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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY K. WEBB, ED.D.
ACTING COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable Phil Bredesen, Governor of Tennessee
The Honorable Ron Ramsey, Lt. Governor of Tennessee
The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Honorable Jamie Woodson, Chair, Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Les Winningham, Chair, House Education Committee

From: Timothy K. Webb, Ed.D.

Re: Annual Conflict Resolution and Character Education Report SY 2006-2007

Date: March 30, 2008

T.C.A. 49-2-118 and 49-6-1007 provide that the Commissioner of Education shall annually report to the General Assembly regarding the implementation of conflict resolution and character education programs in Tennessee schools. Attached you will find our reports for the 2006-2007 school year.

Character education and conflict resolution programs support the social, emotional and moral development of our students while addressing the negative behaviors, attitudes and beliefs that frequently serve as a barrier to learning. The attached reports provide an overview of the nature and extent of these programs in schools across the state.

Questions regarding these reports may be directed to Mike Herrmann by phone at (615) 741-3248 or via email at Mike.Herrmann@state.tn.us.

TW/mh

Attachment

Conflict Resolution Programs in Tennessee Schools

SY 2006 – 2007

(As Required by T.C.A. 49-2-118)

Introduction

T.C.A. 49-2-118 states that each local education agency shall implement for grades one through six an intervention program that utilizes conflict resolution and decision-making strategies aimed at preventing occurrences of disruptive acts by students within the school and on school property. Tennessee Code Annotated further provides that the Commissioner of Education shall submit a report on conflict resolution programs implemented during the previous year.

This report summarizes the information provided by all Tennessee school districts and provides a brief overview of conflict resolution programs in our state.

Background

Conflict resolution programs are intended to reduce violence by providing children with the skills, information, and practice needed to appropriately resolve conflict. Some of the interpersonal skills taught in a typical program include empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management. Students learn to define conflict and determine where conflicts originate.

While initially created to reduce incidents of violence or aggression, many of these programs are also effective in decreasing disruptive behavior and improving the social and learning climate of the school. As a result, many schools now include such programs as part of their broader school improvement process.

Conflict Resolution Programs in Tennessee Schools

Tennessee's first statewide efforts at developing conflict resolution programs began in 1997 with the initiation of the Peaceable Schools Project. A partnership between the Tennessee Legal Community Foundation and the Tennessee Department of Education's School Safety Center, Peaceable Schools provides basic conflict resolution and classroom management training to teams of teachers and administrators from participating schools. Since 1997, a total of 866 school teams have received the basic three-day training. The Peaceable Schools program has been identified as a model for statewide implementation by the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Center for Conflict Resolution Education.

In addition to the Peaceable Schools Project, Tennessee's efforts include three other programs targeted at early elementary and middle school students. The Life Skills Training program is an alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention curriculum for students in grades 6, 7 and 8. While developed and more generally recognized as a drug

abuse prevention program, the Life Skills Training curriculum also includes a focus upon problem-solving and conflict resolution skills. Approximately 654 Tennessee schools are currently trained in this program.

The Second Step program is targeted primarily at preschool and early elementary school students (up to 3rd grade). The Second Step curriculum helps young children develop empathy, impulse control, anger management, and problem-solving skills. Over 1,963 Tennessee teachers and school counselors have received training and curriculum kits to date, including approximately 230 Head Start and pre-school teachers. Three training events were held during the current school year.

Tennessee schools have also been very active in addressing the problem of bullying. Since 2000 more than 625 teams from elementary and middle schools have been trained to implement the No Bullying model in Tennessee schools. The process is designed to change norms within the school so that teachers and students alike are actively working to address bullying or harassment whenever it may occur.

A more intensive model based on the work of Norwegian researcher Dr. Dan Olweus is currently being piloted in Tennessee. For the last 3 years, Tennessee has implemented this pilot program in 17 sites across the state. The Olweus program is a comprehensive, school-wide model designed for use in elementary, middle, or junior high schools. Program goals are to reduce and prevent bullying problems among school children and to improve peer relations.

In addition to its impact on reducing bullying, the program is designed to improve the social climate of classrooms and reduce related antisocial behaviors such as vandalism and truancy. Tennessee is one of a limited number of states that have hosted a training of trainers. As a result there is a cadre of 20 Certified Olweus trainers in Tennessee who are prepared to train schools in the strategies necessary to implement the program.

One shining example has been the successful implementation of the program in the Henry County School System. Director of Schools Rick Kriesky and all of his building administrators have launched a system-wide initiative. Every school in Henry County has a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee. These committees meet regularly to evaluate the progress of the program across the four areas of implementation: school-wide, classroom, individual and community.

Survey of School Districts

All Tennessee school districts responded to the 2006-2007 Conflict Resolution Survey. Results of the survey are presented on the following pages.

Conflict Resolution Survey

A copy of the survey document is attached as *Appendix 1*. The results of the survey are listed below:

1. *The following conflict resolution programs were utilized to prevent or reduce disruptive behavior and to foster conflict resolution skills by school districts:*

Response	Number of Districts Responding	Percentage of Districts Responding
Peaceable Schools	65	49%
Second Step	71	53%
Other	66	50%

2. *How many students in grades one through sixth were targeted and participated in conflict resolution programs?*

Of the Tennessee school districts reporting, a total of 575,005 students in grades first through sixth and 1,163 Tennessee schools participated in structured conflict resolution programs in the 2006-2007 academic year.

3. *Districts reported the following changes while implementing conflict resolution activities:*

Response	Number of Districts Responding	Percentage of Districts Responding
Improved School Climate	115	86%
Improved Staff/Student Morale	84	63%
Reduced Discipline Referrals	88	66%
Improved Student Behavior	104	78%
Increased Student Awareness/ Action	102	76%
Improved Parent/Community Involvement	67	50%
Other	16	12%

4. *What difficulties have you encountered or what technical assistance would help you to implement these required activities?*

The most frequent response, as with previous years, was a request to provide more funding for school counselors in Tennessee schools. Other suggestions included having more training opportunities, the availability of more resources, and making conflict resolution programs a part of the Tennessee Curriculum Frameworks.

Conclusion

Based on the information provided by surveyed schools, it appears that elementary schools are complying with the mandate of T.C.A. 49-2-118. The data collected also suggests that these programs have been effective in reducing problem behaviors and improving the overall climate of a school.

Additional information regarding conflict resolution programs is available by visiting the Office of School Safety and Learning Support Program's website at:

<http://www.tennessee.gov/education/learningsupport/tssc.shtml>.

Annual Character Education LEA Report

SY 2006 – 2007

(As Required by T.C.A. 49-6-1007)

Background:

In 1985, the General Assembly passed legislation mandating that “The course of instruction in all public schools shall include character education to help each student develop positive values and improve student conduct as students learn to act in harmony with their positive values and learn to become good citizens in their school, community and society.” In 1999, T.C.A. 49-6-1007 was amended to include that school systems report to the Department of Education and General Assembly information about their character education efforts and progress. Tennessee is one of 28 states that have legislation mandating or encouraging character education.

Based on the language of the mandate, social, ethical and emotional development should be an integral part of the school day. Experts in the field of character development, such as Tom Lickona, Kevin Ryan and others contend that character education should not be looked at as an “add on” to the curriculum, but as a foundation for all other learning that takes place. Character education can and should create school environments where students feel safe, valued and respected and that will lead to improvements in attendance, behavior and academics. The National Character Education Partnership (CEP) was established to provide educators with access to best practices, materials and resources. CEP, with the help of Tom Lickona, developed the “Character Education Quality Standards” (*Appendix2*) as a guide for implementing character development activities. Department staff has shared these standards with school personnel and encouraged their use, conducted workshops on the standards and posted the standards on the department’s website.

In August of 2004, the State Board of Education adopted the National Character Education Quality Standards and the state character education definition. The Character Education Quality Standards may serve as a guideline for developing high-quality character development initiatives.

Findings:

An Annual Report document (*Appendix-1*) was distributed to all Tennessee school districts through the Commissioner of Education's office. Data was collected and the information was compiled into the following report. The following findings are considered to be significant:

1. Tennessee's 136 school systems and special schools have identified a character education contact person for all correspondence and reporting to the Department of Education. With all districts reporting, it is obvious that students at all grade levels are participating in character education activities across the state.
2. Most school systems report using packaged character education programs, with Character Counts! (15 percent) being the most widely used and Word of the Week/Month next (12 percent), followed by Service Learning (10 percent), and Project Wisdom (3 percent). Many systems are turning to Safe Schools sponsored curricula/training (39 percent) such as Second Step, Peaceable Schools, No Bullying, and Life Skills. Systems continue to report using Service Learning both as a curriculum and a strategy integrated into specific content areas. A small percentage of districts have reported utilizing "teachable moments" brought on while covering skills within the state frameworks. As staffs learn more about program effectiveness, they are eliminating programs that are not contributing to student improvement; *over the past three years, the number of programs being used across the state has decreased from approximately 110 to 40.* Responsibility, respect and fairness are the three most targeted traits among school systems. *More information on Models/Programs and Targeted Traits can be found on Appendix-3 & 4.*
3. Cooperative learning, role-play, literature/stories, class discussion, journal writing and the arts are the most widely used strategies for conveying positive traits/values. More and more school districts are using service learning and peer mentoring/tutoring as strategies for developing positive character with (238,396)

students participating in these type programs across the state. School personnel have found these methods to be the least complicated to manage yet still provide maximum learning experiences for students. Using multiple strategies also helps accommodate various learning styles and increases opportunities for student success. *Sample Teaching Strategies and explanations are provided on Appendix-5.*

4. Eighty-six percent of school systems expressed improvement of school climate and sixty-three percent indicate improvement in student behavior since incorporating character-building skills into daily activities. Office referrals, suspensions and expulsions have decreased in sixty-six percent of schools responding. Seventy-eight percent report positive changes in staff/student morale (up 24 percent) from last year (2005-2006). Districts reported that parent/community involvement was an outcome of character education (50 percent) – that is an increase of 3 percent from last year. Reports submitted also show an increase in student awareness/action and improved staff buy-in/support of character development activities. *See Appendix-6 for a sample of System Comments regarding improvements and changes.*

5. A significant number of systems identified lack of time, lack of funding, lack of materials and need for teacher training as major obstacles to implementing effective character education activities. Those same systems also reported the Department of Education’s character education website, and department sponsored training as key resources being utilized in their character development initiatives. *See Appendix-6 for a sample of System Comments regarding improvements and changes.*

Other Accomplishments:

The Department of Education posted the first component of the Character Education Correlation Guide on the website. This Guide is based on the Tennessee K-12 Curriculum Frameworks skills that relate to character development. Easy to use character

education evaluation tools have also been made available. It is hoped that these materials will make it easier for local personnel to infuse character education into the daily curriculum and to better measure the progress being made.

Per T.C.A. 49-6-1007(d)(2), the Department integrated a new recognition program into the annual report requirement. Criteria emphasizing the use of best practices, community partnerships and a service element were used to identify high-quality character education initiatives (*Appendix-7*). ***Bridgeport Elementary School (Cocke County Schools)*** in Cocke County and ***Richard Hardy Memorial School (Richard City Schools)*** in Marion County were selected as 2007 Best Practices in Character Education Merit Award winners. Representatives from these schools were recognized and conducted a breakout session at the *TN Leadership in Education Conference* in October.

Since 1988, the reigning Miss Tennessee has served as the Spokesperson for a Safe and Drug-Free Tennessee addressing issues of drug/alcohol awareness and prevention and making responsible choices. Department staff decided to use Miss Tennessee's appointment to also support character education. Staff works with the current Miss Tennessee to develop her message around traits being identified and targeted by school districts. A section on the website provides classroom activities, take-home activities/parent materials and links to other character education sites that relate to Miss Tennessee's topic.

Next Steps:

Department of Education staff will continue to collect vital information on the character development of Tennessee students through the annual report and identify additional Best Practice Schools/Districts. Best practices in character education will be updated constantly and available to districts via our website at <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/learningsupport/titlevpartd/index.html> .

Staff will also work on ways to provide technical assistance to schools/systems on why/how to integrate character development into the School Improvement Plan and

School Safety Plan. The Department will continue to support character education via training events that will expand our existing Second Step PreK-3 training to PreK-5 and include a literacy component, as well as revive the sexual harassment training with a date violence companion piece during the upcoming school year.

**Annual Conflict Resolution and Character Education Report
SY 2006- 2007**

APPENDICES



Annual LEA Character Education and Conflict Resolution Report SY 2006-2007

As Required by T.C.A. 49-6-1007 and 49-2-118

T.C.A. 49-6-1007 requires the course of instruction in all public schools shall include character education. T.C.A. 49-2-118 states that each LEA shall implement for grades 1-6 an intervention program that utilizes conflict resolution and decision-making strategies.

School System:		Character Education Contact:	
Address:		City:	Zip:
Phone: () ()	FAX: () ()	Email:	
Participation: Character Education - No. of Schools: _____ No. of Students: _____ Conflict Resolution - No. of Schools: _____ No. of Students: _____ Service Learning - No. of Schools: _____ No. of Students: _____		Has a Character Education Advisory Committee been established? YES <input type="radio"/> NO <input type="radio"/>	

1. Character traits being targeted – *Select all that apply*

- Responsibility Trustworthiness Caring Other (specify): _____
- Respect Honesty Courage _____
- Fairness Self-discipline Citizenship _____

2. Character Education or Conflict Resolution Models/Programs being used – *Select all that apply*

- Character Counts! Project Wisdom Peaceable Schools
- Word of the Week/Month Second Step Other (specify): _____
- No Bullying Facing History & Ourselves _____
- LifeSkills Training Service Learning _____

3. Of the Conflict Resolution programs indicated above, how many times was the program(s) presented?

- Daily Once per month Other (specify): _____
- Once per week On an as-needed basis _____

4. How is character education integrated into the regular academic curriculum?

5. Provide an example of a teaching strategy used in the character education program and a summary of how well it works. (EX-cooperative learning, role-play, service learning projects, etc.)

6. What changes have occurred while implementing character education and conflict resolution activities? *Select all that apply*

- Improved School Climate Improved Student Behavior
- Improved Staff/Student Morale Increased Student Awareness/Action
- Reduced Discipline Referrals Improved Parent/Community Involvement
- Other (specify): _____

7. What difficulties have you encountered or what technical assistance would help you to implement these required activities?

Please return this form, no later than **JUNE 30, 2007**, to:
James Witty, Special Projects Coordinator
710 James Robertson Parkway, 5th Floor AJT
Nashville, TN 37243

OR

FAX: (615) 532 - 6638

CHARACTER EDUCATION QUALITY STANDARDS

*Developed by the Character Education Partnership
Endorsed by the TN Character Education Partnership*

Principle #1: Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character

Principle #2: Character is comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.

Principle #3: Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.

Principle #4: The school is a caring community.

Principle #5: To develop character, the school provides students opportunities for moral action.

Principle #6: Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.

Principle #7: Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation for developing good character.

Principle #8: The school staff is a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.

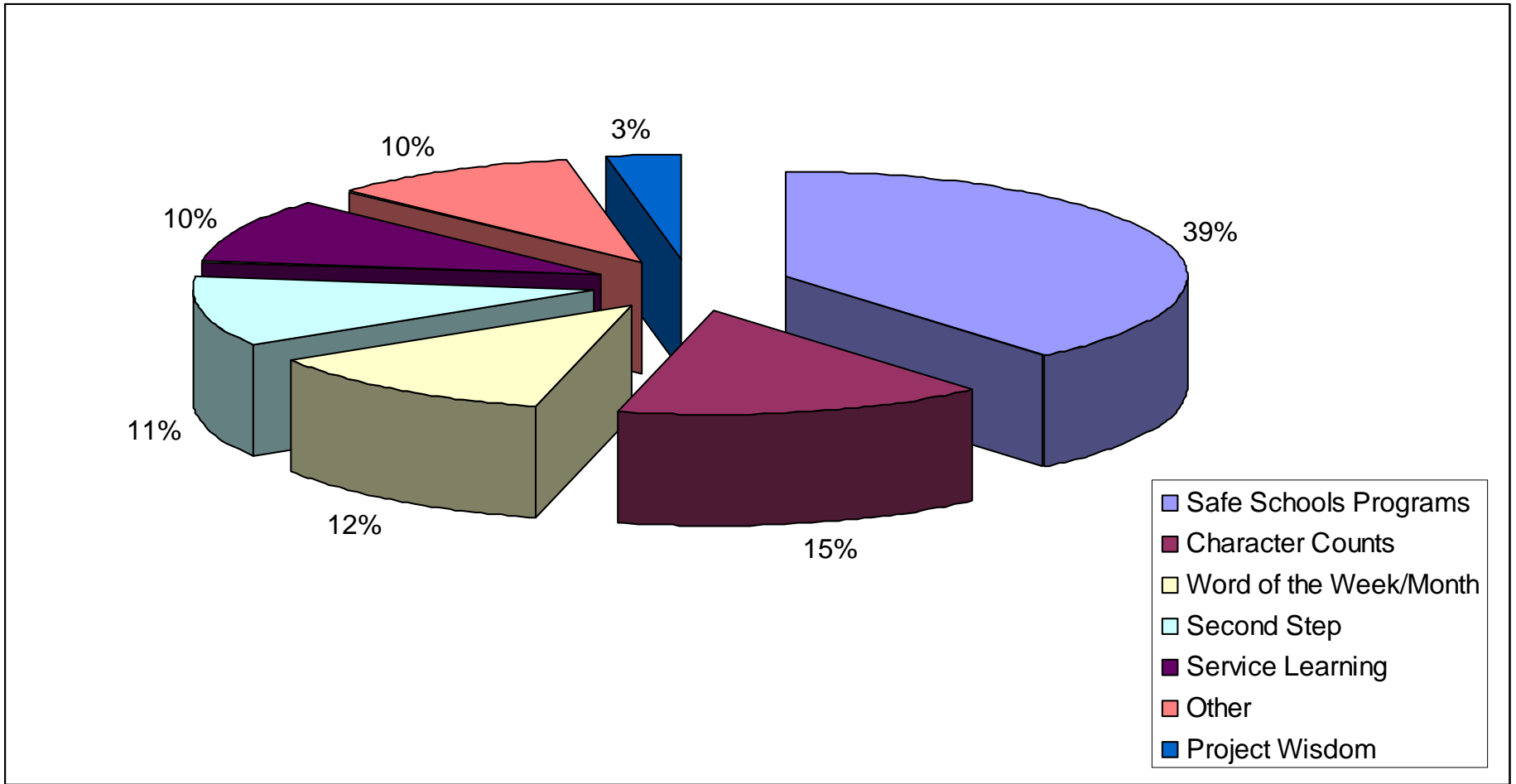
Principle #9: Staff and students demonstrate moral leadership.

Principle #10: The school recruits parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.

Principle #11: Evaluation of character education assesses the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

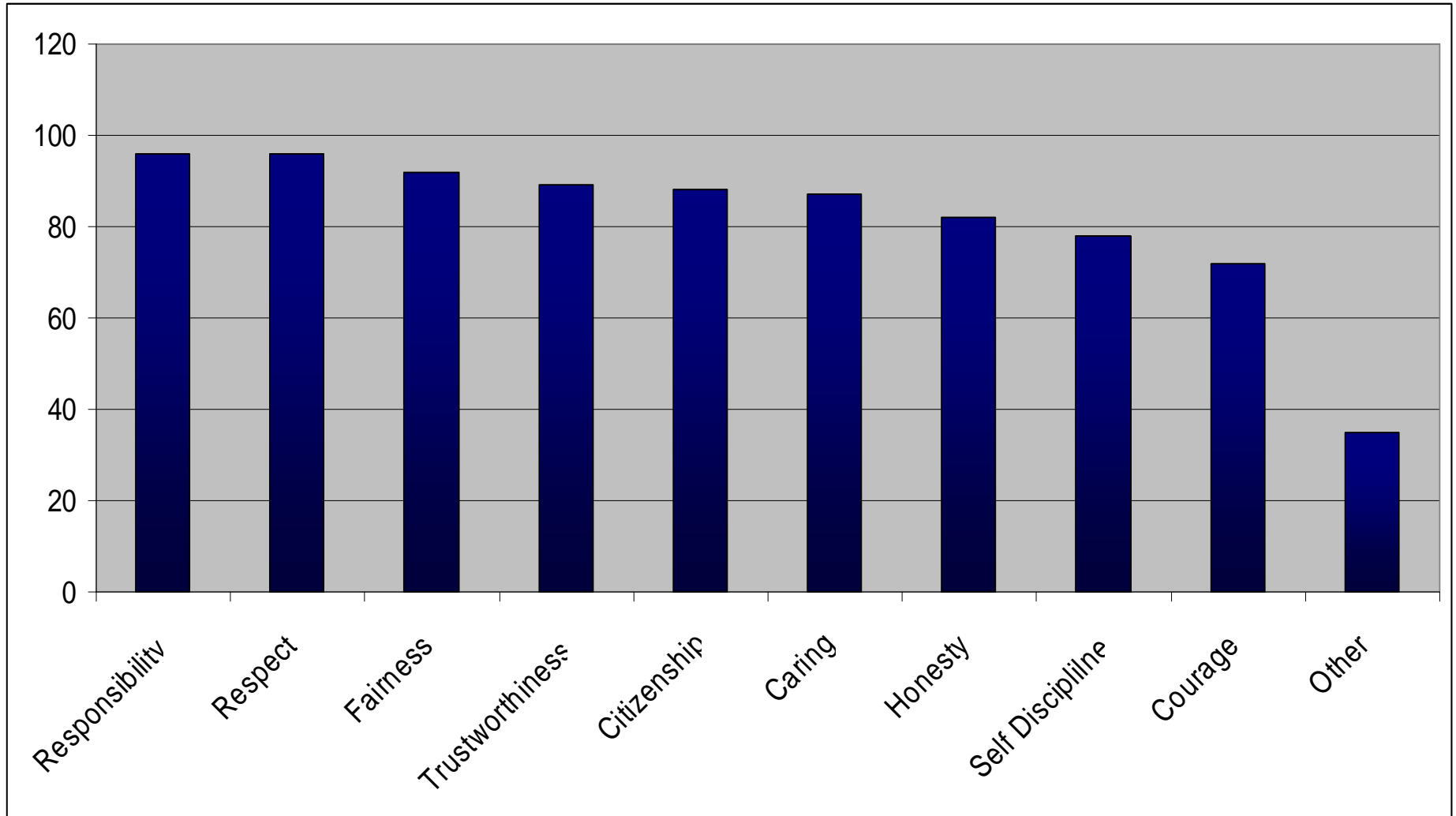
Models or Programs Being Used Statewide SY 2006-2007

(135 School Districts reporting including Special Schools: School for the Deaf, School for the Blind & York Institute)



Character Traits Being Targeted SY 2006-2007

(135 School Districts reporting including Special Schools: School for the Deaf, School for the Blind & York Institute)



2006-2007 Sample Teaching Strategies:

Service Learning Projects – Nursing Home adoptions, Homeless Shelter adoptions, Meals-on-Wheels projects, Habitat for Humanity projects, peer tutoring.

Small Cooperative Learning groups – Small group activities such as games, discussion cards, role-play and class projects.

Mentoring programs – High School students provide drug awareness and abstinence (self-respect, responsibility) information to younger students through role-play and facilitation of cooperative groups.

Role-play – Students are guided through role-play situations where they learn to react to different statements or actions by other people challenging them to use learned character traits to respond in the proper way.

Class Discussion – Effective in bringing to the students' attention the results of making poor choices; students work on improving decision-making skills.

Language Arts activities – Use of literature and short stories featuring specific character traits, reflective/creative writing activities, storytelling and creating and performing skits.

Fine Arts activities – Students create artwork, music/songs, skits and puppets to depict positive actions and good decision making.

Peer Mediation – Students learn to help each other work through problems and strengthen their interpersonal skills and understanding of the traits covered in class (i.e. fairness, respect and responsibility).

Character.net internet site – Students research/read topics in the character education model and respond in writing about the topic. Students post their writing for others to read and discuss.

SY 2006-2007 Sample of System Comments:

In ***Anderson County Schools***, district administrators report that the number of zero tolerance incidents have decreased at a local high school and attribute that to character education programs.

Benton County Schools reports that one school rose over \$8,000.00 during the past three years for Vanderbilt Children's Hospital as a part of a service learning activity.

Increased school attendance and improved student behavior is credited to conflict resolution and character education in ***Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools***.

Cleveland City Schools reports many successes in implementing the Second Step curriculum but contend that the time commitment is problematic with teachers trying to meet the academic requirements under No Child Left Behind.

Clinton City Schools cites that character education is not currently funded, therefore funding is needed to fully implement these type programs in their school district.

In ***Elizabethton City Schools***, officials cite the need for full-time guidance counselors at each elementary school to provide more time for classroom guidance and service learning projects.

Improved academic skills and positive self-esteem are reported outcomes at both the elementary and high school levels in ***Jackson County Schools*** due to character education.

Maury County Schools contend that a lack of funding makes it difficult to provide updated materials such as videos, charts, etc. that would help enhance the program.

Peer mediation training was offered last school year to over one hundred and fifteen teachers and administrators in ***Memphis City Schools***. Administrators report positive outcomes such as improved school climate and student behavior after implementing this professional development series.

In ***Obion County***, system administrators cite increased student awareness and action as a definite outcome of character education programs. Students participated in building a home for Habitat for Humanity during the reporting period.

Oneida Special School District suggests funding for a state-wide conference where best practices can be shared with school districts, as well as, the sharing of innovative ideas.

Wayne County Schools mention a need for funding to update materials. Administrators believe that when materials start appearing "dated" they lose much of their impact on students.

BEST PRACTICES IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

Application Process

As part of the legislative mandate (T.C.A. 49-6-1007) revised in 2004, the Department of Education will be recognizing schools that have developed model instructional methods and administrative policies for the delivery of character education. The Department will showcase the chosen practices at an appropriate statewide venue. Recognized schools/districts will receive a certificate of merit and will become part of a mentoring network for high-quality character education initiatives.

~ Directions:

- You may apply as a district or as individual schools. Provide the following information:
 - District name or official school name
 - Address
 - Contact person's Name, Phone, Fax and Email
 - Grade level and Number of Students
- Respond, in narrative form, to the questions below. Responses should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and no more than 3 pages in length. Supplementary materials should **not** be included.
- Submit **three (3)** copies to:
Laura Ellis, Character Education Coordinator
Tennessee Department of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway, 5th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243
- *Best Practices Applications* must be received on or before June 30, 2007.

~ Questions to Address:

- 1) What is the instructional method or administrative policy being recommended? How is it being implemented in the school/district and how does it contribute to character development?
- 2) What impact is the method or policy having on students/staff? Describe the skills, attitudes or behavioral changes that have occurred as a result of this practice.
- 3) Describe any community involvement related to the implementation of this strategy. Discuss how the parents/community is involved in supporting the character education strategy. What methods are used to communicate the goal of the activity?