

# AN INTRODUCTION TO INTEGRATING CHARACTER EDUCATION AND SERVICE LEARNING

## 3 HOUR IN-SERVICE/ACT 48 COURSE

**Course Goal:** *To give teachers an overview of the interrelationship of service learning and character education and how the two support each other. The course gives teachers a variety of easy to use ideas for making the link between the initiatives.*

**Faculty:** The course is designed to be presented by trained teachers and administrators experienced in service-learning and character education. They may be Pa. Service Learning Alliance Peer Consultants or others as is appropriate.

**Scheduling Options:** The course is approximately 3 hours in length. It can be given in a variety of options depending on the needs of the school and their requirements. It can be in 1 hour segments, or a longer morning or afternoon session.

**Prerequisites:** Teachers are expected to have an understanding of Service Learning prior to the course. If they are not familiar with Service Learning they should take the Act 48 - Introduction to Service Learning course (course will be on Web-site, shortly) prior to this course. Teachers do not need to have experience or specific, in depth, knowledge of Character Education before entering the course, as basic concepts and philosophies will be presented.

## **EXPERIENCE #1 – Introductions**

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: Members of the class may not know one another well, if at all, and this experience will give them a brief introduction to each class participant. It is also a way to explore some of Character Education traits and how they exhibit themselves in the classroom.

Procedure:

- Give everyone a large Name Tag.
- Display Slide 2, which shows how they are to fill out their name tag.
- Each of the participants is to make a card with their name and 1 of the Character Traits indicated on the card, that they feel is a trait representative of them as a teacher.
- Each participant is then stand and introduce themselves to the group. They should share a little about themselves; name, where they teach, what grade and then to explain why they chose a specific trait, and how they make the trait come alive in their teaching.
- **Make sure YOU, as an Instructor, introduce yourself. Share why and how you became involved with service-learning and character education.**

**NOTES:**

## Experience #2 – What IS Character Education?

Time: 10 Minutes for discussion, 10 Minutes for Character Education presentation.

Purpose: To define Character Education and to begin thinking about the place of Character Education in our educational institutions.

Procedure:

1. Ask the group members to form groups of 3.
2. Each group is to have a general discussion trying to answer the following questions.
3. Each group should have a person writing down their answers.
4. Ask each group to briefly share what they discussed in their groups about the questions.
5. Instructors should review the information on Character Education that is included here and make sure they are aware

### QUESTIONS

*What is Character Education?*

*What does it mean to “teach” Character Education?*

*What are the possible challenges in teaching Character Education?*

- Let the groups discuss for 10 minutes
- Ask each group to briefly present their answers.
- Try to summarize some of the general, and frequently mentioned answers and concepts.
- Share with the group the definition of Character Education on **Slide 3**
- Summarize the Character Education information listed below. This information is primarily from the Character Education Partnerships (CEP) which is the primary Character Education resource. CEP works closely with the Federal Department of Education Character Education department so the information of CEP is generally used within school districts across the country. Slide 4 has the CEP website to share.
- CEP has evolved 11 Principles of Character Education which are listed on **Slides 4–9**. Go through the elements with the students. If there is time, have students discuss the elements and decide on the ones that they feel are most important to their school.
- Feel free to bring in additional information that is pertinent to your specific school district. If your district uses a definition of Character Education, be sure to include it in your presentation. If there are already Character Education initiatives in progress at your district it would be advantageous for the group to hear about them.
- Review the outcomes of Character Education listed on **Slide 10**. Brainstorm what “other” benefits participants are aware of.

## **Character Education Information (presenter should read over for general knowledge)**

The basic premises of character education, as stated in the Character Education partnership's publication *Character Education: Questions and Answers* (1996) are as follows:

1. In a free and democratic society every citizen has personal and civic responsibilities as well as inalienable rights.
2. Only a virtuous people are capable of sustaining a free and democratic form of government.
3. Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed overtime, through a sustained process of teaching, examples, learning, and practice.
4. Developing good character in children is primarily the responsibility of families. It is also the shared responsibility of communities, schools, religious institutions, and youth service groups.
5. Creating civil and caring school communities is indispensable to developing good character in students and to good academic teaching and learning.
6. Effective K-12 character education: (a) helps make schools more civil and caring communities; (b) reduces negative student behavior such as violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, and disrespect for teachers, parents, and peers; (c) improves academic performance; and (d) prepares young people to be responsible citizens and productive members of society.

In the past century, moral or "value" education in schools has twice emerged and then receded: once in the 1920's and 30's in response to pressures arising from industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, and again in the 1970's with the values-clarification work of Sidney Simon and moral decision-making efforts of Lawrence Kohlberg.

Around 1980, new interest in character education developed in response to increasing numbers of alarming statistics concerning the state of America's families, schools, and communities. A key factor in the new character education movement, as it has evolved, is the critical role of communities in supporting schools and teachers in creating productive, civil, caring learning environments.

In 1993, a national Character Education Partnership (CEP) was formed to promote the development of good character and civic virtue in young people. Support for character education among the American people is high. A clear indication of this strong support is the willingness of political leaders to speak out in favor of school based efforts and to provide new sources of funding for character education.

Local character education initiatives are a growing phenomenon. School communities venturing into character education often begin by conveying a representative community group to identify the values the community would like to see promoted in the classroom. Typically, these lists include core values such as the Six Pillars of Character promoted by

the Josephson Institute (respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, and civic virtue and citizenship).

NOTES:

## **Experience #3 – Why link Character Education and Service Learning?**

Time: 25 Minutes

Purpose: To link the concepts of Character Education and Service Learning and show how they support and strengthen each other.

Procedure: Use the following discussion points to present to the group a general framework for the linking of service and character education.

### **Why link service and character education?**

The Institute for Global Ethics conducted a research study of a program that linked service with Character Education. What they found out from a variety of testing measures, was that when properly implemented, an integrated program of Service Learning and Character Education resulted in students who exhibited greater ethical awareness, social responsibility, and capacity to make moral decisions.

### **How are Service Learning and Character Education Alike?**

(Slide 11)

Both are personal and tied to students feelings and perceptions.

Both require a teacher to “facilitate” more than teach. Both are based on discussion, work and consideration of the world outside of the classroom.

Both encourage reflection.

Both care about kids.

Both need more evaluation. Both believe in improving the relationships between students and teachers.

### **How are Service Learning and Character Education Different?**

(Slide #12)

- Service learning is primarily “constructivist” in nature—learners draw meaning directly from their experiences—whereas character education sees much of its value as lying in the clear ethical message a community sends directly to its students.
- Service learning, as a movement, has been organized for many more years than the modern character education movement. Thus, service-learning is somewhat clearer in its philosophy, core objectives and methodology.
- Service-learning places (usually) a greater emphasis on being “student driven”, whereas character educators place greater importance on the teaching youth the values of the community.

## **Integrating Service and Character Education**

In the Ethics and Service Model proposed by the Institute for Global Ethics the cycles of both Character Education and Service Learning are meshed to form a flow of development of a project. Each has its own set of steps, which are the following. (Slide#13 )

### **SERVICE LEARNING**

Explore the community  
Identify community needs  
Brainstorm solutions to problems  
Select a doable issue  
Tie to academic objectives  
Prepare for the experience  
Do it  
Reflect on experiences

### **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

*Apply the lens of ethics.*  
*Define the community's values.*  
*Operationalize those values.*  
*Discuss right-versus-wrong.*  
*Analyze right-versus-right dilemmas.*  
*Practice Ethical Fitness and moral courage.*

Together the steps of the two initiatives can be combined. The Institute for Global Ethics suggests the following plan for integrating service work and character education; (Slide #14)

Lesson 1: Introduction to service-learning.  
Lesson 2: Explore the community.  
Lesson 3: *Apply the lens of ethics.*  
Lesson 4: Identify community needs  
Brainstorm solutions to problems  
Select a doable issue.  
Tie to academic objectives.  
Lesson 5: *Define the community's values.*  
Lesson 6: *Operationalize those values.*  
Lesson 7: Prepare for the experience.  
Do it  
Lesson 8: *Discuss right versus wrong*  
Lesson 9: *Analyze right-versus right dilemmas*  
Lesson 10: *Resolve right versus right dilemmas*  
Lesson 11: *Practice Ethical Fitness and moral courage*  
Lesson 12: Reflect on experiences

Ask the participants to discuss the following questions.

## **QUESTIONS**

***What are the benefits of such a combined service learning and character education program?***

***How do you think the program would actually work with students?***

***Is the extra time to make the links worth it?***

***In what curriculums/courses does this format work the best?***

NOTES:

## Experience # 4- Developing a Code of Ethics

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: To give participants a specific way to start integrating service learning and character education. This exercise can help students and teachers to think about their own code of ethics and what they believe in. Developing and then using a code of ethics is a great way to help students think of what behavior is important to the success of a service learning project and to help everyone to maintain positive behavior.

Procedure:

1. Divide the group into two.
2. Each group is to come up with a list of as many value/ethics words as possible. They should be words that stand for how people should act, feel and believe. (care, love, trust, etc.)
3. After 10 minutes ask each group to say their list of words. You might want to go back and forth between groups allowing them to answer on alternate turns. Put all the words on the board or on newsprint.
4. When a large list is generated ask each group to discuss and then choose the **5** words that they believe are the most crucial, important and universally accepted as representative of the way individuals should act.
5. List on the board the 5 that each group decides upon. There will be a great deal of overlap as individuals tend to pick universal words of

<b>caring</b>	<b>respect</b>	<b>honesty</b>	<b>responsibility</b>	<b>love</b>
---------------	----------------	----------------	-----------------------	-------------

6. From these words, ask the two groups to come up with a “code of ethics” that would be appropriate for the school in which they work. In other words, if there was a sign over the school with a code of ethics on it, what would it say? **Slide 15 and 16**
7. Give each group 5 minutes to come up with a code. You do not have to spend too much time on this, as it is the process, not the finished product, that is important.
8. Explain that developing a “code of ethics” can be an important component of service-learning preparation. It can give students an overall guideline for how they are to behave and why they are participating in service.
9. Explain that having students go through the same process as the teachers did, is very helpful for all students. Ask participants how they would use this process in their own classrooms.

NOTES:

## **Experience # 5 - What does Character “look like”?**

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To give participants the experience of connecting service-learning and character education. Experience will point out that it is sometimes difficult to really define or verbally explain character, but it is usually easier to describe what a person can “do” to show character. This activity also serves to energize the group as it is fun and active. (Use this experience at any time you feel the group is losing interest or energy – great for after lunch!)

Materials: Copies of Experience # 6 – Concrete Character Behaviors

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 participants.
2. Each group is given a character “trait” that was on the list generated previously in Exercise #4.
3. Write out the words on small slips of paper and give to each group.
4. If possible, let the groups work in separate rooms, or in the hall, so that groups cannot hear and see one another while they are preparing.
5. Allow the groups approximately 5 minutes to prepare. Then ask each group to “act out”, like charades, their character trait.
6. Observing groups are to guess what character trait is being acted out.

**NOTES:**

## **Experience # 6 – Concrete Character Behaviors**

Time: 25 Minutes

Purpose: To further operationalize Character Traits from the previous “charades” experience and to develop service opportunities to actually put into practice character traits.

Procedure:

- Divide the class into groups of 3.
- Hand out the Character Education Words to Action handout.
- Give each group 1 character trait word listed in the first column of the handout.
- Ask each group to first “define” the word given to them.(Defining the word will be difficult and groups should struggle with this for about 5 minutes. If they have not arrived at a definition encourage the group to move on to the next step.
- After the definition the group is to think about how to operationalize the word. the Charades exercise has been played previously, the actions portrayed will be a good start. Again, the group should only spend a few minutes on this component.
- Finally, each group is to design a service-learning project that they think would really bring out and support the character trait assigned to them. Be sure to remind them to link the project with academic curriculums.
- Ask each group to share their service project idea with the rest of the class. Class members should take notes on the form so that they can possibly use the ideas when they return to their school.



**Character Education Words to Action – Exercise # 6**

<b>CHARACTER WORD and DEFINITION</b>	<b>WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? OPERATIONALIZE THE WORD</b> (describe what a person looks like, how they act, when they are exemplifying the word)	<b>HOW CAN THE OPERATIONALIZED WORD BE USED IN A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT?</b>	<b>HOW CAN YOU REFLECT ON THE WORD?</b> (will revisit later )
CARING			
HONESTY			
RESPECT			
RESPONSIBLE			
TOLERANT			
LOYAL			
SELF-RELIANT			

## **Experience # 7- Homework**

**Time:** Give this experience as a homework assignment in between sessions, if possible. If the course is being taught all in one day, then this assignment can be given at the end of the course as a suggestion for further exploration.

**Purpose:** To give participants an encouragement to look at their own schools system and determine the types of programming already in existence and to consider whether they should adapt the programs in any way.

### **Procedures**

1. Ask the participants to look at the handout with the list of programs related to Character Education programs.
2. With other members of the class or other teachers outside of class, the participants can explore which of the programs exist in their own school district.
3. With other teachers, discuss and plan how service-learning could be integrated into any of the existing programs to strengthen and expand it.
4. If there are no existing Character Education programs in the district, discuss with fellow teachers what kind of initiatives would meet their school and community needs. (They can use the list from the following exercise if they need ideas of types of character ed programs.)

### **NOTES**

## **Exercise # 8- What is included in Character Education?**

Time: 20 Minutes

Purpose: To give participants a quick overview of the variety of initiatives that can be included under Character Education and to help them discover ways to incorporate service into the program.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into groups of 4.
- 2.** Ask each group to look at 1 or 2 of the initiatives related to Character Education **(Slides 23-26)**
3. Direct each group to consider the initiatives and brainstorm how they can be integrated with service and action.
4. Encourage the groups to consider how the addition of service would increase the impact of the program on the students.
5. Show Slide – Ways to involve students as leaders in Character Education. Ask the group for additional ideas that can help students take a leadership role.

**NOTES:**

**Character Education Initiatives\***  
WHAT IS INCLUDED IN CHARACTER EDUCATION?

The list below is not intended to be exhaustive, but to give a general sense of the types of programs under the general category of Character Education.

       **Moral Reasoning/Cognitive Development**

Discussion of moral dilemmas to facilitate student development of moral reasoning capacities.

       **Social and Emotional Learning**

A process in which students learn to understand their own and others' feelings, resolve problems, and gain key behavioral skills.

       **Moral Education/Virtue**

Academic content (Literature, History) used to teach about moral traditions in order to facilitate moral habits and internal moral qualities (virtues).

       **Life Skills Education**

Practical skills (communication and positive social attitudes (self esteem) stressed.

       **Service Learning**

Students addressing the authentic needs of communities while meeting academic standards and learning objectives.

       **Citizenship Training/Civics Education**

American civic values taught as preparation for future citizenship.

       **Caring Community**

Caring relationships fostered in the classroom/school.

       **Health Education/Drug, Pregnancy and Violence Prevention**

Program oriented approach used to prevent unhealthy/anti-social behaviors.

       **Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation**

Students trained to mediate conflicts as a means of developing constructive conflict resolution skills.

       **Ethics/Moral Philosophy**

Ethics or moral philosophy explicitly taught.

\*Adapted from Partnerships for Character Education Survey

## **Exercise #9 – Reflection AND Character Education**

Time: 15 Minutes (more if there is time at the end of the course)

Purpose: To give participants a basic introduction to how the process of reflection can support character education and service-learning.

Procedure:

1. Review the basic key points about reflection.
2. Show Overhead # 9 - What is reflection
3. Show and discuss Overhead # 10 - Ways to Integrate Service Learning Reflection with Character Education. Ask participants if they have additional suggestions for reflection experiences that also reinforce character traits.

### **What is Reflection?**

There are many different definitions of reflection. Basically, it is the process of thinking back on experiences to learn from them and process them so that we understand them on a very personal and deep level. It is often the way we look at our own beliefs and values. Reflection is one of the most critical components of effective service-learning.

Character is developed through reflection. It is the only way that one has to consider on a personal level how activities and events have affected them. According to Dewey (1916), reflection is an ethical undertaking. Dewey believed that people's reasonable and responsible behavior rests on their ability to reflect on their experiences, to think about them, make sense of them and then act upon their reflections in an ethical manner. Dewey saw reflective thinking as an intentional attempt to discover specific connections between our actions and their consequences. The process of reflection, according to Dewey, is a way to help students gain problem-solving skills and increase their ability to learn from their experiences.

According to the Institute for Global Ethics character education can enhance the service-learning reflection process. They suggest that reflecting on ethical issues in the community can lead to selecting a meaningful service-learning project. Identifying shared community values can form the basis for determining how those values should be applied when service-learning projects are underway. Understanding a process for making good ethical decisions can help students deal with challenges that may arise during their projects.

**NOTES:**

## **Experience #10 - Course Reflection**

Purpose: To give participants the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned throughout the course.

Time: 10 Minutes

Procedure:

1. Divide the group into groups of three.
2. Show Overhead # 11 the "Quotations on Character"
3. Ask participants to discuss in groups of three the quotations on the handout.
4. The following questions can help;
  - a. *What do the quotes say about action, not just talking about character as an abstract idea?*
  - b. *What are the feelings that the quotations bring out in you personally?*
  - c. *What are the feelings, thoughts, in these quotations that we should promote with our students?*
  - d. *Why is there so much information and talk about character, ethics and virtues lately in the press and the political arena?*

**NOTES:**

<b>ACTIVITY/EXERCISE</b>	<b>~ TIME</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Exercise #1 - Introductions	15 Minutes	
Exercise #2 - What is Character Education?	20 Minutes	
Exercise #3 - Developing a Code of Ethics	30 Minutes	
Exercise #4 - What Types of Initiatives are included in Character Education?	20 Minutes	
Exercise #5 – What does Character Education Look Like?	15 Minutes	
Exercise #6 – Concrete Character Behaviors	25 Minutes	
Exercise #7 - Homework	To be done outside of class	
Exercise #8 – What is Included in Character Education?	20 Minutes	
Exercise #9 - Reflection and Character Building Activity	15Minutes	
Exercise #10 - Reflection – Quotes about Character and Service	10 Minutes	
Course Evaluation Form	~10 Minutes	

## **Course Evaluation Form**

Course Name:

Instructor Name:

School:

Date(s) and Time(s) of course:

In order that we may continue to improve these courses and design them to meet your needs, please take a few minutes and fill out the following questions.

1. I took this particular course because

I \_\_\_\_\_

