



Minnesota Character Council

CHARACTER Connect

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Minnesota Character Council

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The MCC is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange. To learn more visit www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-character-council

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The Main Thing

“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

These are the words and leadership wisdom of the late Dr. Stephen Covey, a recognized authority on leadership effectiveness and author of the best-selling book, “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.”

The reality of contemporary society and challenges of our communities with fake news, misinformation, lack of confidence in institutions, trust and actual lies, is a good time to take a fresh look at our own leadership focus regarding where we spend our time, invest our energy and resources, and how we foster character education and development.

Character does count. The importance of our leadership focus is very important. Are we placing a high enough priority addressing character education?

“For most of our nation’s history, character education was the center of the school’s mission,” according to Dr. Thomas Lickona, a national leader in the character education movement and author of “Character Matters.”

Horace Mann, often called the “Father of American education,” said it is important to read, write, spell and learn math, science, geography and history, but it is even more important to build good character, according to Hal Urban, a strong spokesperson for building character in schools and author of “Lessons From the Classroom.”

“To educate a person in mind and not morals is to educate a menace to society” are the words of former President Teddy Roosevelt, a strong advocate of leading by example and advocating moral values.

“Intelligence plus character – that’s the goal of education” are the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the famous ‘I have a dream’ civil rights leader.

“Hire for character, train for competency” is the conclusion of extensive research of law enforcement officers by Matt Bostrom, Ph.D., former Ramsey County Sheriff.

The words of these leaders about the importance of character and character education and development are very challenging to those of us in leadership roles, particularly in school settings.

To develop character and the virtues of character is of major importance to students, educators, business and organization leaders, and communities.

Leaders make things happen. Leaders provide inspiration and lead by example.

Our very future is dependent on the quality of our future leaders. Leaders provide vision, develop strategy, allocate resources, make decisions, and take action. Many in leadership positions place a high priority on character education.

The Main Thing . . . Continued

Dr. John Gardner, who served under six Presidents, authored books on leadership and founded the citizen's advocacy group Common Cause said, "Many people of rank and status are not leaders at all. The greater portion of those in a position to lead are time servers, but the miracle is that the remaining portion, the saving remnant, roll up their sleeves and lead."

To address character education and character development needs, to recognize the opportunities to make a positive impact, and to learn of existing resources available, takes leadership. Leaders need to place a high priority on the topic and take action.

Stephen Covey's advice is that of effective leadership: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." It's something to think about and take action on!

—By Don Salverda: member of the Minnesota Character Council; leadership consultant; former Ramsey County commissioner, and; former president of the Association of Minnesota Counties

Seeking Applications For 2021 Minnesota Promising Practices



Has your school created and implemented a unique and successful practice that promotes character development? Apply online for a 2021 Minnesota Promising Practices Award! **Applications are due Feb. 12, 2021.**

Promising Practices are unique and effective practices created and implemented by schools, districts and youth serving organizations that promote character development in Pre-K–12 students and exemplify one or more of the 11 Principles.

Visit the Synergy & Leadership Exchange website at www.synergyexchange.org under "Celebrate" for more information and to view award-winning practices.

Providing Students with Opportunities for Moral Action

The 11 Principles from Character.org are based on the practices of effective schools, decades of research and the wisdom of leading thinkers and practitioners in the field. As a framework they define excellence in character education and serve as guideposts for schools to plan, implement, evaluate and sustain a character initiative. Principle 5 of the 11 Principles focuses on the role of moral action in the process of effective character education. Below is excerpted text from the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education, 2018 revision:

Service provides students an opportunity to practice putting their core values into action and demonstrate intellectual and civic character. To develop the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of their character, students need many and varied opportunities to grapple with real-life challenges (e.g., how to plan and carry out an important responsibility, work as part of a team, negotiate for peaceable solutions, recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas, and identify and meet school and community needs). Through repeated experiences and reflection, students develop appreciation for and commitment to acting on their core values. Schools with a culture of character regularly provide ways to serve the needs of their families and community. When providing service to others, the school follows guidelines for effective community service and service learning to include student voice and choice, integration of service into the curriculum, and reflection. In the practice of service learning students are constructive learners—they learn best by doing. In addition to serving the community, moral action can include student leadership to advance topics such as conflict resolution, restorative practices, bully resistance, academic integrity, and sportsmanship.

In this principle, it is important for students to learn to see and fill a need. They need to understand service is important, whether it be community service or service learning. When students participate in the decision-making process about service experiences, it takes their learning to a new level.

It is critical to know the difference between community service and service learning, both of which are valuable. Community service is defined as voluntary work intended to help people in an identified area of

Providing Students with Opportunities for Moral Action . . . Continued

need. Service learning is an experiential teaching strategy that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service. Both of these service types create strong community connections, value an individual's ethical growth and civic responsibility, and meet real needs in the local community and beyond.

Character Resources

- [The Gratitude Project: How the Science of Thankfulness Can Rewire Our Brains for Resilience, Optimism, and the Greater Good](https://bit.ly/2Locgfh); <https://bit.ly/2Locgfh>
- [Civic Education in the Elementary Years](https://bit.ly/3hRWOUd) by Sheldon Berman, *School Administrator Magazine*, September 2020; <https://bit.ly/3hRWOUd>
- [Warning: Humans in the Workplace](https://bit.ly/3oqXaEs) by Tom Laughlin, blogpost from Ethical Leaders in Action, Dec. 5, 2020; <https://bit.ly/3oqXaEs>
- [The Intersection of Developmental Relationships, Equitable Environments, and SEL](https://bit.ly/2XfMtIL), Search Institute, 202; <https://bit.ly/2XfMtIL>
- [Spring 2021 Virtual Forum](https://www.character.org/forum), March 3-5. Dive deeper with character education. Live keynotes featuring Angela Duckworth, Larry Nucci and Karen Niemi. 30+ recorded breakout sessions that can be accessed during or after the Forum; <https://www.character.org/forum>

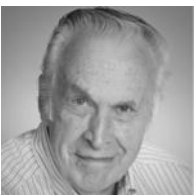
Proposed Revisions to Character Development Education Legislation

The Minnesota Character Council is proposing changes to MN Statute 120B.232 on character development education and welcomes your comments. A PDF with original language and proposed changes can be found at <https://www.synergyexchange.org/proposed-ce-legislation>.

In Memoriam: Bob Brown and Don Craighead



Bob Brown, Minnesota Character Council member and former co-chair, passed away November 14, 2020. Brown started his career as a public school teacher, coach and counselor. He taught at the University of St. Thomas for more than 40 years as professor of education leadership. Brown founded the St. Thomas National Youth Sports Program, a free academic and sports summer camp that served hundreds of low-income youths each summer. Brown served 10 years in the Minnesota State Senate, was the Minnesota Republican Party State Chairman, and later National Committeeman. Brown was a researcher, author, member on many boards, and consultant to industry, public and private schools, and the national secretary of education. Bob was a shining example of civic mindedness. In 2019 he was presented with the inaugural "Champion of Character" award for consistently demonstrating positive character as a visible role model. Bob was committed to character because, "The need for a more responsible American society, which respects individuals and cultures so we can continue to be a model for the rest of the world."



Don Craighead, Minnesota Character Council member, passed away at age 86 on December 18, 2020. Don was an engineer, entrepreneur and successful business owner. After selling his business to employees, he spent the next 30 years giving back as a volunteer, mentor and connecting hundreds of people and organizations. Don's passion for connecting people was inspiring. The connections he made were sincere and intentional, passing on the best names to help with whatever one was working on. He was recognized with many awards over the years, most recently as the first recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from Robotics Alley and the Hill Legacy Award from Century College. Don was committed to character because, "Ethics is the foundation of good citizenship, something for which we need to keep striving."

The Minnesota Character Council and Synergy & Leadership Exchange are grateful for the leadership and support from these two beloved colleagues; they will be deeply missed!