TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Character Education in the Classroom
Develop Moral and Ethical Behavior in Students
An Online Graduate Course

Course Description

Character Education in the Classroom examines the role of educators in developing moral and ethical behavior in students by assisting teachers in defining and identifying character traits that would be important in their school. Character education has become a very popular theme in education since the 1990's because of the increase of violence in schools, discipline concerns, and a national call to action for character education.

Educators will explore different theories of moral development and identify skills that can be integrated into the classroom. Practical application of the concepts shared is an important part of this course. Teachers will prepare lessons/vignettes that they will use in their classrooms. They will analyze and critique these lessons to see the value of promoting character development in students.

Another aspect of this course is the concept that the teacher can be an effective model for their students. Therefore, teachers will identify their own personal character strengths and explore how these strengths work to aid the teacher when problems occur in the classroom.

It is the intent of the author that this course stretch beyond the classroom and that character education be developed into not only a school wide program but involve the community as well. Exploring avenues to involve the entire school, parents, and the community are addressed in this course.

Objectives

Participants will develop skills to:
- Examine the need for character development in schools
- Explore historical perspectives on education
- Discover avenues to create a moral community in the classroom
- Identify the teacher's role in the process of fostering the character of his/her students
- Develop and implement classroom activities that promote character development
- Analyze and critique classroom curriculum in relationship to incorporating character development
- Establish guidelines for studying controversial issues
- Develop a plan for moral disciplining of students
- Identify ways to develop character through conflict and problem solving
- Explore the process of building a school-wide character education program

- Examine ways of engaging parents in promoting the character of their children
- Explore community involvement in supporting moral development in schools

Curriculum Design

The basic methodology is experiential through work on prescribed topics, issues, and practical application of shared concepts. Participants will prepare, analyze, and critique lessons that can be used to promote character development within the students in their classrooms. This is an online sixty-hour, three credit online graduate level that is completed over a thirteen-week period.

Hardware and Computer Skills Requirements

Students may use either a Macintosh computer or a PC with Windows 95 or higher. Students should possess basic word processing skills and have Internet access with an active e-mail account. Students also are expected to have a basic knowledge of how to use a Web browser, such as Netscape Navigator, Microsoft Internet Explorer or America Online's (AOL) browser. To download a browser at no cost, visit one of the following Web sites: Netscape.com, Microsoft.com, or AOL.com.

Course Materials

The required textbook for this course is *Educating for Character – How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* by Thomas Lickona. The textbook and course materials will be provided for all students. A variety of readings will be referenced throughout the course. Other supplemental readings will be provided.

Module Outline

Module One: Setting the Stage - The Case for Character Education
Contents**:**
- Defining character
- Identifying the components of character
- Exploring the importance of character education
- Examining the school's involvement in character education

Module Two: Encouraging Moral Reflection
Contents:
- Identifying historical perspectives on education
- Exploring Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development
- Gaining understanding of the need for moral development
- Identifying skills that can be integrated into the classroom

Module Three: Creating a Moral Community in the Classroom
Contents:
- Examining the teacher's role in the classroom environment
- Helping students connect with each other

- Discovering ways to help students care for each other
- Improving the quality of group interaction

Module Four: The Teacher's Role in Nurturing Character
Contents**:**
- Examining the six E's of character training
- Exploring the virtues that promote commitment
- Understanding how to respond when kids don't know the answer

Module Five: Cultivating Character through Curriculum
Contents:
- Examining the curriculum - What is most worth knowing?
- Identifying where character education fits
- Developing lessons that teach moral literacy

Module Six: Teaching Controversial Issues
Contents:
- Structuring moral discussions
- Exploring whether teachers should express their own views
- Establishing guidelines for studying controversial issues

Module Seven: A Morally Disciplined Classroom
Contents:
- Understanding the role of the teacher as the moral authority in the classroom
- Setting up classroom rules
- Dealing with the consequences of broken rules

Module Eight: Developing Character through Conflict
Contents:
- Understanding self-control in a morally disciplined classroom
- Recognizing the role of perceptions in evaluating values
- Assessing discipline, control and problem solving

Module Nine: Building a Community of Virtue School-Wide
Contents:
- Assessing a schools character education program
- Identifying key elements for effective programs
- Examining the mission statement
- Creating a positive moral culture in the school

Module Ten: Engaging Parents and the Community in Character Education
Contents:

- Exploring changes that have affected the home-school partnership
- Promoting moral conversations between parents and children
- Encouraging parents in leadership roles
- Identifying means of soliciting community involvement

Student Requirements

1. Actively participate in all Forum activities.
2. Complete all readings and reflection assignments.
3. Complete the Classroom Lessons project.
4. Write a paper assessing the school's climate.

Assignments	Points	Grading Scale	
Forum Participation	40	100-93	- **A**
Reading Assignments	30	92-85	- **B**
Project: Classroom Lessons	15	84-77	- **C**
Project: Assessing School Climate	15		
	100 points		

Student Academic Integrity

Participants guarantee that all academic class work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one's own), is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and are subject to disciplinary action.