



COL·LEGI
BELL-LLOC



8 CULTURAL FORCES TO BUILD CHARACTER
IBSC ANNUAL CONFERENCE, St. Mark's School of Texas, 2022

WHAT WORKS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

Berkowitz and Bier, 2005

**“CHARACTER EDUCATION DEPENDS IN A
LARGE PART ON THE DEGREE TO WHICH
STUDENTS BOND TO, BECOME ATTACHED TO,
OR FEEL A PART OF THEIR SCHOOLS”**

**“SHAPE THE CULTURE AMONG THE ADULTS
IN BUILDINGS BEFORE THEY CAN
EFFECTIVELY TACKLE CHARACTER
EDUCATION AND WHOLE SCHOOL CULTURE”**

**“GOOD TEACHING CANNOT BE REDUCED TO
TECHNIQUE; GOOD TEACHING COMES FROM
THE IDENTITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE
TEACHER”**

THE COURAGE TO TEACH, P.J. PALMER

HOW TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CHARACTER IN OUR SCHOOLS?

CREATING CULTURES OF THINKING, R. RITCHHART

**ORGANIZED
DEPRESSING
NICE
FRUSTRATING
HAPPY
BITTER
FREE
WORRIED
EXCITING
SAD
SOOTHING
DISAPPOINTING
DIFFERENT
AWESOME
BORING
ENGAGING
EXHAUSTING
NORMAL
ENTHUSIASTIC
ANNOYING
ACTIVE
FUNNY
THREATENING
MOTIVATING
FREE
PROUD**

UNCOVERING THE OLD STORY

“ *SCHOOL* CULTURE IS ABOUT *SCHOOL* MESSAGE. IF YOU CAN FIND, AND CHANGE, ENOUGH OF THE SOURCES OF THESE MESSAGES, YOU WILL CHANGE THE CULTURE ”

Carolyn Taylor (2005)

1. EXPECTATIONS

Those beliefs that shape our behavior enhancing our possibilities or limiting our potential.

WHAT BELIEFS SHOULD WE PROMOTE IN OUR SCHOOL? WHAT PRECONCEPTIONS WE NEED TO OVERCOME?

~~“I'm like that, I can't do anything about it”~~

“Our qualities are not fixed: they can grow with effort”

~~“Why do we have to do that? It doesn't count for grades”~~

“There are powerful reasons to strive beyond rewards or punishments”

~~“I don't like him, there's nothing to do”~~

“We use to like people when we get know them better”

2. LANGUAGE

It shapes behavior, interactions, thinking, attention, and feelings

HOW SHOULD WE COMMUNICATE TO REINFORCE THIS EXPECTATION?

EXAMPLES:

- **COMMUNITY:** Using "we" or "our" instead of "I" and "mine"
- **IDENTITY:** engaging instead of teaching *about*
- **PRAISE:** Instead of labeling wrong answers, ask: "what makes you say that?"

3. OPPORTUNITIES

Virtue couldn't be learned if it couldn't be practiced

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES CAN WE PROVIDE OUR STUDENTS TO EXERCISE THIS STRENGTH OR CHANGE SOME EXPECTATIONS?

EXAMPLE:

Growth mindset: a difficult challenge that we know they can overcome.

Cooperation: Launch a project that requires the involvement of the whole group.

EXAMPLE:

8 CULTURAL FORCES TO BUILD CHARACTER

4. INTERACTIONS

No significant learning occurs without significant relationships

WHAT KIND OF INTERACTIONS COULD HELP ACHIEVE THAT EXPECTATION? HOW TO ENCOURAGE THEM?

EXAMPLE:

Openness to others: writing task, "What would you like your teacher to know about you as a student?"

Responsibility: in groups talk about essential agreements in our classroom.

5. TIME

Recognizing time as a statement of our values

**WHEN COULD WE DO THAT? HOW OFTEN?
HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?**

EXAMPLE:

- **Tidiness:** last 5 minutes of my lessons to keep things how it were at the beginning.
- **Kindness:** I'll be at the door at the beginning of the day to welcome my students.

6. ROUTINES

SET OF SHARED PRACTICES THAT CONSTITUTE
A GROUP'S WAY OF DOING SOMETHING

WHAT ROUTINE CAN WE
ESTABLISH TO HOLD THESE
OPPORTUNITIES AND
INTERACTIONS?

EXAMPLE:

Prudence: Use the "Me with Myself" routine to solve a dilemma

Open-mindedness: With the "Circle of Viewpoints" discover how things change depending on the observer and the circumstances

Brainstorm a list of different perspectives and then use this script skeleton to explore each one:

1. I am thinking of ... the topic... From the point of view of ... the viewpoint you've chosen	2. I think ... describe topic from your viewpoint. Be an actor - take on the character of your viewpoint	3. A question I have from this viewpoint is ... ask a question from this viewpoint
4. What new ideas do you have?		
5. What new questions do you have?		

7. MODELING

Our actions are constantly on display for our students

HOW CAN WE MAKE VISIBLE IN OUR LIFE THOSE THINGS WE WANT TO REINFORCE?

EXAMPLE:

- **Honesty:** Acknowledge when I made a mistake and apologize
- **Perseverance:** Practice a think-aloud with something difficult

8. ENVIRONMENT

“THE BODY LANGUAGE” OF THE SCHOOL, CONVEYING ITS VALUES AND KEY MESSAGE EVEN IN THE ABSENCE OF ITS MEMBERS

WHICH ENVIRONMENT COULD HELP TRANSMIT AND REINFORCE THAT STRENGTH OF CHARACTER OR CHANGE THEIR VIEW?

EXAMPLE:

Open-mindedness: Occasionally changing classroom layout

Gratitude: Use the blackboard to let some message of gratitude.



ESSENTIAL AGREEMENTS (RESPONSIBILITY)

EXPECTATIONS



Idea to overcome: "norms are boring", "without detention, anything is permitted"

Individualism,

OPPORTUNITIES



Let our students the chance to define their own norms.

Allow them to talk about it

TIME



- At 2n week of course, so you could spent some time establishing school values
- Let time so students could think individually, before seeking consensus
- Revisit the agreement at the beginning of each term

MODELING



- Use those agreements in your daily work in that classroom.

LANGUAGE



Use "agreement" instead of "norm"

Language of virtue: connecting ethics to good, awareness to freedom, consensus, happiness...

Avoid judgement on their proposals

ROUTINES



1. "Me with myself": consider what helps them strive and learn. 5 min.
2. In groups of 4, let them talk about things stated on point 1. 10 min.
3. Every couple write their essential agreements on a sheet. "Talk with chalks" routine. 15 min.
4. Give the sheets to the teacher. Summarize and vote the final agreement.

INTERACTIONS



- In groups of 4.
- Heterogenic groups made by teacher

ENVIRONMENT



- Put it on a visible place in classroom



Gràcies

Thank you

txema.simon@bell-lloc.org