

FROM THE EDITORS

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This issue of the *Journal of Character Education* was initiated by a Call for Papers soliciting manuscripts that focus on clear ideas for integrating character education, social-emotional learning, and civic education into the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and that are aligned with Every Student Succeeds Act curricula. The editors were seeking conceptual manuscripts and research-based studies describing notable examples of engaging programs. The array of articles published in this issue describes research and other thought-provoking ideas with implications for preschool through high school.

The first manuscript, by Joseph Hoedel and Robert Lee, describes a case study of how a character-based curriculum developed by the Character Development and Leadership Program was implemented in an alternative high school, replacing a more traditional English/language arts curriculum. The new curriculum was fully aligned with CCSS for English/language arts and then evaluated for its effects both on student academic achievement and student prosocial changes in attitude and behavior. The results are promising.

Jacob Francom writes a qualitative study that looked at high school principal leadership qualities necessary to initiate and maintain high functioning character education programs at the secondary level. His research focused on

a select group of high school leaders—principals whose schools previously had been recognized as National Schools of Character by Character.org (previously known as the Character Education Partnership). Six roles, or types of leadership, emerged from this research and are fully described in terms of effective leadership practices.

Melinda Bier and her colleagues at the Center for Character and Leadership at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, contribute an extensive review of the research literature that studied the integration of character strengths (e.g., self-efficacy, perseverance, growth mindset, carefulness, courage, etc.) into CCSS-Mathematics standards in grades K–8. The result is an articulation of the broad dimension of character and a revealing set of best practice ideas for engaging students.

The first set of articles is capped by Character.org's position paper on the CCSS. The statement, written by character education experts Kristin Fink and Karen Geller, describes essential features of the CCSS, as well, suggesting ways to strengthen those standards to include an emphasis on democratic ideals through specific attention to teaching moral and performance character and by emphasizing the socioemotional skills that create a positive school culture and climate resulting in an ethical learning commu-

nity. The statement ends with a very descriptive case study of how one good middle school conceived and implemented such fusion.

The **Voices From the Field** section of this issue describes the work of five elementary and middle schools, all 2016 National Schools of Character honored at the Character.org annual conference in October. Schools from New Jersey, Maryland, North Carolina, and New York are represented. Each school has a distinct emphasis and the themes they describe address character education in early childhood education, and in the inner city; and, programs centering on restorative justice, service learning, and sustainability.

Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education School #51 demonstrates how a developmentally appropriate character education curriculum was planned and provided for 3–4 year-olds. As described by teachers Carla Kokoszka and Juliette Smith, character education receives an all-year schoolwide emphasis at Donald Stewart School #51. A range of character-related activities are described here that are planned and regularly assessed to promote a caring nurturing culture throughout the school's community.

Restorative justice provides students with the skills and understandings to resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups as an alternative to punishment. Norwood Elementary School has been on that journey for several years. In her description of that process, principal Patrice Goldys describes why Norwood Elementary undertook this change and how, through innovative and meaningful programs for its students, the climate at her school changed dramatically. A big lesson learned was that substantive change is very possible, but it takes buy-in and dedication.

The creation of a comprehensive service-learning theme runs across all grades at Brooks Global Studies School (K–5) and is described by teacher Sandra Lubchenko. The mission of this school is for its students to “genuinely respect and accept the differences that make people and their cultures unique.” It

is from that perspective that Lubchenko traces the service-learning journey of her school over its 5-year implementation, from a single service project to understand the difficulties faced by people with little usable water to a full-range of meaningful service projects that are now ingrained throughout its academic programs and that involve the whole school community. These efforts have created a true academic community of caring.

St. Hope Leadership Academy is a high-school preparatory public charter school serving students in fifth–eighth grades. Located in Harlem, it practices its HARLEM values (Honor, Absolute determinism, Responsibility, Leadership, Excellence and Mission). Its rigorous academic program is grounded on those values and expressed through a multitude of related programs such as its scholar behavior system, carefully planned ceremonies, peer coaching, and community-related service-learning projects. As described by its Principal and Executive Director Constance Bond, St. Hope Leadership Academy has developed these programs thoughtfully, over several years of teamwork resulting in impressive academic gains.

Valley Park Middle School was first named a National School of Character in 2008. It received this award again in 2016. In this article the school's counselor, Erin Steinkamp, describes the complicated process of expanding the impact of character education in an already excellent school. She describes an important meeting in the summer of 2015 where Valley Park's leadership team began this work by embarking on a plan to rejuvenate its program with all its stakeholders—students, staff and parents. The process Steinkamp describes included tightening her school's character traits and its emphasis values, and allowing greater student voice related to accessibility of those values as they were operationalized in the curriculum. As described, the school emerged stronger and more focused, a model for others to follow.

This issue concludes with two book reviews describing important recent books that should be required reading for teachers and parents.

We hope this collection of meaningful and practical articles proves useful to educators desiring to implement deeply the education of the next generation of students.