Always Do What is Right: National Implications for Good Character Counts in Schools

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ABSTRACT

Good character can sometimes be hard to find, but there must be high expectations for educators to make good decisions, model excellent behavior and to do what is right. In order to accomplish this goal and to create a nurturing learning environment, educators must be held to the highest ethical standards. Based on the William Allan Kritsonis Balanced Teeter-Totter Model, an ethical balancing tool is established to include a framework for developing good character in educators.

Introduction

Character development is not isolated to students in a school, but rather entails the development of good character in the entire school community. Students will do what they see being modeled; therefore it is imperative that schools hire educators with the superior communication skills and mental stableness to exhibit good character. Communication is important because students need to be taught how to get along with others without battling over trivial topics. Mental stableness of educators is the minimum owed to students in order to give them the best role models as possible.
Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article is to identify Character Education balancing methods to secure the Anderson Teeter-Totter model. Honesty, Respect, Responsibility and Integrity are virtues that are necessary for every educator to reach success and self-actualization. Four components will be recommended to prepare schools for this transition. Based on extensive research and experience in character education, these finding are developed.

1. Support and acknowledge those who are upholding the highest levels of honesty, respect, responsibility and integrity.
2. Have the courage to terminate those who are not upholding honesty, respect, responsibility, and integrity (the trouble makers).
3. Provide ongoing professional development to promote the development of good character.
4. Always do what is right, even when it cost money, friendship, or even loyalty. Be prepared to take a loss, no one said having good character was easy.

Good character consists of balancing four important humanistic characteristics: honesty, respect, responsibility and integrity. It is imperative that people in all facets of life focus on these characteristics as they are the basis of our character. Character is not how we describe ourselves, but how others interpret our actions.

Anderson Teeter-Totter Model

Based on the William Allan Kritsonis Balanced Teeter-Totter Model

Showing good character can be challenging, because when you interact with people who do not possess these same characteristics, it creates an imbalance in the model. Just as the William Allan Kritsonis Balanced Teeter-Totter model, when the
model is not functioning productively, it teeter totters, swings back-and-forth causing frustration, insecurities, and multiple dysfunctions resulting in low-level production, and in some cases competency (Kritsonis, 2002). In the work place, this is what can happen when someone with good character is challenged by someone who lacks these characteristics. People may become frustrated when someone they are working with takes a stand on a character issue in the work place and exposes irregularities.

As one climbs the career ladder, they are faced with making ethical decisions on a daily basis, and there becomes a thin line between doing what is ethically right and doing what is best. Educators are obligated to take the high road and do what is right because students are watching what they are doing and often duplicate the actions being modeled by the adults they are around.

Many times, if a person is being honest and confronts a co-worker and informs them of a behavior that is dishonest, manipulative, or down right wrong, the individual will not warmly accept the criticism, but instead, the person may take their dishonest behavior to a new level and start targeting the individual who initially tried to help. Thus, the teeter-totter is imbalanced and the problem escalates. There must be a system in place to protect those who do what is right. At the same time, there must be an accountability component for those who are displaying poor character.

There must be an accountability component mandating all organizations uphold honesty, respect, responsibility and integrity. If a person cannot be terminated for violating any of these virtues, there is no accountability. Too often, the person who does not sacrifice these virtues is misunderstood as not being a team player, instead of being a person who is considered building the integrity of the organization.

Character can no longer be considered an optional entity of an organization, but has to be a priority and be viewed to be as important as profit. In schools, there is sometimes too much emphasis on test scores and not enough focus on how we teach students to treat people. Test scores are important, but an honor roll student who lies, cheats and steals is not successful. Similarly, the star athlete who bullies peers is not successful and should not be allowed to terrorize students Monday through Thursday and be cheered on Friday night at the big game.

In public education, educators have to be held to the highest character education standards. Some teachers lack some of these characteristics and as a result, students pick up poor character habits from their teachers. Some public education teachers feel irreplaceable and are not willing to rejoin the era of true character education. Dr. Martin Luther Kings, Jr. states, “Intelligence is not enough, education plus character, that is the goal of true education.”

An effective character education program must start with the administration, then the teachers, and ultimately impact the students last. We cannot start teaching character education to students without having prepared teachers and administrators. Sometimes groups like unions can provide unrealistic support of employees who have a lack of good character. Educators sometimes feel like they have a larger than life persona when they feel protected by a group that will provide support if they are innocent or guilty.
Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, character needs to be placed back on the priority lists of what employers are looking for in employees. Schools and companies no longer have to feel forced to keep employees who lack good character. After providing sufficient professional development in character education, employers must do what is right and support the employees who have the good character. Coincidently, this means having the courage to terminate those who have been given ample opportunity to succeed and who are actually destroying the climate of the organization. Honesty, respect, responsibility and integrity must be the framework in the development of a great school.

References