



# Re/Viewing Character Education

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A teacher-research group was formed in an elementary school during a sustained initiative to implement character education. The teachers were interested in learning how values, such as respect, responsibility, caring and excellence, were internalized and modelled on the school premises. They also wondered what they could do to ensure character education initiatives were realized beyond the confines of the school to support students and their families. It was hoped that as a result of the study and its emphasis on character education, some parts of their school lives and work would be improved.

## Implementing and Analyzing Character Education

Over four years, the school engaged students in lessons, activities, assemblies, and hallway art displays related to character education. Teachers discussed respect, responsibility, caring, joy, excellence, kindness, cooperation and other values and virtues with their students. Parents/caregivers and inter-agency support personnel, both inside and outside the school, participated in the initiative.

In September, 2003, many of the teachers responsible for school assemblies and “values” projects came together as a planning and research group for the school. The teacher-researchers spoke informally about character education initiatives in the school with teachers, students, and their caregivers. They also

gathered information through a survey of staff members, student focus group discussions, a survey of parents/caregivers, and discussions with the school social worker, Indian/Métis Education Worker, and public health nurse. Data-gathering and analysis occurred throughout the project, with results shared with school staff to support reflection and further direct energies related to character education.

## What They Said...

Staff, parents/caregivers and inter-agency support personnel supported the school’s attention to character education. For example, they said:

*I believe that this is of vital importance!!! With everyone’s busy schedules, it is great to have children exposed to positive values from many directions.*

– Parent/caregiver

*My students use the vocabulary that I teach . . . they frequently use my teaching examples in their play and conversation with others.*

– Teacher

*I believe that direct instruction of values is necessary as well as integrated instruction. We often expect students to just know what is right without explaining it to them, and that is not enough.*

– Support worker

The response from students was more mixed. Generally, students had noticed the values/

