various scenarios that will depict a repertoire of behaviors such as responsibility, perseverance, caring, self-discipline, honesty, etc. The repeated exposure and response to these behaviors in turn will facilitate the formation of good character.

Summary

The literature important to the project was presented in Chapter Two. To understand the necessity for a
curriculum that incorporates both curriculum skills and character development skills it was necessary to identify the limitations of the current educational reform, No Child Left Behind ACT (NCLBA). The stringent accountability factors set by NCLBA, specifically high stakes testing, has shifted the focus of instruction skills that Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) labeled analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information to simply knowledge and comprehension of basic facts. In addition, to identifying the limitations of the current reform, it was also necessary to define the components of character development and their relevance to academic achievement.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter Three documents the steps used in developing the project. The research on current practices in curriculum instruction as a direct result of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) legislation, the necessity for a change in current curriculum, and the benefits of character development education programs were identified through various sources as listed in the reference section. Questions were formulated with regard to how well the current curriculum meets the needs of students, schools, and society at-large. Theory, legislation, and existing data was compiled and studied. Ultimately, it was discovered that today’s educational agencies and practices, currently in place throughout the nation, were falling miserably short of meeting many vital needs of students.

Development

Resources and Content Validation

The project utilized much of the theory presented in the body of the project as well as the most effective age-appropriate teaching strategies. Additional studies
are necessary. This would include, but not be limited to, updating and identifying the current changes brought about by current federal and state legislation more specifically changes taking place during President Bush's second term of office and his educational proposal to extend NCLBA to the high school level.

In addition to an influx in state assessments at the high school level, the endorsement of the growth of Advanced Placement courses, and the allocation of funding for initiatives such as Striving Readers and State Scholars, the President's High School Initiative would trigger changes throughout the k-12 curriculum. These changes may in fact affect the practices now in place at the elementary level.

The character development data provided in Chapter Two was based on small-scale studies conducted throughout a small number of school districts. Currently, only a few districts throughout the nation have adopted various models of character development curriculums. The limitations in the number of schools implementing these types of programs were a result of a restricted amount of data. In addition, studies conducted to evaluate the long-term benefits of such programs were limited based on their implementation. Long-term case studies are necessary
in order to acquire information on the long-term effects of this form of curriculum. More funding for both the practice and research in character development education would be needed.

**Design**

The design of Lessons in Character Development was based on research findings in both character development education and suggestions from a panel of first grade teachers and an elementary principal.

This panel consisted of three first grade teachers that work for the Baldwin Park Unified School District in Baldwin Park, California, and one principal that works for the Riverside Unified School District in Riverside, California. Each teacher in the panel possesses a minimum of ten years experience as a first grade teacher and a minimum of 15 years of teaching experience. These teachers have been working for Baldwin Park Unified School District for a minimum of 12 years and have been teaching the current curriculum for a minimum of five years. Two of the three teachers possess a master's degree in the area of curriculum development and the third teacher has a master's degree in the area of reading. The principal possesses 20 years of experience as a principal, seven
years of experience as a reading specialist, and holds a master's degree in Administration.

The panel was asked questions to determine their knowledge of character and character development education. Based on the array of answers, it was determined that a conceptual model was needed in order to define character development education.

A conceptual model was adapted in order to define the domain of character development. In this model, character was defined as being a psychological development of students. Character development education, therefore, targets a particular subset of child development that affects a student's capacity and tendency to be an effective moral agent. The design of this project was intended to promote the development of some aspects of student character. It is a classroom-based endeavor designed to help foster the positive, pro-social, moral and civic development of youth.

The panel was then asked to study various Character development programs, for their effectiveness. In view of the fact that character development education targets a subset of child development, the choice of which subset would be most appropriate to target with this project, was posed to the panel. After exposing the panel to various
Character development programs, the panel found that the most common content areas in these programs were social skills and awareness, personal improvement, and problem-solving/decision-making.

The area of personal improvement was the one adopted for this project. Personal improvement focuses on the development of student competence in areas such as self-discipline, goal setting, and stress management and achievement motivation. With high learning demands being placed on children as early as kindergarten, and those of high stakes testing, it is believed that equipping children as early as possible with the above-mentioned skills would benefit them greatly.

In addition to addressing the content area of the project, the decision to integrate character development education into the curriculum or to teach it outside of the curriculum was also explored by the panel. The decision to integrate it to the curriculum was reached. An investigation into the advantages as well as disadvantages of both approaches was carried out. The conclusion to incorporate the project to the curriculum was reached based on time management, material availability, and district guidelines. With the limited amount of time and the extensive amount of information to be taught, it was
considered that embedding this curriculum to the language arts curriculum currently in place would facilitate the task for teachers in three ways. First, teachers already have time allocated for the implementation of this curriculum. Second, teachers already have the materials accessible to them. Finally, teachers would not be reprimanded for teaching a subject that is not part of the district’s core program.

In addition to deciding on the correct approach to implementing the program, this panel also assisted in developing the pedagogical strategies adopted in the program. A consensus was reached as to what interactive teaching strategies each lesson would utilize, what direct teaching strategies would be employed, what community participation topics would be addressed, and what assessment approaches would be best suited for the population being targeted.

Population Served

Lessons in Character Development was designed to assist first grade students in the Baldwin Park Unified School District in the State of California to learn, develop, and apply an array of positive attitudes throughout various situations in their lives. Students
would learn about caring, citizenship, courage, perseverance, self-discipline, and responsibility through actions of characters in various children's stories. Lessons developed were to examine these character traits and assist students in making themselves 'self-aware' of these types of traits within themselves. Students would be able to extend their learning and apply these skills in their lives through a range of family projects.

Treatment

The proposed Lessons in Character Development was a handbook containing lesson plans in the area of character development education, which sought to identify various areas for self-improvement for first grade students. This project identified areas for self-improvement, and provided first grade students opportunities to apply this knowledge to every day occurrences.

Lessons in Character Development was a project designed to meet four primary objectives that developed the following competencies:

1. Identify the traits of citizenship, courage, perseverance, respect, responsibility and self-discipline in character actions.
2. Develop an understanding of the definition of these traits by repetitive exposure to examples of these traits.

3. Create a repertoire of possible actions that will demonstrate the above traits.

4. Adopt and utilize this repertoire of traits in all situations.

Achieving the above competencies would result in students having a positive predisposition to responding to things, people, places, events, or ideas.

Data Analysis Procedures

The content of Lessons in Character Development was developed after researching current teaching strategies, issues facing today's educational system, and the effects of character development education. The primary objectives were:

1. Provide first grade teachers with a series of lessons plans aimed at developing specific character traits of students.

2. Present the curriculum as an addendum to the current curriculum being used at their school.
Summary

Existing data and theory supports the hypotheses that today's educational system is not fully meeting the needs of students, teachers, schools and the community at large. The reason for this shortcoming is simple; students do not possess the adequate personal traits to take on the rigid requirements of today's academic curriculum. Students' competence in areas of character development such as self-discipline, goal setting, and achievement motivation are imperative in today's rigid academic curriculum. Exposure to curriculum like Lessons in Character Development is essential.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Included in Chapter Four was a presentation of the conclusions gleamed as a result of completing the project. Further, the recommendations extracted from the project were presented. Lastly, the Chapter concludes with a summary that revisits the original premise, to ascertain that it was adequately substantiated, that the conclusions logically follow the identified research, and that the recommendations are reasonable.

Conclusions

The conclusions extracted from the project follows.

1. Instructional practices in today's classrooms consist of objectives geared toward test performance and come at the expense of higher substantive learning and critical thinking.

2. Lessons that take into account students' feelings and emotions are powerful at motivating students and are effective at engaging students in critical thinking.

3. Through constant exposure to motivational curriculums such as Lessons in Character
Development students become more motivated and more engaged in learning.

4. Increases in both student motivation and student engagement in learning may contribute to an improvement in student performance.

Recommendations

The recommendations resulting from the project follows.

1. Additional assessment tools that assess growth in areas targeted in character development education are essential to ascertain the impact of character development education on a long-term basis.

2. Similar curriculums to Lessons in Character Development must be adopted across grade levels to determine the impact of character development education throughout various developmental stages of students.

Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the conclusions extracted from the project. Lastly, the recommendations derived from the project were presented.
The articles and books used during the research stage of the project support the premise upon which the project was based. Current teaching practices and content are not meeting the needs of today's students.

This chapter concludes that high accountability demands, posed by recent legislation, are obstructing higher substantive learning in schools. These demands along with a lack of disciplinary action by the school districts have resulted in a curriculum focused only on test score improvement. A new curriculum that addresses both academic and character development would be needed in order to equip students with demands being placed on them.

The recommendations indicated that further research and evaluation should be scheduled to verify the results from this project. Finally, if the results are judged valid then broader applications should be considered.
APPENDIX

LESSONS IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT
Lessons in Character Development

By

Virginia Escobar
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Preface

For Whom This Handbook Is Intended

This handbook is intended for teachers, who share the philosophy that if we are to prepare students for life beyond school, then we cannot just teach them to add or read. We need to teach them how to think and how to make decisions about right from wrong.

This handbook uses literature that evokes emotional responses from readers that need to be acknowledged, explored and extended. These stories demand readers to judge the moral responses of characters to life’s trials and tribulations in light of the events of their own lives. By emotionally engaging the reader, these stories fortify the best habits and dispositions of its readers.

Through the use of various pedagogical approaches that foster dialogue, students are guided into creating communities for shared memories. By means of the open communication and empathy that the lessons in this handbook induce, young people are drawn together to think critically and construct meaning in their lives. Through a series of steps embedded throughout the handbook students will identify basic questions
and issues, clarify meanings, uncover assumption and biases, evaluate reasons, arguments, and evidence, consider alternative points of view, and draw warranted or justified conclusions. Students will understand that they can use reading and writing to bring about change in their own lives, their families and in their communities.

The metacognitive activities suggested in this handbook allow for students’ own thinking to become transparent to them thus allowing students to become more autonomous and successful learners. The instructional decisions of this handbook were made with the intent of providing learning experiences designed to develop personal and social skills in first graders for appropriate interaction with others during participation. Each lesson component, the pre-reading activity, discussions, activity, wrap-up, and home extension reflect the objective of the lesson: specific changes in the concept area to take place in students’ thinking and feeling as well as overt action.

The combination of the selected stories along with the selection of pedagogical practices offer you, the teacher, the opportunity to introduce students to the appreciation of learning that strong work ethics, sense of responsibility, and willingness to persevere invokes.
Introduction

The following lessons have been designed with the awareness of the time constrictions teachers face in the classroom day after day. With this in mind, the six components of each of the lessons, pre-reading activity, vocabulary, activity, discussion, wrap-up, and the home extension were designed to be independent of each other. This interdependence allows for flexibility in the administration of the lessons. Teachers can choose to administer the entire lesson in one day or can choose which components of the lesson to use depending on how much time is available. Another method for presenting the lessons can be to introduce a section a day at a time. The exposure to the entire lesson, however, will give students a deep understanding of the attributes targeted and is the most recommended method for utilizing the lesson plans.
Miss Fannie’s Hat
Jan Karon
Illustrated by Toni Goffe
1998
New York: Penguin Group

**Concepts**
Love
Loyalty

**Reading Time**
7 minutes

**Summary**
Each of Miss Fannie’s hats reminds her of a special time. She wore her green velour hat in the terrible flood of 1916. Her brown velvet hat feels just like Miss Fannie’s grandmother’s cow. And her famous pink straw hat with the silk roses is the one Miss Fannie has worn on Eastern Sunday for the past thirty-five years. When Miss Fannie’s preacher asks her to donate one of her hats to the church auction, choosing which one to part with is no small task.

**Pre-reading Activity**
Show students a picture of Abraham Lincoln wearing his tall black hat and ask them to identify the person. Continue to show students additional pictures of Abraham Lincoln wearing his hat. Ask students what Abraham Lincoln was famous for wearing. Discuss with students how his tall black hat was one of his trademarks. Discuss with students the definition of a trademark: something that sets people or an organization apart from others. It is a unique way of letting people know who we are, what we like, or what we stand for. Show students pictures of various commercial trademarks such as McDonald’s golden arches, or Target’s dot with a circle around it. Have students share what one of their trademarks might be.

**After the Story**

**Discussion**
1. What was Miss Fannie’s trademark? How do you know?
2. How did Miss Fannie feel toward her hats?
3. We use the word loyalty when people help each other solve problems. How did Miss Wanda show loyalty to Miss Fannie? How did Miss Fannie show loyalty toward the church?
4. Why did Miss Fannie's loyalty toward the church become a problem?
5. Discuss with students how at first Miss Fannie was thinking about herself and her problem was hard to solve, but when she began thinking of her love for the church she was able to solve her problem much easier.
6. Discuss how Miss Fannie demonstrated unselfish love when she stopped thinking about herself and began thinking of the church.

Activity
Choose two students to play the parts of the two cats in the story. One cat will try to convince Miss Fannie (played by the teacher) not to donate any of her hats. The second cat will try to convince Miss Fannie to donate her favorite hat. Instruct students that the first cat will say things to her about how much the hats mean to her, but the second cat will say things to her about how much the hat will mean to the church. Give students cat masks and have them act out the scene. Then, have class vote for the most convincing cat.

Wrap-up
Have students draw two pictures of Miss Fannie. The first picture should show Miss Fannie trying to solve her problem when she was thinking of herself. The second picture should show Miss Fannie solving her problem as she was thought of the church.

Vocabulary
Donate, favorite, auction, preacher

Home Extension
Have students complete home extension 1-A ditto with their families. In this task, students and their families will make a list of acts that each family member performs that shows unselfish love.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about an old woman named Miss Fannie and her act of unselfish love. Discuss with your child the story and ask your child what was Miss Fannie’s act. Discuss with your child how unselfish love means thinking about others instead of oneself. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

Draw a picture or paste a photo of each family member. Under each person’s picture, write about one unselfish act of love that person has performed for the family.
How My Parents Learned to Eat
Ina R. Friedman
Illustrated by Allen Say
1984
New York: Houghton Mifflin

**Concepts**
Respect
Love
Courage

**Reading time**
8 minutes

**Summary**
An American sailor courts a Japanese girl and each tries, in secret, to learn the other's way of eating.

**Pre-reading activity**
Distribute a pair of chopsticks to each student. Place in front of them various types of foods for them to eat with the chopsticks. At the end of the activity, ask students if they felt successful at eating with chopsticks. Ask them what a successful person eating with chopsticks would look like, and what an unsuccessful person eating with chopsticks would look like. Call on volunteers to demonstrate each of the concepts. Discuss with students how it is much easier to perform tasks that one is successful at, then it is to perform tasks one is not too successful at. Then, ask them how they might feel if tomorrow they were the only class in the cafeteria to eat with chopsticks.

**After the Story**

**Discussion**

1. Why was the John afraid to invite Aiko out to dinner?
2. Draw a Venn-Diagram to list the similarities and differences between the two main characters, John and Aiko.
3. We use the word respect when people show regard and patience for traditions, differences, age, race, the earth, the self, and others. How did John show respect for Aiko in this story? How did John show respect for the Japanese culture in this story? How did Aiko show respect for John in this story?
4. Ask students if given the choice would they prefer to eat with chopsticks at a Japanese restaurant or at the school cafeteria. Why?

5. Discuss with students how John showed great courage going to a Japanese restaurant and learning to eat with chopsticks alone. Tell them that although John was fearful of eating with chopsticks, he put his feelings aside and thought only of Aiko.

**Activity**
Copy the first and last pages of the book on to a transparency. Using the overhead, show the first transparency and ask students to identify what the little girl is eating with. Then, have them list all the other items in the picture and their use. Explain to students that these items are used when one eats a Japanese meal. Then, show the transparency of the last page of the book and have students identify what utensils the little girls is using. Have students list all the other items in the picture and their use. Explain to students that these items are used when one eats an American meal. Then, have students draw a picture of what might be found on their tables and have them share with the class three items on their table and their use.

**Wrap-up**
Students will be placed in groups of three. As a group, they will write a letter to an imaginary new student explaining how various tasks are performed in the classroom and the importance of maintaining these tasks the same way.

**Vocabulary**
Kimono, bow, utensils, foreign

**Home Extension**
Have students complete home extension 2-A with their families. In this task, students and their families will make a list of traditions practiced in their homes. They will then create a poster illustrating some of these traditions.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about an American soldier who learned to eat with chopsticks and a Japanese woman who learned to eat with utensils. In learning how to eat differently, these two characters showed respect for the differences that exist between them. Discuss with your child the story and share with your child ways people who live together show respect for each other. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

For this assignment, you and your family will make a list of traditions practiced in your homes. Then, you will use a poster-size paper to create a poster illustrating some of these traditions. This poster is to assist visitors to your home understand and respect your traditions.
Daisy Comes Home
Jan Brett
Illustrated by Jan Brett
2002
New York: Penguin Group

Concepts
Courage
Perseverance
Love

Reading time
8 minutes

Summary
Mei Mei has the six happiest hens in China. She gives them treats and fresh hay baths, and when she calls to them—gu gu gu gu gu!—they all run to her as fast as they can. But one of the hens, Daisy, is not always so happy. The other hens pick on Daisy and push her off the perch every night, knowing that she is too small to stand up to them. Then one day, Daisy accidentally drifts out onto the river in a basket and must quickly learn how to survive. When Daisy finds her way home, this plucky little hen is no longer afraid.

Pre-reading activity
For this activity, you will play the chicken song and give students the following instructions.

1. Anyone who’s not a chicken, stand in a circle facing each other.
2. When the music starts, hold your hands out in front of you and open and close them like a chicken beak four times.
3. Put your thumbs in your armpits and flap your wings four times.
4. Place your arms and hands like the tail feathers of a chicken and wiggle down to the floor four times.
5. Clap four times.
6. Repeat steps 1-5 four times.
7. After the fourth time take the hands of the people on either side of you and everyone move in a circle.
8. When you get dizzy, switch directions.
After the Story

Discussion

1. What was the relationship between Daisy and the other hens?
2. Why do you think the hens picked on Daisy? Why would her small size cause the other hens to pick on her?
3. Create a time line to track the seven main events that Daisy experienced in this story. Label the event and describe Daisy throughout the event.
4. We use the word courage when people master their fear. Find examples of courage in this story?

Activity
Assist the class in making a list of ten possible sources of fear that a first grade student might experience (i.e. bullies, not being picked up after school, etc…). Then, have students come up with a behavior, a dialogue, and a way of thinking that would demonstrate courage when dealing with each of the fears listed.

Wrap-up
Students will create a Courage Flower. Each child will receive an envelope with their name on it and 5 petals inside. On each petal they will write one way in which they have shown or can show courage. After 5 acts of courage are written down, each student will arrange the flower and petals and glue the petals to the flower. Students will share with a partner their acts of courage and then the flowers will be hung on the wall for children to see.

Vocabulary
Flap, peck, nip, squawk

Home Extension
Have students complete home extension 3-A ditto with their families. In this task, students and their families will create a Flag of Courage.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about a hen named Daisy who through a series of events developed the trait of courage. Discuss with your child the story and ask your child how Daisy demonstrated courage in the story. Discuss with your child how courage is not simply overcoming fear through physical strength, but is also a quality that involves actions, words, and thoughts. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

Use a piece of white construction paper to create a flag that represents courage. Decide on the meaning for each of the components on your flag. For example, stripes on the flag might symbolize words of courage while circles on the flag might symbolize strength to do the right thing.
When the proud and haughty Chin Yu Min loses her wealthy husband, she becomes as poor as the village beggars, and has no one to turn to. Then one day, on a fishing dock nearby, she meets a ginger cat, and her luck begins to change.

Prepare a set of cards. List one of the following topics on each one:

friends    eating    playing    sleeping    grieving
learning    communicating    family    water    enemies

Then, divide the class into pairs and give each pair a note card. Ask the pairs to put themselves in the place of a cat and discuss with each other the topic on the note card, first from the perspective of an indoor cat and then from the perspective of an outdoor cat. Ask each pair of students to present to the class the topic on their note card from both perspectives.

When we describe what a character in a story looks like we call this description a physical description. When we describe a character based on his/her actions, feelings and behaviors, we call this a character description.

Give a physical description of ginger cat. Note responses.
3. Give a character description of Chin Yu Min. Note responses

4. Explain to students that physical descriptions will be the same most of the time regardless of who is describing the character. Character descriptions, however, can change depending on who is describing the character. In this story, Chin Yu Min is described in three different ways. Draw an expanded Venn Diagram to describe how the cat, the beggar, and the narrator of the story think of Chin Yu Min. Then, give examples from the story that allowed these characters to describe her these ways.

5. We use the word loyalty when people have a sense of duty, a sense of commitment, and community. People who are loyal act and behave as part of a group. They do what is good for the group and not just for themselves. Find examples in the story of loyalty.

**Activity**

Have students list all the communities that they belong to: school, classroom, family, friends, church, sports team, etc... Assign students to groups of three, and have each group think of examples that demonstrate loyalty in each of the communities listed. Bring students together and chart their responses. Using a long piece of butcher paper, assign each group of students to choose one community, illustrate it, and write the responses listed for that community on an assigned place on the butcher paper. When all groups are finished roll up both ends of the butcher paper so that it looks like a scroll and hang it up outside the classroom door or inside the classroom.

**Wrap-up**

Have students write one personal goal for showing loyalty this week. Follow up at the end of the week with a written report beginning with: I showed loyalty when....

**Vocabulary**

Proud, prosperity, greedy, venerable generous, virtuous, beggar

**Home Extension**

Have students complete home extension 4-A ditto with their families. In this task, students and their families will create a scroll that lists ways in which family members can demonstrate loyalty to one another.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about an old Chinese woman named Chin Yu Min who with the help of a cat learned the importance of loyalty. Discuss with your child the story and ask your child how Chin Yu Min demonstrated this quality in the story. Discuss with your child how loyal people act and behave as part of a group. Loyal people do what is best for the group and not for themselves. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

Chinese culture has a custom of hanging scrolls outside doors that read “Good Management,” “Wise Decision,” “Prosperity,” “Contented Joy,” etc... in order to attract or to bring those qualities into homes. In the attached scroll, please write an example of how members of your household can help bring the quality of loyalty into your home.
loyalty
Akiak
Robert J. Blake
Illustrated by Robert J. Blake
1997
New York.: Penguin Group

**Concepts**
Perseverance
Loyalty
Love
Courage

**Reading time**
8 minutes

**Summary**
When she hurts her paw on the fourth day out, Akiak can no longer compete in the Iditarod - the famed dog-sledding race through 1,151 miles of Alaskan terrain. Her musher has no choice but to leave her behind. The rules say once a dog is dropped from the race, it may not rejoin the team. But ten-year-old lead dog Akiak doesn’t know the rules, and nothing will stop her from catching up to her team. Akiak has never won the race before.

**Pre-reading activity**
Show Disney’s Snow Dogs movie to students to build their background knowledge of Alaska’s Iditarod race (option: skip the beginning of the movie and show only the part that pertains to the race). Discuss the plot and the characters.

**After the Story**

**Discussion**

1. We use the word perseverance when people are determined to complete a task regardless of how hard the task proves to be. How did Akiak demonstrate perseverance in this story? What were some of situations that made Akia’s goal of finishing the race in first place more difficult?

2. Draw a Venn-Diagram to chart the similarities and differences between the Akiak race and the race from Disney’s Snow Dogs.
Activity

For this activity, students will participate in a scavenger hunt. Each student will be given a card with one of the following senses listed: hearing, touch, smell, sight, taste. Students will be instructed not to use that sense during the scavenger hunt. Students will be given ear mugs or a blind fold if they are not allowed to use the sense of hearing or sight, respectively. Students not using the sense of touch will be instructed to not touch the items. Students not using the sense of smell will be told not to hold the scavenger items up to their nose, and students not using the sense of taste will not be allowed to use their mouths to taste some of the scavenger items. Distribute a list of the items students are to search for in each area to every student. Teacher will place the following items in the respected areas:

Area 1: Place two bells in this area. One bell that rings and one that doesn’t ring.
Area 2: Place two items in this area.
Area 3: Place two different types of chocolate in this area. The chocolates must have the same shape, but must smell differently.
Area 4: Place two items with different colors in this area.
Area 5: Place two pieces of candy that are the same color, but with different taste in this area.

One student at a time will go to each of these areas. Instruct students that no matter how difficult the task of searching for each of the items on the list becomes, they must demonstrate perseverance and finish the task. Place the other students at each area to root for the players.

Wrap-up
Reflect on the scavenger hunt. Have students write about thoughts and feelings they experienced as they went through the scavenger hunt. Have them write about thoughts and feelings that helped them complete the task.

Vocabulary
Trail, musher, limping, blizzard, rooting

Home Extension
Have students complete home extension 5-A ditto with their families. In this task, students will interview an adult family member about a time in their life in which they demonstrated perseverance.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about a dog named Akiak who showed determination or perseverance by finishing a race even when she was injured. Discuss with your child the story and ask your child how Akiak demonstrated perseverance in this story. Discuss with your child how perseverance means setting a goal and not giving up regardless of how difficult the task becomes. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

For this task, your child will be interviewing an adult in the family about a time in his/her life in which he/she demonstrated perseverance. Your child will ask the following questions to the adult. Please have the adult answer the questions as clearly as possible. Your child will not be writing down the answers, but will be listening to the responses instead.

1. Name one task that you wanted to complete?
2. How did you complete this goal?
3. Was the task hard to complete?
4. How did you feel once you completed it?
Fanny’s Dream
Caralyn Buehner
Illustrated by Mark Buehner
1996
New York: Penguin Group

**Concepts**
Hope
Loyalty
Love

**Reading time**
6 minutes

**Summary**
Fanny just knows she is going to marry a prince. So when she hears that the town mayor is giving a grand ball, Fanny is sure her dream is about to come true. On the night of the ball, she dresses up in her best calico and goes out in the garden to wait for her fairy godmother. But when her fairy godmother doesn’t show up, she decides on a local farmer instead.

**Pre-reading activity**
Read to students the story of Cinderella. Explain to students that the story of Cinderella has many versions (i.e. Chinese Cinderella, Egyptian Cinderella, etc...). Discuss with students how all these versions share some similarities: a big party or ball, the main character, a magical being that makes dreams come true, some type of prince.

**After the Story**

**Discussion**
1. Have students identify in this story who is portraying the character of Cinderella, the young prince, and the magical being.
2. We use the word hope similarly to the word wish. Hope is when someone’s beliefs in something or someone reach out to the future. What did Fanny hope for at the beginning of the story? Do you think Fanny got what she hoped for?
3. Why do you think Fanny turned down the fairy godmother’s help at the end?
4. In this story we saw how Fanny’s hope at the beginning of the story changed as her life changed. At the end, Fanny’s hope was about her family and not about what she wanted for her.

Activity
In this activity, students will write (and later act out) a second ending to the story of Fanny’s Dream. In this ending, the fairy godmother will arrive the first time Fanny finds herself outside looking down at the mayor’s home. The fairy godmother will grant Fanny’s wish and she will get a chance to meet the mayor’s son and therefore get what she had hoped for. Have students brainstorm what type of life Fanny would live had her dream come true and have them act out the new ending. Then, have students vote on what ending they liked the most.

Wrap-up
Have students write in their journals about what they hope their lives turn out to be when they are grown-ups. Ask them to reflect on what career they hope to have, what type of family they hope to have, and what types of activities they hope to do as a grown up.

Vocabulary
Mayor, sturdy, ball, fairy godmother, acres, colonel

Home Extension
Have students complete home extension 6-A ditto with their families. In this task, students will discuss and compare with their families their hopes for the future.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about a woman named Fanny who hoped to marry a prince. As the story continued, Fanny’s hope changed from that of her own to the hopes that she has for her family. This story is a great example of how individuals’ futures change due to family. Discuss with your child the story. Ask your child what Fanny hoped for at the beginning of the story and what she hoped for at the end of the story. Ask your child if he/she thinks Fanny did the right thing at the end and why. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

In this task, you and your child will make a list of hopes that a single person can have in various parts of his/her life and how these hopes change when the person has a family. This task is intended to help your child understand how a person’s life can change once a family is involved.

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<th>Married person/person with a family</th>
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<td>Eating out</td>
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A Sweet Smell of Roses
Angela Johnson
Illustrated by Eric Velasquez
2005
New York: Simon & Schuster

Concepts
Justice
Courage
Hope

Reading time
5 minutes

Summary
There's a sweet smell in the air as two young girls sneak out of their house, down the street, and across town to where men and women are gathered, ready to march for freedom and justice.

Pre-reading activity
Tell students that you have a bag of different sized candy that you want to share with two of the students. Choose two students and tell them that you want to be fair in how you distribute the bag of candy and therefore you might have to use a scale. Review with students how a scale works. Count five pieces of large candy and give these to student #1 and count five pieces of small candy and give these to student #2. Ask students if they think this scenario is fair. Note responses. Then, place the five pieces of large candy on one side of the scale and place the enough pieces of small candy on the other side to balance the scale. Ask students if they think that this scenario is fair. Note responses. Then, tell students you think that it is only fair that the student who is the hungriest gets more candy than the student who is not so hungry. Instruct student #1 that he/she is very hungry and therefore will get more candy, and instruct student #2 that he/she is not hungry at all and therefore will receive a smaller amount. Then, ask students if they think this scenario is fair? Discuss with students how the concept of fair can change.

After the Story

Discussion
1. When an author thinks something is important he/she repeats it in the story many times. The words waist high are repeated on one of the pages three times. Why do you think repeating that
the girls were waist high was important for the author? Why did the author want you to know that the girls were only waist high?

2. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used the word “equality.” What other word do you hear in that word? Before reading this book we did an activity to try to find out how many candies two students in this class should get and it was hard to find out what number was fair to give them.

3. We use the word justice to mean equality, fairness, and truth. In this story we learn that the two sisters sneak out of the house in order to march with Martin Luther King, Jr. They marched for justice and equality. Ask students the following questions: When the girls returned home, we learned that their mom had been very worried about them. Do you think that it was fair of the girls to sneak out and worry their mom? Do you think that was fair?

**Activity**

In this activity, the teacher will select a recent issue facing the class, a particular group of students, the age group, or the school. The students will participate in a mock trial. One student will serve as the judge, one as the defendant, one as the victim, and twelve students will serve as the jury. Students are to present issue in court and students are to deliberate on what outcome is fair and be able to defend their decision.

**Wrap-up**

Have students write in their journals whether or not they agreed with the court decision and why.

**Vocabulary**

Equality, march, sneak out, waist high

**Home Extension**

Have students complete home extension 7-A ditto with their families. In this task, students and their families will review the house rules and understand how these rules are fair.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about two girls who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for justice and equality. Discuss with your child the story. Ask your child what the words justice and fairness mean to them. Share with your child your meaning of the word justice and compare both meanings. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

In this task, you and your child will make a list of all the rules enforced at home. Review each rule at a time and discuss with your child how these rules fit your definition of justice and how it might/or might not fit the definition of justice your child holds.
Too Many Tamales
Gary Soto
Illustrated by Ed Martinez
1993
New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons

Concepts
Honesty
Loyalty
Love

Reading time
7 minutes

Summary
While making tamales with her family on Christmas Eve, Maria tries on her mother’s diamond ring. Later, Maria misses the ring and believes she has cooked it into the food. She enlists her loyal cousins to eat through the batch of tamales in search of the ring. When they are unsuccessful, she confesses her actions to her mother. Family loyalty provides a supportive atmosphere for telling the truth.

Pre-reading activity
Show students a tube of toothpaste and ask them what it is. Then ask them what it is used for. Squeeze out some of the toothpaste from the tube and ask students if there is anyway in which they can put the toothpaste back in the tube. Note responses. Attempt to follow any of the suggestions students offer. Inform students that once the toothpaste comes out of the tube it is impossible to put back in. Tell students that the same happens with lies. Once a lie comes out of someone’s mouth it is impossible to take it back and therefore it is better to tell the truth from the beginning.

After the Story

Discussion

1. What was Maria’s problem in Too Many Tamales?
2. Maria tried to solve her problem in different ways. What were some of her solutions to her problem? Which one worked the best? Do you think Maria’s cousins made it easier for Maria to tell the truth to her mom?
3. We use the word honesty when we talk of truth. Honesty is very important in our relationships with family, friends, and the
community. Give examples of how different characters in the story demonstrated honesty.

4. Being honest or dishonest doesn’t always involve talking. It can involve actions. What was the one dishonest action that Maria demonstrated in this story?

5. Discuss with students how people we love can help us be honest because they are honest themselves. However, sometimes some people can help us lie because they are liars themselves.

**Activity**

In this activity, students will be separated into groups labeled class, family, community, church, friends, and school. On a white sheet of paper, each group will write what lies they think are easy to tell in these settings; for example, in the family setting it might be easy to lie about whether or not we brush our teeth. Discuss with the class how these easy lies are called white lies. Inform students that many people believe that white lies are okay to tell.

**Wrap-up**

Ask students to write in their journals whether or not they feel white lies are okay to tell. Have students write about how a white lie might hurt different people.

**Vocabulary**

Tamales, masa, husks

**Home Extension**

Have students complete home extension 8-A ditto with their families. In this task, families and students will write a story about a character who tells a white lie and the effects of this lie on other characters as well as the main character.
Dear Parents,

Today your child heard a story about a girl who was faced with the choice of being honest with her mom or being dishonest. Discuss with your child the story. Ask your child why telling the truth was hard for Maria and discuss what lie Maria could have told her mom regarding the ring. Then, do the activity below as a family.

Instructions

In this task, you and your child will write a story about a character that faced with a similar situation as Maria decides that a white lie would not be a bad choice to make. In your story, describe how this white lie becomes bigger and bigger and how it affects the characters in the story. Make sure to write a conclusion to the problem and give details about how the conclusion was decided upon.
REFERENCES


