

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKFORCE SUCCESS

Character Traits Make the Difference

Ohio Partnership In Character Education

Final Report

submitted by

The Public Sector Management Advisory Group

August 1999

REFLECTIONS ON GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

“Government is a trust, and the officers are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.”

HENRY CLAY, 1829

“The most crying need in the humbler ranks of life is that they should be allowed some part in the direction of public affairs. That is what will develop their faculties and intelligence and self respect.”

HENRIK IBSEN

An Enemy of the People

Act III

“Good laws lead to the making of better ones; bad ones bring about worse. As soon as any man says of the affairs of the state ‘What does it matter to me?’ the State may be given up for lost.”

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

The Social Contract

Book 1, Chapter 1

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP**

Doug Trail, Chairman
Ohio Building Authority

David Berger, Mayor
City of Lima

Karen Cook
Manager, Hillsboro Office
Ohio Bureau of Employment Services

Tim Kachmarik
Special Investigations Supervisor
Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation

Richard King, City Manager
Upper Arlington

Larry L. Long, Executive Director
County Commissioners' Association of Ohio

Penny Purviance
Human Resources Administrator
Ohio Department of Administrative Services

Stephen W. Stover
Administrative Director
The Supreme Court of Ohio

THE PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT ARENA

Employment in the governmental or public sector is rapidly changing as it is in all employment arenas. During past generations individuals held jobs for extended periods of time, while today it has been reported that a majority of the workforce in the next century will change jobs on the average of every five to six years. Government, like all other sectors of the job market is experiencing the impact of the revolution of technological innovation, and this means that many governments are “reinventing” the way governmental business is conducted.

Yet, public sector employment is necessarily different from that in the private sector. The nature of public sector employment is different primarily because governmental programs are service oriented and in most cases there is no bottom line from a profit and loss standpoint. It is much more difficult to measure productivity, output and success in such public sector functions as public education, alcohol and drug addiction programs, and administration of the state and local tax system than it is for private sector businesses. Another difference is that most governmental services are the ultimate responsibility of elected officials who often have goals different from private sector managers.

In addition, certain public sector laws such as outdated civil service laws and cumbersome administrative procedures tend to make it harder to discipline employees in an effort to improve performance. On the other hand, the opportunities for advancement and monetary reward in the public sector is often more limited than in the private sector because incentives that excite and inspire individuals are more limited. Given this framework, public sector managers are challenged even further to deliver quality services to the public.

Even with these constraints, most public sector employees perform admirably and provide valuable service to their fellow citizens. Many public sector employees are driven by the feeling that they are contributing in a meaningful way to the improvement of the daily lives of people in their communities. There are also a variety of other reasons to choose public sector employment including job security, attractive benefits, and interesting and challenging jobs.

The innovations that are taking place in the public sector work environment, however, are such that governments are becoming more business-like in their approaches and are being challenged to show more concrete results with available revenues. This trend will, no doubt, continue as citizens become more concerned about the level of spending and as taxpayers become increasingly reluctant to pass increased tax levy requests to fund basic services.

Governments can only improve and become more efficient if their employees are well educated and trained and have the character traits that are vital for success in the public as well as the private sector. Members of the Public Sector Management Advisory Group observed that when public sector employees face dismissal from their jobs, it is usually a result of the absence of fundamental character traits, not because of a lack of job skills and technical competency. The

challenge for the public schools then is to increase focus on basic character development as they continue to work on the many challenges to improve basic education and job readiness.

ROLE OF FAMILIES IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The Public Sector Management Advisory Group initially debated the role of families and parents in relationship to the responsibility of the public school system in the development of character. As a result of these extensive discussions it is the strong belief of the Advisory Group that the primary responsibility for the development of values and core character traits rests with parents through the family structure.

The values and the core character traits that have been identified by the Advisory Group should be a primary focus of general parenting responsibilities. A father and mother and the extended family needs to take the time and effort to teach these values and core character traits by example.

Yet, given the changes in traditional family life that have occurred in the last fifty years, the Advisory Group recognizes that the public school system has an ever increasing responsibility to fill the voids in character development not being met by the institution of the family and that are becoming more apparent.

CORE CHARACTER TRAITS

Members of the Public Sector Management Advisory group held four meetings to develop this final report to the Ohio Partnership on Character Education. The Advisory Group spent most of its time discussing and identifying what they consider to be core character traits that are central and essential to the improvement of character education.

The Public Sector Management Advisory Group concluded that the following core character traits are the most important traits that should be emphasized by The Partnership as it proceeds to make recommendations and proceeds to improve character education in the public school system:

1. **HONESTY**
2. **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**
3. **CIVILITY\TOLERANCE**
4. **RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY AND OTHERS**
5. **LOYALTY**
6. **VALUES\JUDGMENT**

Attached as Table 1 to this report is a summary of the extensive deliberations of the Advisory Group. Table 1 includes both good and bad examples of how the members have experienced each of the core traits in the public sector workplace and in other similar environments.

The Public Sector Management Advisory Group then proceeded to develop a series of ideas and recommendations on how governmental and public sector employers could help families and schools to more effectively enhance the development of values and core character traits that are essential for the success of students as they enter the public sector workplace. These ideas and recommendations are included as Table 2 of this report.

TABLE 1

GOOD AND BAD EXAMPLES OF CORE CHARACTER TRAITS

CORE CHARACTER TRAIT	TRAIT PRESENT WHEN AN EMPLOYEE	TRAIT ABSENT WHEN AN EMPLOYEE
HONESTY	<p>Tells the whole truth to a reporter when it is a detriment.</p> <p>Shares a good idea.</p> <p>Refuses to accept a gift of any type.</p> <p>Admits a mistake.</p> <p>Corrects a problem.</p>	<p>Overstates educational experience or inflates present salary on resume.</p> <p>Manipulates leave by forging medical document.</p> <p>Makes copies for personal use (theft).</p> <p>Takes office supplies home.</p> <p>Puts personal mail through meter.</p> <p>Misuses e-mail for personal communication.</p>
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY	<p>Accepts responsibility for making a mistake.</p> <p>Becomes involved in preventing theft or wrongdoing.</p> <p>Volunteers to help with an essential task.</p>	<p>Blames someone or something else for a problem (“The computer would not work,” “It just happened.”)</p> <p>Adopts the mentality of “government owes me a living”</p> <p>Engages in illegal behavior.</p>
RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY & OTHERS	<p>Observes the Golden Rule: treat others as you would like to be treated.</p> <p>Supports diversity programs that foster understanding and respect for others.</p> <p>Builds understanding and respect for others into his or her work team and leadership style.</p> <p>Applies workplace rules consistently.</p>	<p>Challenges the legitimate authority of supervisors.</p> <p>Cannot get along with elected officials.</p> <p>Discriminates against others.</p> <p>Harasses others.</p> <p>Speaks disrespectfully about governmental institutions.</p> <p>Steals.</p>
CIVILITY/TOLERANCE	<p>Honors the court creed of professionalism.</p> <p>Promotes training in civility/tolerance.</p> <p>Goes beyond the call of duty to help someone in distress.</p> <p>Strives to reduce tensions in community disputes, appeals to the common good.</p>	<p>Relies on adversarial techniques.</p> <p>Appeals to emotions rather than focusing on substance of an issue.</p>

LOYALTY	<p>Supports a supervisor, co-worker, or subordinate who has a legitimate complaint.</p> <p>Speaks in defense of one's office or agency.</p> <p>Lives up to commitments made about not seeking a new position for an agreed-on period.</p>	<p>Ridicules government employees or politicians.</p> <p>Fails to respond to calls just before closing time.</p> <p>Takes proprietary information to a new job.</p> <p>Gossips about people and the organization.</p>
VALUES/JUDGEMENT	<p>Engages in experiences of diversity; learns to share with others.</p> <p>Develops ethical reasoning skills about what's right and wrong.</p>	<p>Loses good judgement under stress (e.g. the N.Y. police officers who shot a person 41 times).</p> <p>Submits to peer pressure; places the desire to be accepted above ethical values.</p> <p>Abuses expense account by claiming expenses only marginally related to primary public business.</p>

TABLE 2
IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP
OHIO PARTNERSHIP IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

ISSUE	IDEAS/RECOMMENDATIONS
	<p>Since the Advisory Group feels that the primary responsibility rests with the family, tools must be provided to parents to make them more effective and understanding. Some ideas in this regard include:</p> <p>(1) PARENTING CLASSES - a variety of public and non-profit organizations offer parenting classes. We wonder how many of these courses emphasize the issues related to the core character traits. A specific module in these issues should be included as a central responsibility of parenting.</p> <p>(2) PTO MEETINGS - PTO meeting agendas should include more issues of substance as it relates to these traits. Principals and guidance counselors should discuss some of the specific problems that they are experiencing that parents often do not see. This should result in discussion among parents and school administrators.</p>
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	<p>It is felt that ethics training and awareness should be included with school curriculum. There were three ideas of elements of the curriculum:</p> <p>(1) BASIC ETHICS TRAINING - one approach is to include a program of basic ethics in the schools as a stand-alone course. Perhaps this could be part of a health or family living course.</p> <p>(2) INTEGRATION WITHIN STANDARD COURSES - under this approach, teachers would include examples of ethical dilemmas with regular courses such as history, biology, math, etc. The goal is to deal with these issues as it relates to each specific discipline.</p> <p>(3) STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE - One of the core character traits identified by the Advisory Group was Respect For Authority. The Advisory Group felt that there was an increasing tendency not to respect state and local government.</p>

<p>CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT (Continued)</p>	<p>To address this problem, it was recommended that schools with government courses have more information about state and local government. It was felt that standard text books did not include adequate detailed information on Ohio state and local government including its structure, organization, functions, and finance. It was suggested that the Ohio Department of Education take the lead in preparing new materials that can supplement standard text books for use in the class room.</p> <p>It is hoped that with greater knowledge and specific relevance to the daily lives of students that knowledge and respect for state and local government will increase.</p>
<p>TEACHER IN SERVICE TRAINING</p>	<p>It was suggested that local elected officials should take the lead in providing learning opportunities for teachers of government. An annual Teachers In Service Government Day could be organized by County Educational Service Centers (ESC's) that would allow teachers to become better informed of the issues confronting county, township, and municipal governments and school districts in the county. The goal is to assist teachers in developing real life activities that will make the teaching of government more rewarding and meaningful to students.</p>
<p>ADOPT A SCHOOL</p>	<p>It was suggested that state and local government agencies could "adopt a school". Such community outreach efforts by governmental agencies should increase respect for authority.</p> <p>This may be an opportune time to increase such efforts as a result of Governor Taft's new reading initiative.</p>
<p>PROJECT CITIZENSHIP</p>	<p>A program entitled "Project Citizenship" that is used in Lima may serve as a model for other cities. In Lima, panels of city officials visit schools to discuss local government powers and authority in "real life" terms. This opens dialogue among law enforcement, local government executives, and others on what to students are "real life" issues such as noise from car radios & boom boxes, traffic violations, etc.</p>
<p>CAREER DAYS</p>	<p>Schools now often have career days for students. An element of these programs should address the core character traits identified by the Advisory Group. The purpose of including such an element into a Career Day program is to show that most people who do not hold a job are terminated on the basis of a deficiency in one of the character traits, not because of a lack of job related skills, knowledge, and abilities.</p>
<p>MOCK TRIALS</p>	<p>It was suggested that the judicial branch of local government should work with the schools to offer "Mock Trials" as a compliment to government classes. Lack of respect for the court system is an integral part of the problem of lack of respect for authority.</p>
<p>WORD OF THE WEEK</p>	<p>Schools should consider using the "Word of the Week" to focus and encourage discussions around character traits. "Word of the Week" for ideas like honesty, self reliance, punctuality, courage, self control, and courtesty could be excellent discussion topics during home-room periods and could be incorporated into regular course work.</p>
<p>CITIZEN OF THE MONTH</p>	<p>Schools should consider instituting a "Citizen of the Month" program to recognize and reward a student for ethical behavior and service to the community.</p>