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Designing and implementing a values education program. (Baltimore County Model) *Bonnie S. Copeland; Mary Ellen Saterlie.*

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Designing and Implementing a Values Education Program

By Bonnie S. Copeland and
Mary Ellen Saterlie

Here's how one school system approached implementing a values education program. Their efforts may provide ideas for other districts.

Most educators are vitally interested in values education. Encouragement and support come from parents, the business community, law enforcement agencies, and local government officials. The problem lies in creating a values education program that is acceptable to all segments of the community.

Designing the Program

The Baltimore County (Md.) Public Schools undertook a study of values education and ethical behavior in the fall of 1982. The superintendent of schools appointed a task force of 21 individuals who were representative of the diverse communities served by the county schools.

Baltimore County is a large school system of 85,000 students

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in 148 schools. The county surrounds Baltimore City, and extends north to the Pennsylvania border. It covers 610 square miles, and its population reflects a wide range of lifestyles, philosophies, and incomes.

Task force members were especially concerned about young people. The research indicated that significant interaction between parent and child was becoming quite limited; in some cases, such interaction averaged less than 15 minutes per week. This phenomenon occurred among the affluent as well as the poor. As a result, the values normally communicated from one generation to the next were being replaced by those generated by television, rock music and musicians, and peers.

Task force members invited community leaders to speak to them. They heard from three headmasters of prestigious private schools in the region, a former county executive now involved as a publisher and television news commentator, the dean of the University of Maryland School of Law, the chief executive of a chain of department stores, and a judge.

One of the most interesting sessions involved a fundamentalist minister and the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. It was from that discussion that the group had posed to it the question, "If you plan to teach values, who or what will be your moral example?" After long debate, the decision was made to base the values on the U. S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Involving community leaders in the

task force deliberations enabled the group to focus on the issues rather than their own differences. The speakers provided a broader picture of the problems, and because of their involvement, they were supportive when the recommendations were ready to be implemented.

The task force also developed and administered a survey for teachers and parents to gather their perceptions about values education. It included such questions as:

- Is it the responsibility of the public schools to teach values?
- What is your definition of values?
- Should teachers be acceptable role models for students?
- What kinds of teacher behaviors convey values?
- Are the current efforts of the Baltimore County Public Schools to teach values sufficient?

The results of the survey were enlightening. They showed a willingness to expand values education programs. The importance of the teacher as role model became especially clear. The group recognized that teachers are indeed role models, and that their behaviors strongly influence their students.

The task force also studied existing implications for values in the school program. The group found numerous allusions to values throughout the curriculum, although the word "values" was rarely used. Board policies had frequent references to values, morals, and ethics. The system's *Student Behavior Handbook* defined acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and discussed the

difference between right and wrong.

In addition, task force members debated questions such as "What is the nature of a just society?" and "What are the goals of a moral life?"

Definition of Values Education

In arriving at a definition of values education, the group decided that the topic was too complex to relegate to an isolated course or series of lessons. The following position statement was developed:

All education is infused with values. The ultimate goal of education is the positive influence of student behavior, and each student's values guide and help determine that behavior. In the process of teaching, the teacher's values are demonstrated to the students. In every class and throughout the school—indeed, throughout the school system—values are demonstrated through actions, procedures, policies, and attitudes from the board of education, to the superintendent and his staff, to the principal and teachers, to the cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and to the students.

Using the U. S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, "A Common Core of Values" for a democratic and pluralistic society was prepared. Included on the list are: compassion, courtesy, critical inquiry, due process, equality of opportunity, honesty, human worth and dignity, justice, knowledge, loyalty, patriotism, reasoned argument, respect for others' rights, responsibility, responsible citizenship, rule of law, self-respect, tolerance, and truth.

The task force also identified student behavior outcomes that should result from an emphasis on values edu-

cation. They were:

- Self-discipline
- Use of rational processes
- Living constructively in a pluralistic society
- Acting in an ethical manner.

Recommendations

The group took eight months to complete its study and to make recommendations. It recommended that each school create its own values committee, to be chaired by the principal and to include staff, community members, and students where appropriate, especially at the middle and high school levels. The school groups were to focus on the concerns of the school and the communities each served. The report of the countywide task force was to serve as a guide, but each school group was encouraged to be creative. The individual school groups began to work in January of 1984.

Implementation

In the first year, the school committees involved more than 2,000 people. In the ensuing years, more and more community and staff members have served on the task forces.

Placing the responsibility for identifying unique areas of concern on the schools and having them create plans has resulted in innovative and effective programs. Projects such as computer ethics, coaches as role models, academic honesty, and "culture nights" to celebrate the variety of ethnic backgrounds in a community are a small sampling of

the hundreds of programs that have emerged.

The countywide PTA Council has supported the program with a pamphlet entitled "Values Education: Questions Parents Ask." This pamphlet is distributed to the home of every student in the school system. The PTA Council also initiated a series of "values fairs." Held each year in a different area of the county, these fairs attract more than 1,000 people each.

Through the curriculum development process, values concepts have been included in new and existing curricula. In addition, teachers are encouraged to incorporate values concepts and activities into their daily lessons.

A statement of "Precepts, Beliefs, and Values in the Baltimore County Public Schools" was developed by the superintendent. It is posted in each school, and serves as a succinct reminder of the underlying philosophy of the school system.

The Chamber of Commerce, the county government, the PTA Council, and the school system collaborated on two full-day conferences on "Values Education and Ethics in the Workplace." The improved quality of life in a

community when ethical behavior and values are prized was the theme.

Partnerships with schools and local businesses have emphasized values and role modeling. The Baltimore Regional Conference of Governments, for example, incorporated values study in its recommendations for the development of the Workforce 2000.

The Next Steps

The Baltimore County Public Schools are currently developing two publications: a "how to" booklet for incorporating a values program in a local school, and a list of the types of values education programs and activities that schools have developed. The system is also expanding community involvement with the values program, and is planning an evaluation of the program, now in its six year of implementation.

The work of the Baltimore Schools has linked parents, schools, and the community in striving for improved communication and reinforcement of a system of moral and ethical examination that should strengthen the character of every student.

Six Strategies of Leadership

The *Personnel Journal* recently listed these steps as being most important in leadership: Develop a vision; keep cool; encourage risk; invite dissent;

simplify situations; care about dealing honestly with the stakeholders in your company