

Ohio Partners in Character Education

Creating Smart & Good Schools



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

“To unlock the power of character is to include the quest for excellence as well as the quest for ethics”

*Thomas Lickona &
Matt Davidson,
Center for the 4th & 5th Rs*



School Teams Meet to Share Plans

On June 11, 2007 schools teams from each of the 5 project schools met in Columbus to present their preliminary plans for implementing character education in the 2007-08 school year. After the “Smart & Good” training in February, each group worked to establish their “ELC’s”

(Ethical Learning Communities) which are staff, administrators, students, parents, and community members working to align school practices toward ethics and excellence; and “PELC’s” (Professional Ethical Learning Communities) which are staff working on best practices for ethics and excellence. These groups will guide the planning and implementation at each site.

Teams started by collecting and analyzing data on school issues and have spent time prioritizing concerns and brainstorming ways to address them. Each site has identified specific focus areas for the coming year such as discipline, leadership, freshman transition, bullying, cheating, in-school suspension, parent involvement, and respect. Each team is also working on creating their school touchstones; the Gahanna touchstone is included on page 2 of this newsletter.



Good to Great — How the Hedgehog Concept applies to schools

Most everyone has heard of the book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins in which he talks about what makes companies great. The opening sentence of the book states “Good is the enemy of Great.” Collins asserts, being good is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. “We don’t have great schools because we have good schools.” What Collins calls the “curse of competence” keeps us complacent with being good.

Collins says great organizations employ a “hedgehog” idea—that is, they simplify their complex world with a single organizing idea that unifies and guides everything, as opposed to foxes who pursue many goals at the same time, but lack focus to do any of them well. Hedgehog organizations understand what they could do best, and align everything to that end.

Tom Lickona and Matt Davidson apply the same concept to schools. They assert, “Under the ever-changing pressures from many sources— federal testing mandates, state standards, dwindling fiscal resources, increasingly



diverse student populations, dissatisfied parents – schools don’t feel they have the luxury to be hedgehogs. But if we aren’t hedgehogs, we lose focus. We end up with a lot of practices that may not help us achieve the central goals of our mission. We may in fact need many practices, but in a hedgehog school – every practice is aligned with its mission.”

The “Hedgehog Concept” for Smart & God Schools is excellence and ethics. Everything in the life of the schools should be designed to promote excellence and ethics so students can achieve their personal best—to be the best person, citizen, worker, and family member they can be.

Meet the Steering Committee: Cliff Biggers

School teams also heard a presentation from Cliff Biggers, a member of the project Steering Committee. Cliff is a full-time Newark City police officer, and a church pastor in Coshocton. His motto, he says with a grin, is “see me now or see me later.”

Cliff is also the creator of a game called the Table of Humanity, a tool used by groups to take the difficulty out of discussing race relations. The game is not designed to change minds, but is meant to provide a “non-threatening arena for discussions about race.” The topics, rules and procedures of the game help groups talk about the “elephants in the living room,” and the role they play in our lives and on the job or at school.

Officer Biggers has used the Table of Humanity successfully with high school groups, helping them to form Diversity Councils where problems associated with racial tension are discussed. They have found that



participating in these groups helps empower students to solve problems.

Project Evaluator presents research on Teacher Efficacy



Dr. Doug Grove from Vanguard University, one of the project’s evaluation team members, presented his work on teacher efficacy with team members at the June meeting. “Teacher efficacy is a teacher’s confidence in their ability to promote student learning,” explained Dr. Grove.

students. They also have positive expectations for their students and expect them to learn and obey classroom rules. They set personal and student learning goals, and they believe they can influence student learning and behavior. They develop partnerships with students to help them reach their goals and help them develop strategies for learning. Finally, efficacious teachers model a positive sense of control, positive behavior and positive expectations of success.

“Students of efficacious teachers generally have outperformed students in other classes”

Efficacious teachers share important characteristics. First, they have a positive attitude toward themselves, their students and their profession. They believe that their work is making a difference in the lives of their

Meet the Coaches: Sherry Owens, Gahanna-Jefferson

Before becoming the Character Coach, Sherry Owens taught in the English Department at Gahanna Lincoln High School for 11 years. A graduate of Ohio Dominican, Sherry received a Master’s Degree from Ashland University. “Incorporating discussions about character in my literature classes was a daily occurrence,” Sherry explained, and one of the things that drew her to apply for the character coach position.

Another draw is Sherry’s experience as a softball coach. Passionate about softball since high school, Sherry has coached softball in Gahanna for 4 years. Sherry also



Gahanna Touchstone

The different colored squares are symbolic of the different cultures represented in Gahanna, and the individual squares symbolize the individuals who come together to create one way, one lion.

advises the “Link Crew”, a group of upperclass students who help middle schoolers adjust to high school, another key goal of the current project.

Sherry has been married to her husband Shane for 5 years, and they have 2 bulldogs Woody and Scarlet, which is a clue to another of her passions, OSU athletics!

