PRIMED for Character Education

Marvin W. Berkowitz, Ph.D.
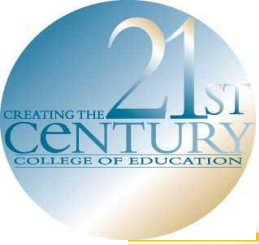S. N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education
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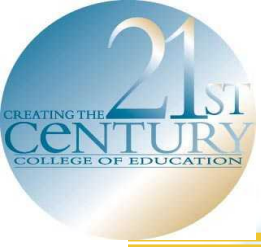Webpage: www.characterandcitizenship.org
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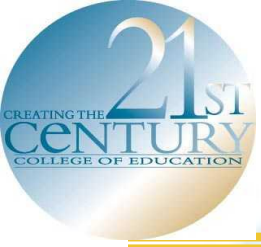CENTER FOR
CHARACTER &
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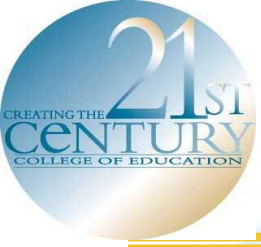
What is character?

Head **H**eart & **H**ands

"Good character consists of understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values"

Character Education Partnership (www.character.org)

What is character education?
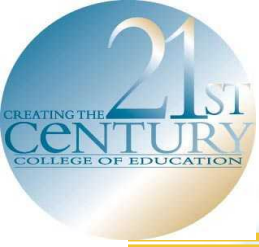
The Zen of Character Ed...

It is a **way of being**, and most notably a way of being with others.
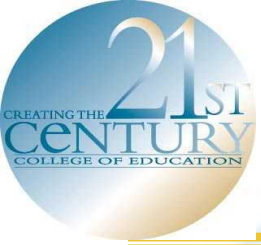
For most educators...

It is a **NEW** way of being.
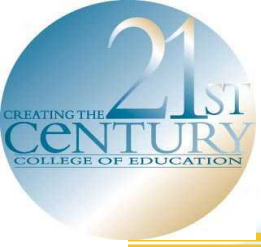
"Schools are perfectly designed for the results we are getting. If we don't like the results, we need to redesign schools."

Paul Houston

Former Executive Director,

American Association of School Administrators

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"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

Haim Ginott
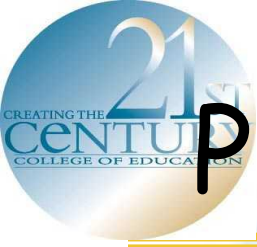
PRIMED Character Education

- **P**rioritizing character education

- **R**elationships

- **I**ntrinsic motivation

- **M**odeling

- **E**mpowerment

- **D**evelopmental Perspective

Prioritizing Character Education

- There are **two primary purposes** of education: **academic** and **character**

- Character development must be an **authentic priority**

- Character has to be an **explicit centerpoint of the school's mission** and of the school leader's philosophy
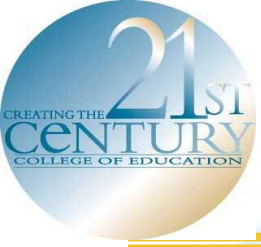
"To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society"
President Theodore Roosevelt

Prioritization Strategies

- **Rhetorical emphasis**
  - E.g., Shared goals and values
- **Allocation of resources**
  - E.g., Investment in professional development
- **School and classroom climate**
  - E.g., Trust in teachers
- **School-wide structures**
  - E.g., Comprehensive approach to c.e.
- **Leadership**
  - E.g., Principal competently leads the initiative
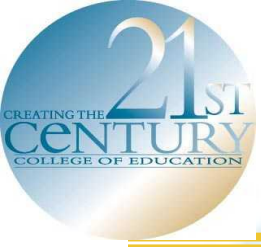
Relationships

- The 3 R's of character education are Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

- Need to consider ways to doing the same work that also build positive relationships

- Relationships should be targeted within and between all stakeholder groups

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A Source of Moral Character

UNRELATED SIGNIFICANT ADULTS

"Invulnerable children" invariably have an adult outside the family who takes an enduring benevolent interest in the child
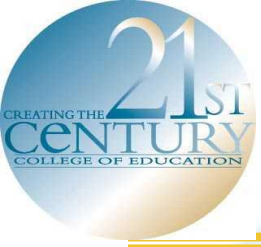
"Golden Child" and "Tarnished Child"

School Climate
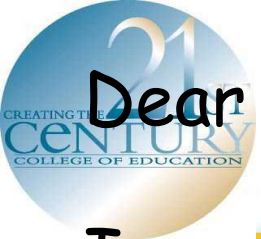
Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness: Gas chambers built by <u>learned</u> engineers. Children poisoned by <u>educated</u> physicians. Infants killed by <u>trained</u> nurses. Women and babies shot and burned by <u>high school and college</u> graduates. So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmans. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.

Sadker & Sadker, 1977
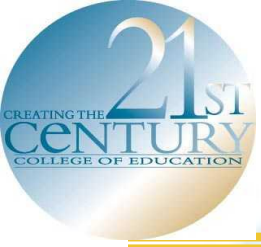
Adult culture of the school

- Adults in the school must function as a caring professional learning community
- They must "walk the talk" and "talk the walk"
- The must treat each other as they want students to behave...with character!

Relationship Strategies

- **Relationships within the school**
  - E.g., Peer interactive pedagogy (such as cooperative learning)
  - E.g., Teaching interpersonal skills (SEL)
- **Relationships beyond the school**
  - E.g., Relationships with family/parents
  - E.g., Relationships with community members

Intrinsic Motivation

- Educators often rush to using extrinsic motivation to promote character

- The true goal of character education is for students to internalize moral values

- Different pedagogical strategies are needed to foster intrinsic motivation

Basic Needs of Students

- Deci and Ryan (*Self-Determination Theory*)
  - Autonomy (sense of empowerment)
  - Belonging (social connectedness)
  - Competence (ability to achieve/succeed)
- Eccles
  - Mattering (make a meaningful difference)
  - Responsibility (contributing group member)
  - Engagement (challenge and enjoyment)
  - Identity (knowing one's place in a social context)
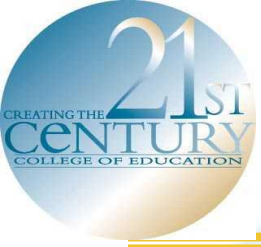
Intrinsic Motivation Strategies

- **Character approach to behavior management**
  - E.g., Developmental Discipline
  - E.g., Induction/Empathy
- **Focus on self-growth**
  - E.g., Opportunities for revising one's work/efforts
  - Goal setting (training and opportunities)
- **Service**
  - E.g., Opportunities for moral action
  - E.g., Community service and/or service learning

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Modeling

- Cannot demand from students what you will not do yourself
- Lickona: The single most powerful tool you have for influencing a child's character is your character
- Students learn more from what you do than from what you say
- Ghandi: "You must be the change you want to see in the world."

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Modeling Strategies

- E.g., Role modeling and/or mentoring
- E.g., Studying exemplars

Empowerment

- Character develops in part through as sense of one's autonomy
- Character education should focus on the empowerment of all stakeholders: teachers, administrators, support staff, students, parents, community members, etc.
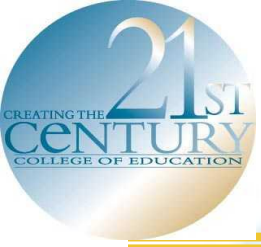- A philosophy of empowerment should be at the heart of the school

"The first service that one owes to others in community consists in listening to them. "
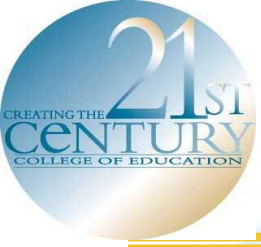
Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life Together*

Empowerment Strategies

- E.g., Shared leadership
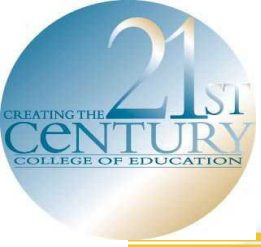- E.g., Democratic classrooms

Developmental Pedagogy

Schools Intentionally Foster the Development of Student Character and Social-Emotional Competence and Utilize Methods that are Developmental in Purpose

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Developmental Pedagogy Strategies

- **Teaching Character**
  - E.g., Teaching SEL competencies
  - E.g., Integrating character concepts in the curriculum
- **Expectations for Growth**
  - E.g., High expectations/Pedagogy of Excellence
- **Opportunities for Practice**
  - E.g., Role-playing

When in doubt…

- Go back to your base:
  - **P**rioritize character education
  - **R**elationships are the building blocks
  - **I**ntrinsic motivation must be nurtured
  - **M**odel good character
  - **E**mpower all stakeholders
  - **D**evelopmental pedagogy