



# PRIMED for Character Education

**Marvin W. Berkowitz, Ph.D.**

S. N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education  
University of Missouri-St. Louis



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# Contact Information

Address: Marillac Hall 402  
College of Education  
University of Missouri-St. Louis  
One University Blvd.  
St. Louis MO 63121-4499

Phone: 314-516-7521

FAX: 314-516-7356

Webpage: [www.characterandcitizenship.org](http://www.characterandcitizenship.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/UMSLCCC](http://www.facebook.com/UMSLCCC)

Twitter: CCC\_UMSL

Email: [berkowitz@umsl.edu](mailto:berkowitz@umsl.edu)



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# What is character?



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# Head Heart & Hands

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

Character Education Partnership  
([www.character.org](http://www.character.org))



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# What is character education?



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# The Zen of Character Ed...

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



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For most educators...

It is a **NEW** way of being.



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"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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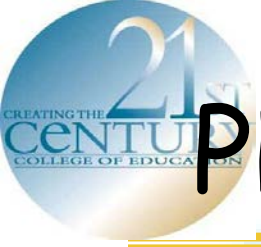


"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. 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



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# PRIMED Character Education

- **P**rioritizing character education
- **R**elationships
- **I**ntrinsic motivation
- **M**odeling
- **E**mpowerment
- **D**evelopmental Perspective



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# 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**



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"To educate a  
person in mind and  
not in morals is to  
educate a menace  
to society"  
*President Theodore  
Roosevelt*



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# 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



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# R

# 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





# 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



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# "Golden Child" and "Tarnished Child"



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# School Climate



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Dear Teacher:

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



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# Adult culture of the school

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- Adults in the school must function as a caring professional learning community
- They must “walk the talk” and “talk the walk”
- They 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



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# 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



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# 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)



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# 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



# 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."







# Modeling Strategies

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



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# 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*



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# Empowerment Strategies

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



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# 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

