

**COUNCIL ON ETHICS IN ECONOMICS
OHIO PARTNERSHIP IN CHARACTER EDUCATION
ADVISORY GROUP: HEALTH AND RESIDENTIAL CARE
September, 1999
REPORT OF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

PROJECT BACKGROUND

There is growing consensus that schools, public and private, must recapture a purpose of educating for character, as well as for technical and communication skills. Employers, especially those that recruit recent high school graduates such as residential and health care facilities, have a huge stake in the education of character qualities.

The Council on Ethics in Economics initiated this project to identify those core values that businesses of today and tomorrow seek in employees so our schools can better work toward educating students in these values. To gather this information from employers, many different business arenas were questioned in small, working advisory groups. The Health and Residential Care Advisory Group is but one of those providing input and recommendations confirming the importance of character education in our schools.

Character Education Defined

Character education involves specific, targeted efforts to communicate and integrate among youth widely shared, core character elements (e.g. sharing, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness). The school and the larger community, committed to character education, explicitly name and publicly stand for specific core character elements; share the elements among members of the school and community, and define them in terms of behaviors that can be observed. Together they practice them, study and discuss them, and honor them by holding all representatives of school and community accountable to standards of conduct consistent with these elements.

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Advisory Group Membership

The Health and Residential Care Advisory Group is comprised of management staff in the health care and long-term care services industries. Dr. Bunge or Dr. Smith from the Council also attended our group meetings. Members of the Advisory Group are:

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| ◆ Brad Reynolds VP-Human Resources | Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services (facilitator) |
| ◆ Robert L. Rouse, Jr. CEO | Methodist ElderCare Services |

- ◆ David Kayuha
VP-Human Resources
National Church Residences
- ◆ Rev. Kathy Westmoreland, D.Min.
Chaplain
Llanfair Retirement Community
- ◆ Michael Distelhorst
Corporate Counsel
Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services
- ◆ Christa King
Administrator
Westminster Thurber Community
- ◆ Walter Bunge, Ph.D.
Senior Counselor
Council on Ethics in Economics
- ◆ David Smith, PhD.
President
Council on Ethics in Economics
- ◆ Patty Grierson
Administrative Asst.
Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services

Advisory Group Goal

Using recommendations and suggestions from business professionals and experienced managers of people, confirm the need for character education in our schools and identify the specific employee-related character traits preferred and required in their respective sectors of work.

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Advisory Group Purpose

The purpose of the group is to improve character education by articulating insights of experienced professionals about the specific needs for, and demands upon, personal character in the workplace of today. The group's concerns will be conveyed to a statewide network of schools and educators for translation into teaching and counseling strategies.

Advisory Group Project Process

The Advisory Group met several times to initially understand the charge to the group from the Council and then to respond, through roundtable discussions, to questions and issues surrounding the “character” topic. Minutes were kept of each meeting’s proceedings and used in preparing our final report.

ADVISORY GROUP DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. What are those character traits and behaviors valued in residential facilities today?

| | | |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Commitment | Honesty | Caring |
| Teamwork | Dedication | Integrity |
| Punctuality | Self-Confidence | Compassion |
| Respect | Appreciation of Diversity | Discipline |
| Alertness | Cooperation | Ambition |
| Loyalty | Trustworthiness | Ethical |

These employee traits are mandatory for any company that depends on the direct, hands-on delivery of care to others by either an individual or in a team-based setting. For employees to be consistently at work on time and when scheduled, to appreciate and respect those you work with and those you serve, to show compassion and caring in all situations and, most of all, to maintain a high level of integrity and ethical behavior at all times is the cornerstone of individual and organizational success in a residential

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facility. Consequently, the need for these traits to be present in the employee's personal and professional make-up is essential.

On a related point, when employers review the main reasons why employees are involuntarily terminated or disciplined, in almost all cases, the reasons can be directly linked to a lack of certain of those character values and traits listed above.

At the other end of the spectrum, when employees are recognized for exemplary performance - service above and beyond expectations - more often than not, these traits are present in the behavior and actions of these employees.

Again, the need for such education is reinforced.

II. How do employers know that these character traits and behaviors may be needed in the workplace?

- ◆ Increasing turnover due to involuntary terminations (employee induced terminations).
- ◆ Increasing numbers of employees failing to arrive at work when scheduled.
- ◆ Increasing numbers of employee/labor relations issues based on inappropriate employee behavior towards customers.
- ◆ Employees changing jobs more frequently than ever before without notice.
- ◆ Increasing frequency of incidents based on lack of respect for customer and/or supervision by staff.
- ◆ Concerns with quality and quantity of work by staff.
- ◆ Increased need for supervisions due to lack of initiative and quality in employee performance.
- ◆ Employees more concerned with what they are to receive than what they have to offer an employer.
- ◆ Increased concerns with on-the-job theft of time and materials.

III. What are some of the problems facing schools in teaching character?

- ◆ Primary Concern - lack of support and complimenting behavior in the student's home.
- ◆ Poor history of similar teaching in the past.
- ◆ Failure of teachers and administrators to model behavior.
- ◆ Failure of parents/guardians to model behavior.
- ◆ Lack of role models in greater society.
- ◆ Hesitation of schools to teach those things historically the family's responsibility.
- ◆ Lack of applicable curriculum.
- ◆ Educators unable to tie teaching of character and values to existing curriculum and methodology.
- ◆ Lack of time in daily schedule.
- ◆ Inability of schools to discipline appropriately due to government, courts, families, etc.
- ◆ Overall acceptable standards of conduct and performance within school systems too low.
- ◆ Apathetic attitudes of students and staff.
- ◆ Fear of violence and retribution among students and staff.

IV. How can businesses assist schools in educating students in acceptable character traits and behaviors and promoting their practice?

- ◆ Increased internships and shadow programs, starting in earlier grades (late elementary, middle school).
- ◆ More business-school partnerships, especially in high school.
- ◆ "Job Sharing"...inviting teachers into the workplace for shadowing, goal setting/sharing, attending company training sessions, to review former students' performance, etc.
- ◆ Including more employers in the classroom through guest lectures, student hands-on participation on company projects, behavior modeling.
- ◆ Offer more direct employer mentoring of upper grade students.

- ◆ Include business leaders/managers, etc. on school district committees and task forces, including strategic and long-range planning committees, plus actual membership on school boards and oversight groups.

- ◆ Include preferred/required behaviors and character traits in all personnel communications...position descriptions, handbooks, and policies.
- ◆ Encourage formal "Adopt a School" programs by businesses, especially in financially stressed districts.
- ◆ Make available to teaching staffs, training materials that can assist in the educating of teaming, diversity appreciation, deadline/time management, etc. Employers should offer to be on the teaching team.
- ◆ Invite families into the workplace on a regular basis so students can (hopefully) see appropriate and expected behavior and character traits modeled.

SUMMARY

The need to teach character within our public and private education systems, beginning at the elementary level, is greater now than ever before. For many employers, the fear that their workplace, as well as society in general, is being slowly dismantled in front of their very eyes by disrespectful, uncaring, unmotivated, self-centered employees is frighteningly real.

For those employers who are of the size, physically and financially, to provide their employees education in life skills and acceptable character and behavior traits, some hope exists for the future of their workforce and the quality of their product. For the small employer, the ability to "hire in" individuals who exhibit and incorporate positive character values in their performance from day one is critical since their chances of changing employee behavior at a later date are slim. As qualified applicant pools continue to dry up for many employers, the need to have candidates who come to the job with good character and values is key to future success.

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What does all this doom and gloom mean? It means that our education system must step up to the plate and ensure that students receive a healthy dose of character education before they leave the security of high school. It means that employers are in short supply of job candidates who exhibit those behaviors and job traits conducive to future quality performance and long term success. It means that educators and employers need to work hand in hand to provide opportunities for students to learn how to be successful *while still in school* and then carry that knowledge into the workplace after school. It means that we cannot rely on the family unit to teach values and character...it is now the responsibility of both the school and the employer to fill in this critical piece of life training.

(A special note to schools and employers: Consider partnering with organizations such as the Ohio School Boards Association and the National School Boards Association. This will provide insight into the workings of boards of education for this is where much of the needed reform must first take place before the schools actually take seriously the teaching of character and values to today's students.)

What all this truly means is that schools and business both know that their individual fortunes depend on the success of each other...neither will flourish alone. Finally, it says that our schools need to begin the process of character building, with the help of business, and it's the responsibility of employers to finish this important building process.

Character education needs to be taught in the schools, beginning in the elementary grades and continuing through high school (and college) and it needs to begin now.

Submitted by:

The Health and Residential Care Advisory Group
September, 1999