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Teaching Ethics at the Primary Level

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Teaching Ethics at the Primary Level

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Introduction

Over the last century, the teaching of ethics in primary schools has changed greatly. The greatest influence upon public schools has been the shift in parents' attitudes towards teaching ethics in the school setting. Parents have progressively wanted to have more control over their child's ethical learning, thus becoming more critical of the teaching of ethics within public schools. This has led to greater input from parents. Christian ethics had long been the yardstick for ethical teachings, although in 1962 in the Engel v. Vitale case, school prayer was ruled unconstitutional, removing Christian views from the school setting. As a result of this, there has been a de-emphasis on teaching values since 1962. However, parents currently would like to return some of this control to the schools, which has caused additional problems. Thus it is up to the schools to find a compromise that will please parents' desire for ethical principles, yet also consider their individual rights.

From the liberal 1960s to the conservative 1980s, there has been a wide variation in the approaches to teaching ethics, both secular and religious. Within psychology there are three distinctly different theoretical approaches to how children learn values. These are the psychoanalytic, cognitive, and behavioral approaches. From these approaches practical programs have been developed for public schools. The Comprehensive Education program, Character Education program, and the Civitas program have all used elements of these psychological theories to create practical programs that combine different contents, methodology, and community involvement. However, because of Church/State issues, religion must be avoided in these programs. At Christian schools, however, an attempt is made to use the best of psychological approaches within an explicitly Christian context.
We can divide attitudes into secular and Christian approaches. Within secular approaches, the ideas of morals in regards to a God are not discussed or encouraged; rather, all student conduct is for the betterment of humanity. Therefore, being good to your neighbor is not for the reward of an all-powerful God, but rather for the self-satisfaction of trying to live in harmony with one’s fellow person. Within this there are disagreements as to the extent that each of the following should be encouraged: living a personally satisfying life, living a socially constructive life, civic virtue, and civic participation.

Christian education, on the other hand, is based upon two commandments from the New Testament, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Through this schools have kept the core values of a Christian education, while remaining distant from the old Calvinistic style of education. Thus, they combine practical approaches to teaching ethics with Christian values.

In this paper I will discuss the problem of teaching ethics in the primary schools. First, through the historical evidence, we will see exactly how we came to this current point in our country’s history in terms of teaching ethics. From there I will lay the foundation to show what theoretical approaches dominate this field today. By examining the psychoanalytic, cognitive and behavioral theories, we can understand how practical approaches develop. Next, I will examine four practical approaches that have been developed. The Comprehensive approach identifies many key areas which schools may focus upon, primarily student’s personal growth and satisfaction. The Civitas approach strives to revive national pride and good citizenship. The Character Education approach attempts to take a more feelings-based liberal education approach. Lastly, the Christian approach to teaching children is developed through the case study of First Assembly Christian School. This paper will identify the problems that currently exist, show
what strategies have been attempted, and then seek to find alternatives that incorporate the positive aspects of these strategies into a new approach. This paper, therefore, lays the foundation for the children’s book and parent/teacher guide that follows. This paper will help the reader to see why it is necessary to create new and creative styles of teaching ethics. The children’s book in the later part of this project will act as a guide by which parents can discuss their values and morals, while teachers may instruct basic ethical boundaries for their students. Thus, this book will please parents by giving them freedom to instruct their children, while encouraging private and public school to teach basic ethical principles. I will conclude this paper by discussing my approach that I have formed out of this research and discuss how it can be applied in school and household settings.

A Brief History of Teaching Ethics in the Schools

In order to understand where we are right now with the teaching of ethics, we must first understand where we have been, what has worked, what has not worked, and how we can improve.

In the early 1900’s, the public schools were seen as a way to teach children how to be “American.” The primary approach that schools took was to implement Victorian standards of ethics, morality and values. There were ten important values or character traits that were emphasized during this era: “self-control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork” (Leming, 1993, pp. 63). Most of these Victorian standards were ideals that were passed on by great Christian teachers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther. According to John Calvin, children were to be taught very strictly in accordance with Biblical teachings. This is considered a far right-wing conservative approach to teaching ethics and morality (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 4).
As time progressed, traditional ethical education programs were shown to be no more influential upon a child’s character than programs that were not aimed at this type of education. This was shown through the research of Hartshorne and May (as cited in Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 4) where they found through repeated studies that “products of traditional character education and scouting programs were no more honest than young people who did not participate in these programs” (Kirschenbaum, 1995, pp. 4). Thus, because of this and the effects of the Great Depression, the nation became less concerned about teaching values in education and redirected the focus upon worldly issues. Parents were focused on working to get food for their family during the Depression, and both parents began to work outside the home. This relative de-emphasis of teaching ethics is considered a moderately left-wing liberal approach (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 4-5).

During the late 1940’s and 1950’s, when a moderately right wing effort was made in regards to teaching ethics, children were encouraged to conform to society and to not stand out (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 5). This shift was primarily because parents became more involved with their children and there was much political support for this. The style of teaching during this period did not place a premium on ethical reasoning. In the 1950’s children were taught more about appearance, social skills and manners. Being prompt and neat were more important than the reasons why this was important. Through classroom movies and other propaganda, the children of the 1950’s were taught their ethical principles. Children were also encouraged to find national heroes to emulate; thus modeling was the central manner in which ethics were handed down to this generation.

Through the 1960’s and 1970’s, the younger generation rejected many of the roles that traditional ethical principles constructed. Many minority groups that had been suppressed for
generations gained status in these years. Blacks, women, students and many other minority groups fought for higher esteem. Moreover, in 1962 prayer was removed from the classroom by the order of the Supreme Court. Children were taught that there were no religiously-based “right values” that were to be held above others. These social revolutions permeated educational institutions at all levels, and with this came a major ideological change. Teachers began to focus more upon clarifying one’s own values rather than teaching the children theirs. Teachers during this period were teaching a **valuing process**, that is, a way that students could arrive at their own values that made them feel secure in themselves and that was satisfying both personally and socially (Kirschenbaum, 1995, pp. 6). This led to teachers instructing children how to arrive at their own conclusions as to how they felt about different issues, which is considered a far-left approach (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 6).

Through the 1980’s up through the late 1990’s, there has been a call back to “traditional values,” which has been moderately conservative and echoed the teaching of the 1950’s. The current trend is simply to tell children about morality and ethics rather than teach them a process of developing their own conclusions. This was because of the call voiced by parents, teachers, politicians and religious educators for a return to “traditional values.” This could clearly be seen in the anti-drugs campaign in which “just say no” was emphasized. The reasons why were never made clear to children, but they knew to “just say no.”

During the 1990s, many programs were developed for the public schools due to universal concern for values and morality. Because of our country’s drug problems, violence in schools, young mothers, and various other problems, we have seen that just telling children what to do and what not to do is not the answer. However, just teaching kids to form their own ideas, as in the 1960s and 1970s, has also come to be seen as too large a responsibility for a child, especially
at the primary level. Therefore, in order for a balance to be reached for future generations, it is clear that we must not over-compensate for the past, but rather move towards an education that both tells what values are and why one should hold them. Experts in the field have thus developed several practical programs, which attempt to strike this balance. Before reviewing these programs, however, we must first briefly discuss the psychological theories of the development of a child’s moral/ethical principles that underlie these new practical programs for teaching ethics in the schools.

Recent Theoretical Approaches to Teaching Ethics

There are three main theoretical approaches in psychology that have influenced practical programs of teaching ethics. These are the psychoanalytic, cognitive, behavioral, approaches. I will discuss each briefly.

Psychoanalytic Approach

Sigmund Freud was the founder of psychology and of the psychoanalytic approach. Although many of his theories were based upon case studies rather than population studies, his theories fueled the growth in the field of psychology. The main explanation for human behavior is the struggle between the superego, internalized societal restraints, and the id, the primal instincts within a person. This can be directly identified with the development of ethics in regards to childhood development. The superego is therefore what a parent strives for in regards to teaching ethics. Freud theorized that there are four stages in early childhood development. These stages determine how we will react in future situations and in each, the struggle between the id and the superego is manifested.

The first stage is the oral stage. In this stage, infants will have pleasure through contact with their mouth. The second stage is the anal stage when children’s main pleasure comes from
bowel movements and their control. Freud's third stage is the phallic stage. This stage is the most important according to Freud because a child needs to displace feelings for the parent of the opposite sex. The final stage of development is the genital phase, where children seek pleasure through their genitals. According to Freud, the development of the superego in the first years is key to a successful superego. If a child becomes fixated upon any stage it can cause behavioral problems in the future (Boeree, 1997, http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/freud.html).

Erik Erikson was a psychologist who worked closely with Freud. Erikson was considered an ego-psychologist. This means that he accepted Freud's ideas as basically correct. He accepted more controversial ideas such as the Oedipal complex, and he also accepted ideas about the ego that were added later by other Freudian loyalists such as Heinz Hartmann and Anna Freud. However, unlike Freud, Erikson believed that the stages of development went far beyond the first years of life. Erikson believed that through the life of a person, one would either “pass” or “fail” each of the eight stages, resulting in behavior patterns in the future.

According to Erikson, an infant will first go through the trust vs. mistrust stage between the ages of 0-1. This stage is primarily contingent upon the mother and will determine the psychosocial virtues of hope and faith. Next the child will enter the autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage. The parents are the key factors in this stage, and this stage will determine the psychosocial virtues of will and determination. Between 3-6, the pre-schooler will enter the initiative vs. guilt stage and it is the entire family that helps to determine this outcome. This stage will develop psychosocial virtues of purpose and courage. The next stage is when the child is between the ages of 7-12; this is the industry vs. inferiority crisis. The major psychosocial behavior that will be achieved here is the child's competence. During adolescence a person enters the stage of ego-identity vs. role-confusion. This was where fidelity and loyalty are
achieved. During the 20’s, a young adult experiences the intimacy vs. isolation stage and this determines the psychosocial skill of love. Next, in the late 20’s to early 50’s, during the seventh stage, a person experiences the issue of generatively vs. self-absorption. The skill learned in this stage is that of caring. The final stage of development according to Erik Erikson is that of the older adult which is integrity vs. despair. Here, wisdom is achieved (Boeree, 1997, http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/erikson.html). This therefore can also be applied to teaching ethics because it gives an outline for parents as for expectations that they should establish for their children.

Both Freud and Erikson developed theories that sparked much interest into how people react to ethics and values. They progressed beyond the thoughts of Calvinistic Victorians in regards to raising children. Since most of their theories were presented in the early 1900’s, when Victorian values were being taught, these new ideas encouraged much more research in the field.

Cognitive Approach

Cognitive theory is how people view the world through their thoughts. Probably the most famous exponent of this theoretical approach in psychology is Jean Piaget (Smith, Sheehy, Chapman. 1997. http://www.piaget.org/). Piaget was a nativist, meaning that he believed that there are certain inborn traits within humans. Jean Jacques Rousseau, who lived from 1712-1778, was an influence on Piaget. For instance Rousseau believed that children are naturally pure and innocent and that moral values and justice do not need to be taught. Because of this, children should be allowed to discover. Partially because of Rousseau’s theories, Piaget developed a complex stage theory of child development.

The first stage, the sensorimotor stage, is where children learn through touching and feeling. This stage lasts until the child is approximately one and a half years old. The second
stage is the preoperational stage. Within this stage, children use symbols and creative play to learn about their world. In addition to this, they are extremely egocentric in that they believe that all people see the world through their eyes. This stage is usually complete by age seven. The third stage according to Piaget is the concrete operations stage. It usually lasts until the age of eleven. Children can distinguish between many different structures of thought. Examples of this are their abilities to put things in order and seeing the world through other people’s eyes. The last stage of cognitive development is the formal operations stage. In the concrete operations stage, the child had a hard time applying his logical abilities to abstract events. However, during this stage, this skill is improved.

Piaget believed that children developed through these stages. How quickly children complete these stages depends upon many variables. Thus, through learning cognitive skills and how to think about a situation, one makes one’s choices. Thus Piaget had a great influence on the way that schools taught children to think about values in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Piaget’s theories greatly stimulated research in child psychology. Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development show some aspects of Piaget.

Although Piaget influenced Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory, Kohlberg is distinctly different. First, Kohlberg believed that moral reasoning must be learned. Children do not know from birth what is right and wrong. However, he believed that the reasoning behind a choice was more important than the actual choice. Kohlberg is said to be one of the founders of the new approaches to moral education. By creating a development model of a child, his theory gave teachers goals to strive for in their classroom. Kohlberg believed that his theory was universal. John Rich and Joseph DeVitis, in their book, Theories of Moral Development, states that the goal
of Kohlberg’s theory is to: “generate a philosophy of moral education designed to stimulate moral development rather than teach fixed moral rules” (DeVitis and Rich, 1994, pp. 85).

Kohlberg’s theory was somewhat based upon Piaget’s four stages, yet Kohlberg focused more on the moral development of a person not the overall persona. Kohlberg believed that this development occurred through six stages grouped in four levels. Kohlberg’s six stages are the preconventional, conventional and postconventional. The stages are as follows:

Level I: Preconventional Morality (age 4 - 10). Moral value resides in a person's own needs and wants. Stage 1: Obedience and Punishment Orientation, Individual’s moral judgment is motivated by a need to avoid punishment. Stage 2: Instrumental-Relativist Orientation, Individual’s moral judgment is motivated by a need to satisfy own desires. Level II: Conventional Morality (age 10 - 13). Moral values reside in performing good or right roles, in maintaining the conventional order, and in pleasing others. Stage 3:"Good Boy/Nice Girl" Orientation, Individual’s moral judgment is motivated by a need to avoid rejection, disaffection, or disapproval from others. Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation, Individual’s moral judgment is motivated by a need to not to be criticized by a true authority figure. Level III: Postconventional Morality (adolescence - adulthood). Moral values reside in principles, separate from those who enforce them, and apart from a person's identification with the enforcing group. Most people never reach this last level. Stage 5: Legalistic Orientation, Individual’s moral judgment is motivated by community respect for all, respect for social order, and a life under legally determined laws. Stage 6: Universal, Ethical Orientation. Individual’s moral judgment is motivated by one’s own conscience (Gill and Magee, 1998, http://moon.pepperdine.edu/gsep/clas s/ethics/kohlberg/Stages_Moral-Development.html).

Kohlberg states that only about 20-25% of adults reach stage 5 and only about 5-10% reach stage 6 (DeVitis and Rich, 1994, pp. 85). Through this study and the detail with which it describes each stage of a person’s moral development, we can see why Kohlberg’s theory is the most in-depth study of a person’s moral development to date.

**Behavioral Approach**

Behavioral theories propose that human behavior acts like a mechanism, in that there are cause and effect relationships that cause us to react in certain ways. Ivan Pavlov, a physiologist
from Russia, founded the theory of Classical Conditioning that underlies the behavioral perspective. Pavlov accidentally found that when a bell was rung, his experimental dog would salivate, even before meat powder was presented. Through further experiments, Pavlov articulated the law of classical conditioning. This is the process where an otherwise neutral stimulus is paired with an unconditioned stimulus, causing the unconditioned response to occur when the previously neutral stimulus is presented (Hill, 1985, http://www.as.wvu.edu/~sbb/comm221/chapters/pavlov.htm).

Beyond these theories, Albert Bandura did numerous studies on behavior. His most famous, the bobo doll studies (Boeree, 1998, http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/bandura.html) explored the correlation between modeling and child behavior. Bandura theorized that modeling could be effective in therapy, coining the term modeling therapy (Boeree, 1998, http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/bandura.html). Bandura's main ideas were that a child can be deeply affected by someone else's behavior, whether that behavior is positive or negative. Children will seek reinforcement for socially unacceptable behavior, even if there is no reinforcement. This idea can be tied to many of the practical approaches that have been developed which emphasize the importance of role models in the teaching of ethics.

The next major contributor to the field of behavioral psychology was B.F. Skinner. Skinner's theory is based upon the theory of operant conditioning. This is where an organism operates based upon reinforcing stimulus. In other words, the behavior occurs and then some reinforcement is presented. The behavior of interest can be controlled through many factors. For example, through extinction, a behavior will cease to exist if it is not reinforced. Skinner also theorized various schedules of reinforcement. A continuous reinforcement schedule is where every behavior is reinforced. A fixed ratio schedule is where under a certain ration,
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reinforcement is presented, for example, for every ten behaviors, reinforcement is provided. A fixed interval schedule uses a timing device. For example during a 20-second period reinforcement is given once, whether one or 20 relevant behaviors of interest occur. There are many variations of these schedules. However, because life does not have precise reinforcement as in a laboratory, we must look at what behavioral theory is proposing about ethics.

Behavioral psychology states that ethical values are no different from any other behavior. They operate because of either the pairing between an unconditioned reinforcer and a neutral stimulus, or the reinforcement that is provided because of the behavior. For example, a child will develop ethical skills quicker if there is a consequence system that is established. For instance, if there are rewards for consequences for good behavior and punishers for bad behavior, the behaviors will become established quicker. During the 1950's social acceptance was the reinforcer that was primarily established. However, in the 1990's, other reward systems were explored. This will be seen through some of the programs seen later in this paper. Through these theories a foundation may be laid to develop practical approaches.

Recent Practical Approaches to Teaching Ethics

The recent practical approaches that are discussed below represent a variety of different styles to teaching ethics. These approaches encompass many aspects of the recent theoretical approaches discussed above. Although many of the theoretical approaches date to the early 20th century, the three discussed above have been constantly revised to fit modern ideas and issues.

Comprehensive Education

The goal of the comprehensive education program is to find a medium between the permissive 1960s and 1970s and the conservative 1980s and early 1990s. Howard Kirschenbaum developed this approach in his book 100 Ways to Enhance Values and Morality in
School Settings. It does so by helping people to live both more personally satisfying lives and more socially constructive lives (Kirschenbaum, 1995, pp. 9). The developers of the comprehensive education program recognized that there was value in both the approaches of the 50's-60's and the 80's-90's, and therefore taking the best attributes of both is the goal of a comprehensive value-centered education. There are four main areas that make a comprehensive education inclusive. According to Kirschenbaum, ethical education is comprehensive if it includes the aspects of content, methodology, throughout the school, and throughout the community.

Content, is all value-related issues, personal choice of values, all the way to deep moral issues. Methodology is when the modeling of teachers and other positive civic leaders is encouraged. Good decision making and other things pertaining to life are emphasized, such as living with integrity. Throughout the school is when values are emphasized not only in class, but also in extracurricular activities and career education, and is encouraged in awards ceremonies. Finally, throughout the community is when people in all walks of life from the community are encouraged to assist in teaching values-centered education. Volunteering with local agencies and working with police, religious institutions, and community agencies is advocated for students.

There is much debate about what should be emphasized in these 4 areas. No ethical approach can be entirely correct, and that is why a comprehensive education strives to incorporate various psychological approaches to teaching ethics at a primary level, as well as conservative and liberal approaches. There are three main areas that need to be addressed in order to fulfill the goals of comprehensive education in order for this balance to be achieved:
Values to live personally satisfying lives by, Moral virtues to live by, and Values to live socially constructive lives by.

**Values to Live Personally Satisfying Lives By**

Sidney B. Simon coined the term values realization in 1980. It refers to a process by which students identify what will give them personal satisfaction (as stated in Kirschenbaum, 1995, pp. 15). Values realization stresses nine major ways to assess one’s needs in living a personally satisfying life. These are, as stated by Kirschenbaum, knowing oneself, self-esteem, goal-setting ability, thinking skills, communication skills, social skills, academic and worldly knowledge, and transcendental knowledge (Kirschenbaum, 1995, pp. 16-20). Through developing these nine areas, students will develop knowledge of what will help them to live a personally satisfying life. Of course, this process places most of the burden on the student by making them realize for themselves what they want out of life and what they think will make them happy. This is taking the positive aspects of the 1960’s-1970’s education. It also incorporates more of a cognitive learning approach in the sense that students are dealing with their individual thoughts and then discovering how those thoughts affect their behavior.

**Moral Virtues to Live By**

This section deals especially with teaching so-called "traditional values." Although everyone’s definition of “traditional values” is different, there are some major areas that nearly all agree upon. These are, respect (for oneself, others, community, property, the environment), responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, loyalty, as well as other character traits that are important such as courage, tolerance, and work ethic (Kirschenbaum, 1995, pp. 21-22). Stress on these values was most prominent in the 1980’s-1990’s conservative era. By incorporating this approach into the education system, the positive aspects of the past conservative era are
being retained. It is basically a behavioral approach, since children are receiving reinforcements and punishments for properly fulfilling the expectations of parents, teachers and others within the community by displaying these "traditional values."

**Values to Live Socially Constructive Lives By**

Living a socially constructive life is the aspect of teaching that focuses primarily on American values. The values defined by C. Quigley in his book *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education* are public good, individual rights, justice, equality, diversity, truth and patriotism. Quigley also feels that this approach should help children to focus upon knowledge, appreciation, and critical thinking skills, communication skills, cooperation skills and conflict resolution (Quigley, 1991, pp. 23). Through adding this point of view to the comprehensive education, the Quigley may be proposing that they can avoid sways of the pendulum of ethics education. Public opinion has changed the attitude towards teaching values. Thus, alternative methods have been developed to teach children good citizenship.

**CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education**

Another practical approach to teaching ethics in the schools is CIVITAS. CIVITAS is a curriculum that proposes to “…revitalize civic education in schools throughout the nation” (Quigley and Buchanan, 1991, pp. 1). This program was created at the Center for Civic Education in Los Angeles and represents the work of nearly forty scholars. This stance in teaching ethics promotes the idea that, through civic education, better citizens will develop, thus increasing the overall ethics of children and adults. However, in order to fully understand the curriculum, we must first understand the rationale for this program. Only then we can fully understand the components of CIVITAS: civic education, civic virtue, civic participation, and civic knowledge.
Rationale

The rationale for a civic education can be summed up in the Center for Civic Education’s rationale statement:

...Civic education in a democracy is education in self-government. Self-government means active participation in self-governance, not passive acquiescence in the actions of others. The words of Aristotle reflect the view that the ideals of democracy are most completely fulfilled when every member of a political community actively shares in government.

(Quigley and Buchanan, 1991, pp. 1)

The main purpose of a CIVITAS education is to make informed and responsible citizens, and by this the authors don’t deny the fact that parts of the government are corrupt. However, they feel that by creating a well-tempered program that will impact children that the future of American democracy will be safeguarded.

In addition to creating informed and responsible citizens, CIVITAS also recognizes the importance of working to pursue the common good of all citizens by striving to “...protect individuals from unconstitutional abuses by government and from attacks on their rights from any source, public or private...” (Quigley and Buchanan, 1991, pp. 1).

Another goal of this curriculum therefore is to inform American children that the government is not a machine that could run by itself, but that it takes informed civic leaders to keep it running. The final rationale for a civic education is, therefore, that “…the citizen needs a deeper understanding of the American political system than is currently commonplace” (Quigley and Buchanan, 1991, pp. 2). Now that we understand some of the goals of this type of education, we can focus upon the three main components of CIVITAS education.

Civic Virtue

The ultimate goal of a CIVITAS education has been labeled “civic virtue.” Through teaching civic knowledge and civic participation, the end result will be civic virtue. This means
that students will eventually make their own commitment in adulthood to strengthening the ideals of American democracy, thus increasing the ethics found in our society. The values that are focused upon in the “civic virtue” section, according to Quigley and Buchanan, 1991, pp.3 are: Civility, including respect for others and the use of civil discourse; individual responsibility, the inclination to accept responsibility for one’s own self and the consequences of one’s own actions; self-discipline, the adherence to the rules necessary for the maintenance of American constitutional government without requiring imposition of external authority; open-mindedness, including a healthy sense of skepticism and a recognition of the ambiguities of social and political reality; willingness to compromise, realizing that values and principles are sometimes in conflict, tempered by a recognition that not all principles or values are fit for compromise, since some compromise may imperil democracy’s continued existence; toleration for diversity; patience and persistence in the pursuit of public goals; compassion for others; generosity toward others and the community at large; and loyal to the Republic and its values and principles.

Civic Participation

To fulfill the goal of “civic virtue,” we must look at how civic participation plays a role in achieving this goal. Through CIVITAS the curriculum helps to nurture “competent and responsible participation” (Quigley, 1991, pp.15). Rather than just influencing public policy or increasing participation, CIVITAS strives also to increase the quality of this education. Students are taught to reflect upon their personal public commitments, thus helping them to make better choices in the future. Through this, CIVITAS stresses the many responsibilities that certain basic rights carry. Therefore, certain obligations, both moral and political are stressed as well. Through the emphasis upon this “civic participation,” the final goal of “civic virtue” is closer to being reached.
Civic Knowledge

Although it is not the main goal of CIVITAS, civic knowledge takes up most of the volume of the CIVITAS curriculum. The civic knowledge section is extremely detailed in the sense that it covers subjects ranging from ancient Greece, to the regimes of the twentieth century, the forms of propaganda, the role that the press plays, and civil disobedience. In addition to this, the idea of Exodus found in the Old Testament, black American history, and ancient societies, is also stressed. Aside from the historical aspect of civic knowledge, attention is also paid too much of American politics. The framework of Congress, the presidency, judicial systems, the federal bureaucracy, local, state, and national government roles are all covered, to name just a few. Through this education and application of civic participation, children are taught to be informed and responsible citizens. This differs greatly from the character education that focuses less on civic virtue, and more on one’s personal character.

Character Education
In their book *Building Character in Schools: Practical Ways to Bring Moral Instruction to Life*, Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin offer suggestions towards building the character and morals of children through what has been called “character education.” The term “character education” is a term that has almost become cliché in the debates about improving children’s morality and ethics. The White House has had six congressional conferences on character education by 1998 (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. xiv). The authors of this book propose that character education is the combining of good ideas with action strategies to form a curriculum. However, to understand these aspects of character education, we must first understand exactly what it is.

In order to define character education, we must first understand what is meant by “character.” Aristotle states that character is practical wisdom (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 6). According to Ryan and Bohlin, this means that good character is “knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good” (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 5). They feel that to know the good you must understand good and evil. Loving the good is being able to develop a full range of moral feelings, and then being able to empathize with others. Loving the good helps us to “love the sinner but hate the sin” (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 6). Doing the good is following through and actually doing what is right. The term “the good” usually means the Golden Rule or dignity for others.

**Good Ideas**

Through the presentation of good ideas, we can have a basis to start, according to the character education curriculum. On January 23, 1996, President Clinton during his State of the Union address said, “I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship” (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 189). This echoed the concerns that
many educators, politicians, and religious leaders have already felt. Following this, a document
called “The Character Education Manifesto” was printed. It outlined seven key principles that
educators thought important to education reform. Part of it states, “Character education is not
merely an educational trend or the schools’ latest fad; it is a fundamental dimension of good
teaching, an abiding respect for the intellect and spirit of the individual” (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998,
pp. 190-191). In addition to this, many ideas such as more charter schools which different
curricula and after-school programs, were brought forth to strengthen President Clinton’s
challenge.

Action Strategies

Following this outpouring of ideas, action plans were put into place. A variety of lists of
how to strengthen character education were printed for schools. Many of the suggestions were
categorized in different areas. A few of these areas were, building a community of virtue, mining
the curriculum, involving teachers, administration and staff, involving parents, and involving
students. A few of the concrete suggestions are as follows:

Develop a school code of ethics. Distribute it to every member of the school community.
Refer to it often. Display it prominently. Make sure all policy reflects it...26. Have
students do a major paper on a living public figure (“My Personal Hero”), focusing on the
moral achievements and virtues of the individual. First, do the groundwork of helping
them understand what constitutes a particularly noble life...46. (As a teacher) tell your
students who your heroes are and why you chose them...62. Consider having a parent
representative present while developing such school codes...82. Structure opportunities
for students to perform community service...100. Remind students-and yourself- that
character building is not an easy or a one-time project. Fashioning our character is the
work of a lifetime.

(Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 229-238)

Curriculum

In this section, the authors offer a sample curriculum aimed at teaching kindergarten, first grade,
and second grade. The related virtues to this unit are responsibility and persistence. Because
much of this model has to do with role modeling and observational learning, teachers are encouraged to find books or to create lesson plans that stress this also. In the sample, the authors suggest that the story of “Jonah and the Whale” be read. After this, the following poem should be read. This emphasizes the responsibilities that come with age:

Good-Bye, Six-Hello, Seven  
I’m getting a higher bunk bed.  
And I’m getting a bigger bike.  
And I’m getting to cross Connecticut Avenue  
All by myself, if I like.  
And I’m getting to help do the dishes.  
And I’m getting to weed the yard.  
And I’m getting to think that seven  
Could be hard.

(From If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries, Judith Viorst, Antheneum, 1993, as cited in Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 253)

This poem can then help lead into a discussion about growing older. The following suggested questions are some of those given for the character education curriculum.

1. What did the story make you think about? Tell me about Jonah.

2. In the beginning, why was Jonah afraid to do what God asked him to do?

3. Was running away a good decision?

4. What can we learn from this story? (Ryan and Bohlin, 1998, pp. 254).

Through offering a curriculum based on these ideas and action strategies, the character education approach seems to be one that encompassed the ideas of many parents, teachers, and politicians. This has influenced many other approaches, but is still sharply different from the Christian Approach that introduces the idea of God.

A Christian Approach to Teaching Ethics

The Christian approach to teaching ethics incorporates the idea of God into the curriculum. In addition to this, such approaches also incorporate Biblical principles, primarily
the two commandments of Jesus, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and love your neighbor as yourself." One such program can be found at First Assembly Christian School of Portage, Michigan. The mission statement of First Assembly Christian School is that it "dedicates itself to providing a Christian education distinguished by academic and moral excellence, preparing students to fulfill God's ordained plan for their lives" (Elementary Handbook, 1999, p.3). This reflects First Assembly's dedication to the philosophy of Christian education. Through these beliefs, they have created an education system that maintains an environment for spiritual development, guiding students in the learning process and personality, and increasing individual and social growth. First Assembly's main focus in regards to moral development is through the teaching of basic Biblical principles and modeling (Lyon, R. personal interview, April 11, 2000).

Rationale

Through the teaching of Biblical principles, many issues in regards to morality are raised. At First Assembly, they teach that God has an ordained plan for every person's life. Part of the Christian education that they offer is helping students to realize this plan. Each student is taught that they are special to God, and that part of the school's job is to help the children develop this plan through God. Therefore, in the school, children also focus on the gifts that God has given them, so that they can realize that God has a plan and that the school is preparing them for that plan.

Secondly, the school faculty tries to model their lives after Biblical principles and figures. Jesus is the best pattern for this modeling. The two commandments that Jesus stresses are to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and love your neighbor as yourself." These two commandments are those that are stressed most at First Assembly. Children are
taught that your neighbor is anyone that they come in contact with, and thus they should live lives of virtue all the time. This helps to prepare children for the work world. Rebecca Lyon, the principal at First Assembly Christian School, says, "These are the types of Biblical principles that we try to instill. These are the same types of things that are expected in the world, work with your colleague, get along, don’t fight..." (Lyon, R. personal interview, April 11, 2000). Therefore, this modeling and teaching of Biblical principles carries over into a life-long commitment to living Biblically.

**Spiritual, Individual, and Social Growth**

Through spiritual, individual and social growth, the faculty at First Assembly Christian School hopes to help the student to understand that the Bible is the “inerrant, infallible Word of God, the source of doctrine, and the guide for daily living” (Elementary Handbook, 1999, pp. 4). In addition to this, students learn the basics of the Christian faith. In regards to individual growth, stress is placed on applying Biblical principles to handling failure, success, stress, and strong emotions. In addition to this, it is also placed upon applying Biblical principles to self-image and one’s uniqueness as a person. Finally, in regards to social growth, students learn to establish wholesome interpersonal relationships that are strengthened by Christian love that mirrors Jesus’ love. In addition to this, the love of family, good citizenship, and patriotism are stressed (Elementary Handbook, 1999, pp. 4-5).

**Dress Code and Chapel**

Knowing the Christian basis for this education helps us to now understand the curriculum more fully. Every week the students have chapel service, where Christian principles are reinforced. This is done through praise and worship, followed sometimes by a skit and then a
Teaching Ethics at 25

short sermon that helps to explain the overall theme. The students have a dress code for daily classes in which the following articles of clothing are not acceptable: shirts condoning drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sex, secular rock groups, violence or anything not within Christian principles. Also, cut-offs, spandex, hats, bandanas, and sunglasses cannot be worn. Girls cannot wear tank tops, body piercings, or facial cosmetics. Boys cannot wear sleeveless shirts, earrings, nose rings, and must have neat hair. On chapel days, children are expected to dress up, girls wearing dresses and boys wearing nicer shirts and no jeans. Ties are optional for the boys (Elementary Handbook, 1999, pp. 25-27). According to Rebecca Lyon, this helps children form respect for chapel day so that they realize that there is something special about that day of the week.

Curriculum

Each grade has a Bible class in addition to basic education classes. This helps the mission of a Christian education to be fulfilled. In addition to this, in third grade, social studies and science is taught from a more Christian perspective. The following is a list of the curriculum elements that support First Assembly’s mission statement in regards to ethics:

**Kindergarten:** Bible- “Learning About God”- This course begins in Genesis with the creation story and continues through to the return of Christ in Revelations. This curriculum presents truths about God and teaches children to hide God’s Word in their hearts through scripture memorization.

**First Grade:** Bible- “Enjoying God’s Gifts” Positive Action for Christ Series- This curriculum focuses on the many gifts of love provided to us by God. Emphasis is on aspects of creation, family, friends, possessions, Jesus Christ, and God’s care for all people.
Second Grade: Bible- "Finding God's promises" Positive Action for Christ Series- This curriculum begins with the creation story and progresses to the Flood. Then it concentrates on the life of Moses from birth to death.

Third Grade: Bible- "Growing with God" Positive Action for Christ Series- This curriculum begins with a brief introduction of the main divisions of the Bible. It includes a study of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then there are intensive studies of the lives of Joseph and Daniel. Throughout there are discussions of the godly, positive traits exemplified in the lives of these men and how these traits can be applied to the lives of the student.

Social Studies- Our American Heritage (A Beka Book Publications)- This is a study of American history from a Christian perspective through the lives of twenty-one historical figures including Christopher Columbus, Pocahontas, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Clara Barton, and George Washington Carver.

Science- Exploring God's World (A Beka Book Publications)- This curriculum includes a study of the human body and geography.

Fourth Grade: Bible- "Building Life Castles" Positive Action for Christ Series- This curriculum begins with a study of the life of Christ (Gospels). This is followed by a study of the Holy Spirit (Gospels, Acts, Epistles), Christian Character (Paul’s Epistles), and the life of Paul (Acts).

Language- Language skills are incorporated within the reading program. In addition, the text God's Gift of Language (A Beka Book Publications) is used.

Science- Understanding God's World (A Beka Book Publications)- This curriculum includes units on insects, plants, birds, matter, energy, geology, oceanography, and astronomy.
Fifth Grade: Bible- “Possessing the Land” Positive Action for Christ Series- This curriculum begins with a study of creation, continues through the Old Testament, concluding with the Major and Minor Prophets.

Social Studies- Old World History and Geography (A Beka Book Publications)- This is a study of the Eastern Hemisphere from a Christian perspective. It includes both ancient and modern history as well as a look at the geography of the area.

Science- Investigating God’s World (A Beka Book Publications)- This curriculum includes the study of insects, light, earth, (rocks, minerals, fossils), the sea, the sky-weather, energy, engines, vertebrates (emphasis on mammals).

Sixth Grade: Bible- "Winning the Race" Positive Action for Christ Series- Students explore the entire Bible to learn how the principles of God affect their lives.

Social Studies- New World History and Geography (A Beka Book Publications)- This is a study of the Western Hemisphere from a Christian Perspective. It includes a study of the “new” world from its discovery to the 1990’s. It also includes geographical studies in this area.

Science- Observing God’s World (A Beka Book Publications)- This curriculum includes the study of invertebrates, plants, earth, the universe, space and matter.


Awards

At the end of each year an awards ceremony is held. In addition to awards such as perfect attendance, there are three awards that are unique to First Assembly’s curriculum. The first award is the “Character Award,” which is a way to recognize positive traits in each student.
Second is the “Principal’s Award,” which is given to one boy and one girl from each class who has shown that they are helpful, cooperative, well-behaved, maintained a positive attitude, and put forth a strong effort in their studies. The third award is the “Scripture Memory Award,” which is given to students in fourth through sixth grade, who have fulfilled their Scripture memorization requirements in their Bible class (Elementary Handbook, 1999, pp. 50).

Through their mission statement they showed that they wanted to help children to see God’s path, while receiving an academic education. Through their curriculum, dress code and awards, they strengthen the values and lessons that they want their students to learn. This shares many of the ideas from the Character Education of self-exploration and also is comprehensive like the Comprehensive Education. In addition to this, by having awards through the school year, it draws upon the behavioral ideas of psychology.

Conclusion

As one can see, there are many approaches to teaching ethics at the primary level. As a culture, the key is to find what is most important to us and then develop curricula that support this. Through looking at the United State’s short history of instilling morality, we can learn that we need to find a place that is not too conservative, nor too liberal. Thus, we can conclude that probably the best curriculum is one that takes positive attributes from many areas, thus strengthening our entire system of moral development.

Because of this I feel that I must pull many of the positive aspects of these approaches and apply them to the following creative portion of the thesis. Given the scientific evidence for the behavioral perspective, I believe that of the three theories, it is the most scientifically sound. Thus, I take a largely behavioral approach in constructing the children's book and parent-teacher's guide. However, I also feel that examining the emotions and one's thoughts is
important, and therefore, drawing from cognitive psychological theories, reflection is a strong aspect of my approach. The third foundation for my approach is that of an all-powerful God. I understand that many people may disagree with this, however, because of this, in my project following the book, I will list the God questions last. I feel that many of the core principles that are touched upon are that of basic human interaction. Therefore, I feel that these general principles can be applied in both a public school and Christian school setting. Teachers and parents may choose to what extent they feel God should be incorporated.

In terms of the practical approaches to teaching ethics in primary schools, I take elements from all three, although I feel the Comprehensive Education program is the most effective. By establishing rules and consequences, learning will occur much quicker than if just by observation. This also will teach “traditional values” such as good decision making and living with integrity. Second to this would be the “through the community” aspect of the Comprehensive Education. This demonstrates practical ways that children can see ethics playing out into everyday life. Following these, I believe that children should reflect upon their experiences in journals, and thus the consequences of their actions and the lessons that they learn will become more powerful in future situations. Through these journals, the child can identify problems, thus allowing the child can develop an action plan to solve these. This last draws somewhat from the Character Education program. Finally, I think that all of this should be applied from a Christian perspective, showing how all of these things can affect our relationship with God. Parents and teachers would decide to what extent God would be incorporated into teaching. Of course, in public schools, the basic ethical ideas would be discussed and there would be no religious identification, however, in a Christian school or home school, the amount of incorporation of God could vary.
By examining the history of ethics and by discussing theoretical and practical approaches, we have seen the positive and negative sides to the teaching of ethics in primary schools. However, through a certain amount of sensitive compromising in an attempt to meet most everyone's needs, I believe we can develop an approach that is best for our children. The children's book and parent-teacher's guide that follows is my attempt to do just that.
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For the Love of the Shepherd

By: Joseph R. Sanok
For the Love of the Shepherd

Joseph R. Sanok
Western Michigan University
Dedicated to Pete S., my family, and Jesus
Long ago, in the country now known as Ireland, there lived a shepherd. The shepherd lived happily with his flock, walking through the hills and enjoying the many places to play. Everything was peaceful within the flock...
...until one day the sheep started discussing why the shepherd loved them. Some sheep said that it was because they did so many good things. However, other sheep thought that it was because of the faith that they had in the shepherd. One side was soon called “The Faiths” and the other “The Works.” Eventually, all the sheep took sides.
The sheep began to fight. The shepherd posted a sign explaining answers to all of their questions, but because they were fighting so much, they didn’t notice.
Soon, the sides were so upset with each other, that they each built a large strong wall, dividing each side. The shepherd just sat in the middle and cried.
Well one day, a rock from The Faiths side rolled over and knocked down part of The Work’s wall. They called The Council of Sheep and discussed what action was to be taken.
They decided that since The Faiths had wrecked part of their wall, that they should do something back. So late in the night, three sheep snuck over to The Faith’s side and set up a surprise for them.
The next day at noon a gigantic confetti bomb exploded next to The Faith’s church. It broke a very old window.
This made the shepherd very sad, because he loved his sheep very much. However, he knew that they had to solve this themselves.
Well, late in the night some of The Faiths snuck over to The Work’s side. They knew that they couldn’t just forget about the confetti bomb.
At noon on the next day a gigantic raspberry jam bomb exploded all over The Work's church. It broke a very old window, and tipped over a lamb's carriage.
As the years went on, the older sheep told the younger sheep stories about how all of the fighting began. All of the young sheep then grew up to hate the other side.
Day after day, there were explosions from each side. This made the shepherd very sad, because he loved his sheep very much, and wanted them to love each other. Through the years, the sheep began to think about fighting more than loving each other or the shepherd. No one had visited the shepherd in many years. But he knew that he could not force anyone to love him or someone else.
One day, much to the shepherd's delight, two lambs fell in between the two walls. One was from The Work’s side and the other was from The Faith’s side. They played all day running through the fields and playing with each other.
As the sun began to set, the mothers began looking for the lambs. They looked everywhere, and soon everyone was looking for the lambs.
No one had thought to look in between the walls, but that is where they were, safe, with the shepherd. But, when they looked at the lambs, they couldn’t tell which one was which!
So, they asked them,

“Are you from The Works?”
they responded, “Who are The Works?”
The Faiths yelled, “They’re the ones that bomb us!”
The mothers then asked “Are you from The Faiths?”
They responded, “Who are The Faiths?”
The Works yelled, “They’re the ones that bomb us!”
The lambs then said, “If we have to bomb each other, then we don’t want to be either, we just want to love the shepherd. The fighting had made the sheep forget about the shepherd.
The shepherd then said to everyone, “You will be happy if you love me, and if you love your neighbor as you love yourself.” The sheep understood that they had been wrong in fighting...
...so they tore down their walls and built an enormous kingdom and lived happily ever after.
Parent/Teacher Guide to “For the Love of the Shepherd”

In developing effective ways of teaching ethical principles we need to learn to effectively communicate with our children. This guide is meant to bring out the true nature of the story, so that it is not seen as merely a fairy tale, but instead as a learning tool for parents and teachers. This guide will develop skills in character development, personal exploration, identifying feelings, how we affect our surroundings, and all creative ideas of how to apply these to everyday life.

The guide is broken into three age groups 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12, but by no means are these meant to be boxes for children, simply recommendations. Feel free to personally elaborate on questions with your child or student. These questions are meant to stir discussion and create an open arena to discuss ethical principles, rather than be all encompassing. Feel free to let your child draw, act, or discuss their answers, since we all have different learning styles. Enjoy!
Children ages 4-6

Character:

- What made the sheep mad?

- How did the shepherd feel during the fighting?

- Did the sheep listen to the shepherd?

- What makes you mad? How do you deal with that anger?
Effect upon Surroundings:

- How do you make your siblings, parents, or teachers feel?

- Why are rules important?

Practical Teaching:

- Find a chore that you can do with your child and discuss how their helping assisted you. Talk about helping people and why that is important.
- With your student provide opportunities for the class to help you within your classroom, discuss how they positively affected you as a teacher.
Further Study:

- Pray for those that you see that are hurting in your life.
- Read Acts 11:28-30
- Discuss how the disciples helped each other when they were in need. Discuss what “each according to his ability” (v. 29) means
- What are your gifts?
- How can you use what God has given you to help others?
- You may read about more adventures of the disciples in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts
Children ages 7-9

Character:

- What did the sheep first start arguing about?

- Did they talk to the shepherd?

- Why do you think that the shepherd didn’t do anything?

- How do you think the lambs felt when they played with the shepherd?
• How do you think the shepherd felt?

• Have you ever hurt someone when you were mad?

• How do you think they felt when they had to choose between The Works and The Faiths?

• What character are you most like and why?

• How could you treat others better?
Effect Upon Surroundings:

- How did the fighting affect others?

- How could they have avoided the war?

- What can you do when you are upset?

Practical Teaching:

- Spend a few hours with your child helping a neighbor with something, cooking dinner, cleaning the garage, yard work, etc. Afterwards, ask the neighbor to talk with you and your child about how helping affected them.

- With your class, do a project to brighten someone’s day. Drawing for a nursing home, hospital or shelter. Ask the director of the organization to come speak to your class about the effects upon the residents.
Further Study:

- What is a hard decision that you made this week? Did you ask the shepherd (God) to help you with it?

- Read Exodus 3:1-15

- Was Moses confident in himself? v. 11

- Do you ever feel that God can’t use you?

- How did God help Moses make the decision to talk to Pharaoh? V. 12,14,15
If God is with Moses, won’t he be with you? Make a list of all the places you can be used by God. Here are a couple to get you started:

- School
- Home

- _______________
- _______________
- _______________
- _______________
- _______________

Pray for these places.
You may read more about Moses’ adventures in Exodus.
Children age 10-12

Character:

- What issues were the sheep divided over?

- When have you taken a stand for an issue?

- What did you learn from the lambs?

- How do you think the parents of the lambs felt?
• Why do you think that the shepherd posted the ‘Rules for Life’?

Effect Upon Surroundings:

• Only a few sheep started the first argument, but others followed. Name a time when others followed you, or you followed others.

• What can you do to be a better leader?

• What can you do to be a smarter follower?

• How do others affect your day?
Practical:

- Volunteer somewhere with your child in your community, i.e.: homeless shelter, food pantry, or church. Over pizza afterwards, discuss how you helped others and why it’s important to help. By doing this, you are making the event an even more positive event, thus, they will want to volunteer more in the future.
- Have your class help out in the lunchroom beyond their daily help. Have others tell how your class helped their job. Give each child a reward i.e.: a mini candy bar, extra credit, or extra time on recess.

Further study:

- Read Acts 27: 13-42 The storm and the shipwreck
- How did Paul affect those around him, especially in v. 21-25?
- Paul was a prisoner, yet God gave him power and strength on this ship. Een through a shipwreck Paul gave God thanks v. 35. How do you think the other prisoners and guards felt about this?

- Pray for those that you volunteered with.

- You can read more about Paul’s adventures in Acts.
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