

**EFFECTIVE CHARACTER EDUCATION:
A GUIDEBOOK FOR FUTURE EDUCATORS**

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Introduction to the Book and Content Summary

The book, *Effective Character Education: A Guidebook for future Educators* by Merle J. Schwartz, McGraw-Hill (2008)

Character education develops the moral, ethical, and traits students need in order to be proactive, productive individuals within their culture. According to the U.S. Dept. of Education, character education is defined as follows:

- Character education teaches the habits of thought and deed that helps people live and work together as families, neighbors, communities and nations.

- Character education is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about and acts on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society. (Character Education brochure)

Now more than ever, we need a program that will develop characteristics that are needed in effective leadership as well as for proactive, productive citizens within their communities. Parallels can be drawn between what type of people cultures and societies need and what their students need to learn in school on how to become that type of person. Once the community decides, the very essence of the culture of the school is transformed to meet the needs of that community. At the heart of any community are the values, morals,

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and virtues they believe are what their children need to be productive citizens. Therefore school officials must develop a curriculum to meet the character education needed for that community. The school must tailor the program using best practice as well as aligning it through the curriculum and into all classes and aspects of school

And most importantly, the character education program must be evaluated to make sure that its goals and objectives are being met. The Character Education Partnership has developed 11 principles to ensure that the program schools use is effectively impacting the character of students in a positive way.

Reflection to the book

As I reread the definition the book, **“Effective Character Education”** gave for character education, I spent some time trying to come up with my own. The one I think is equally as good is as follows:

- Character education is the morals, values, virtues and behaviors students develop, to fulfill the experiences of life and live harmoniously within their culture.

The book does a wonderful job discussing character education from an American point of view. Now, I want to step back and include International schools into the fold.

I see character education as an important educational arena that needs to be enhanced through international school students because of the nature and transitional life, these students live. International students come from various countries from around the world, as well as the host country. These kids are mixed into classes where they must learn together with foreign teachers, different students, and new surroundings. I call it, The “Crayola Effect,” because each crayon represents a different student from a different country raised in a different culture.

These cultural differences could come from the same continent like Africa, where there is a huge difference in someone from the Ivory Coast and someone from Somalia. Or it can be people who come from the same country like Australia where there are the whites

who migrated there from Great Britain and the original inhabitants, called the Aborigines who are dark skinned. Or it can be people who come from the same area, state, territory where the people are different by who lives in the city or town and who lives in the rural areas or countryside.

Therefore to answer the question as to why it is needed, the answer lies in how we are to communicate and live alongside people who are different than us, as the world becomes smaller. By developing these traits and behaviors while they are young, students, will be prepared for their work experiences that may take them far from their homes.....to live, which is how they got to the international school in the first place. Their parents were afforded these opportunities, through their employment, to expand their culture to include new locations and cultures.

Therefore, I deem it necessary to produce a character educational program that will effectively teach students how to be virtuous and live life with core ethical values (*Effective Character Education 2008*) at the center of their spiritual being.

To do this, international schools need to look at its vision and mission statements to understand what type of students they are trying to develop and determine if it's consistent to the community it serves. All stakeholders, including parents, businesses, universities, and community officials should come together to discuss what type of characteristics and values students need to develop to prepare them for real world experiences. This is the information needed for school officials to take back to their international schools to discuss with faculty, staff, teachers, janitors, cooks, support personnel, and security to create the appropriate traits to be developed.

Once the traits are decided on, curriculum needs to be developed. Decisions on what the program would look like and how it will be put in place needs to be worked out and aligned with the academic curriculum. The only way to solidify the need and engage school officials is to make it part of school, that's why it must be part of the curriculum. Not

having it in the curriculum is like having a menu without the main courses. All you see is the appetizers, desserts and drinks. It's that important. If not, there will be no consistencies of programs and everyone will do their own thing.

This new curriculum will not only enhance students' education but will improve the culture and climate of the international school itself. With everyone involved, students will see role models all over the school modeling and reminding them of good behavior. Discipline will reduce and interactions between students and students and students and adults will improve. To make sure, the Character Education Partnership has eleven principles that should be considered when developing, measuring and evaluating any character educational program that is being used. I think these principles can also be looked at as a guideline to see how effective your program is.

In conclusion, I have gained a lot of insight as to how to proceed with the development of the international character education program I am going to develop. I really like and plan to use the 11 principles states by the Character Education Partnership. This book has benefitted me in four ways:

- Starting point in the International Character Education Program, I will develop.
- 11 principles to consider in the development of my program
- Insight on surveys and questionnaires I can produce
- Review of leadership approaches like transitional, authentic, situational, and traits

REFERENCE

Shwartz, M.J. (2008). *Effective Character Education: A Guidebook for Future Educators*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.