

Character Education Year End Grant Report

Tracy Wright, BLaST I.U. 17

July 12, 2009

Description of the Project

The CFTT grant helped offset the costs of the character education curriculum implemented at the Bradford, Lycoming, and Sullivan Tioga (BLaST) Intermediate Unit 17/ Northern Tier Counseling (NTC) partial hospitalization program in the 2008-2009 school year. I was trained as a trainer in character education by a national organization, CharacterCounts.org, in October of 2008. A mental health therapist from NTC who also works in the children's program with me attended the conference as well. Together we came back from this excellent training and trained all of the teachers and NTC staff in the Monroe-Franklin Elementary school building. I then trained 30+ more teachers at BLaST through in-service opportunities. Since the close of this school year, I have also spoken to three community organizations about the importance of character education in our schools. This character education curriculum affected children from every school in Bradford County.

Goals of the Project

The goal of the project was to implement a character education program that was holistic. In other words, I did not want character education to be a class. I wanted it to be a teaching philosophy that was integrated into all the content areas. The ultimate goal was to teach children with a common vocabulary about the importance of developing positive character traits which will make them contributing members to families and communities. Theoretically, this character education philosophy also has the potential of lessening school violence, disrespect, behavioral problems, and community crime.

Steps Used to Carry Out the Project

1. Attendance at the CharacterCounts trainers' training in October 2008
2. Training all teachers and NTC staff in our program
3. Training other teachers at BLaST through in-service time
4. Implementing the character education curriculum at Monroe-Franklin Elementary School
5. Acting as a resource teacher to other staff in the area of character education
6. Performing a character education play in the spring
7. Hosting a talent show and open house in the spring
8. Presenting information to community organizations about character education

Problems Encountered and How I Overcame Them

I did not encounter any problems with implementing character education this year. The philosophy behind character education is such a positive one that it is readily accepted by school leaders and staff. Who does not want to work towards creating better kids?

One small hurdle was overcoming the idea that character education is an add-on curriculum or a class (or a special program). I worked hard to convince some teachers that character education is a teaching philosophy that needs to be integrated into all that we do and teach. I believe I did this by serving as an example and resource to other teachers.

Lessons Learned

I learned that children will buy into character education and will learn quickly from it if you invest the time into doing it. Character education does take time and practice. Teachers must remember to pull out character traits, conflict resolutions in stories, heroes, etc. It requires some planning and a lot of engagement of students. I am proud of all that was done with character education in our program this year. I would like to see the message get out to all of the schools about the importance of integrating character education. I would not do anything differently except to try to reach more kids and schools. I do not feel a lot of school administrators put enough emphasis on character development, especially in grades 6-12.

Words of Advice

There is nothing more important than the character of a child. We put so much emphasis on state standards but at what cost? It is really easy to do both if you pay attention to what you are doing. I would love to teach other teachers to teach character while hitting the standards. It is so easy if you just pay attention. Wouldn't it be great to have smart, nice, respectful, community citizens in our classrooms? My advice to other teachers is to role model positive character traits to your students, talk to your students about character development, and teach them to identify character strengths in themselves.

Note: Tracy has extensive resources in character education including lessons, teaching strategies, writing prompts, etc. She would be glad to train others or pass on resources. Just call or email her. Since there is way too much material and some of it is copyright protected she was not able to attach or provide copies of all the character education curriculum she has. She is however able to forward helpful documents to people interested in implementing Character Education in their classrooms. Contact information – Tracy Wright – email: twright@iu17.org – Telephone: 570-673-3724.