

Considering the Assessment of Character Education Programs from the 1920's and 1930's

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Character education has resurfaced in the 1990's with enthusiasm and widespread implementation across the nation. A recent search of ERIC documents for character education-themed articles revealed over 1,000 entries in the last year alone. Increased public attention resulting in a preponderance of character education goals set forth by school boards and administrators is not a new phenomenon, however. As in contemporary times, in the 1920's and 1930's, programs devoted to the development of good character were widespread. Almost all schools in America had adopted a formal character education curriculum, with various rationales, objectives, and character traits to be emphasized. Events leading up to America's "golden age" of character education reflected the socio-cultural tensions of the times. At the turn of the century, America had experienced success in the Spanish-American War, foreshadowing expanded military involvement in the World Wars in the next 50 years. Continued growth in the industrial sector led to more urban job opportunities, and a migration began from rural areas to larger cities. Many Americans perceived that the phenomena of burgeoning urban centers brought with it increased social ills. Writing in the periodical *Education* in 1914, Charles Taylor noted, "The lure of the street, the unsavory moving pictures, the yellow journal, the low comedy of so many vaudeville performances—and be it said, of so many so-called 'comic' journals and supplements—all have their effect" (p. 224). At the same time, this country experienced an increased flow of immigrants, and populist calls for teaching "the American way" emerged. According to Cunningham (1992), "the pressures of this influx of foreign-born was compounded in many educator's minds by the view that even the American-born population was seriously deficient in the basic requirements of citizenship" (p. 9).

An examination of the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature from the period indicates that character education was a heavily-reported topic throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. The number of articles about character education peaked in 1907 and 1913, while the number "explodes" throughout the second decade, most especially in the late 1920's (Cunningham, 1992, p. 7).

Phase I of this study (Nickell and Field, in press) analyzed and reported the character education programs of three states (Pennsylvania, Iowa, and New York) and three cities (Washington, D.C., Denver, and Birmingham). Each of the program reports described the progress of its public school character education initiative during the 1920's and 1930's. In preparing their own character education curriculum, New York state teachers and administrators "analyzed the provisions for character education in the syllabuses or statutes of 41 states and of 57 cities of the United States, together with an account of several organized, privately financed efforts toward character education and a considerable correspondence with prominent leaders interested in character education or child guidance" (1931, p. 21).

Researchers have studied the effectiveness of character education for decades, especially in the 1920's and 1930's by Evans (1938), Hartshorne & May (1930) and McKown (1935) and in contemporary times by Field (1996), Kirshenbaum (1992), Leming (1997), McClellan (1992), Nickell & Field (in press), and Wynne (1997). This study uses descriptive analysis techniques to examine three character education programs from the 1920's and 1930's, with specific emphasis on methods and resources utilized to assess the progress of each. It provides a summary of the burgeoning psychological and educational testing trends of the period, and details the state programs in Pennsylvania and New York and the city program in Denver. Supplementary data were provided by various reporting instruments from schools across the nation during the period of study.

Development and Implementation of Character Tests

The 1920s and 30s were situated in an era of widespread and growing fascination with mental measurement, or psychometrics. The seeming power of standardized aptitude and achievement measures to paint lively and believable pictures of the individual's mental capacity and progress were all but unquestioned. It followed then, that if intelligence could be measured, so could another psychological phenomena heretofore only surmised – character. Thus, educators of this period witnessed the development and testing of a vast array of strategies for quantifying a person's character. The scientific approach to character "caused tension among those who believed that traditional values and practices had already been severely undermined by the scientific attitude toward morality and religion" (Cunningham, 1992, p. 17).

Goodwin Watson (1927) found that in 1926 alone, at least 167 "studies" were written about the topic of character tests. It should be noted that the "studies" described by Watson include "those . . . which develop new instruments, . . . attempts to make use of existing instruments" (1927, p. 1), as well as examinations of findings from various instruments. The results of his meta-analysis are interesting.

In categorizing the studies he found, he introduces the ways in which researchers of the period were attempting to examine character:

"Seven per cent . . . are summaries of work done by others; 16 per cent deal with ratings, 8 per cent with tests of social attitude and information, 5 per cent with moral attitudes, 4 per cent with other related attitudes and information; 4 per cent deal with the concept introversion-extroversion; 11 per cent represent further work with some of the older and better known tests; 8 per cent are studies of interest, usually occupational interest; 11 per cent may be classified as based upon a case-study approach; 10 per cent use questionnaires; 12 per cent investigate physical or physiological indications; 6 per cent

are clearly moral conduct tests; 10 per cent interpret conduct in the light of data other than test scores; 3 per cent present objective observations of behavior in natural situations; and 4 per cent offer analysis and criticism of method of character measurement." (p.2)

To clarify, "ratings" were measures in which one or more individuals completed a checklist of character traits to reflect their judgement of another. This was the "predominant approach to character measurement during 1926" (p. 2). "Social attitudes and information" included opinion surveys about such matters as race, political leanings, and current issues. "Moral attitudes and information," on the other hand, included examining individuals' ideas about matters of honesty, "ethical vocabulary," and the relationships among such conditions as poverty, education, age, and one's sense of right and wrong.

"Other attitudes and information" included studies about loosely related matters such as superstitions (interestingly, the only superstition named was the belief that "hard study strengthens the mind"), one's ability to interpret the Bible, and cheerfulness versus depression. More popular at the time was the recently recognized and named dichotomy between introversion and extroversion, and tests and studies thereof were quite appealing to researchers. "Well-known tests" that came under scrutiny during 1926 included the "Downey Will-Temperament test," the "Pressey X-O test," "Koh's ethical test," "the Woodworth questionnaire," "the Colgate Mental Hygiene Test," the "Kent-Rosanoff word association tests," and "Moore's "Aggressiveness Test" (p. 6).

Interest analyses probably need no explanation, for they are still in use today, but these researchers found it somewhat odd that they would be considered a form of character measurement. Likewise, "Case studies" require no explanation except to note that they appeared to be limited in number, and were accorded little value by Watson, who indicated that the ones found added no new information.

"Questionnaires" on the other hand, were quite numerous and included attempts to examine character through play activities, favorite publications and authors, "sex instruction and practices" (p. 7), ideas about God, etc. There were even attempts to identify physiological correlates of character in a number of studies described in the category, "physical or physiological indications." "Moral conduct tests" included Hartshorne and May's well-known "Character Education Inquiry" which was already underway in 1926 even though it was not published in its 3-volume format until 1932. "Moral conduct tests," "...in light of other data," and the "objective observations" sections described studies in which attempts were made to examine character directly by observing actual behavior or examining existing relevant records, rather than testing character indirectly via pencil and paper tests.

Categories of Character Tests

A number of categories revealed studies with interesting findings. Some have less to do with character as we have come to understand it than others.

Ratings

Researchers using ratings of individuals found,

- That when using ratings, "... it is best not to know people too well" (p.2). It was noted that reliability decreased as the rater's exposure to the individual increased.
- That when self rating, "individuals rate themselves more highly than they ought" (p. 2).
- That there was "little difference between self-ratings given by college students and by murderers in the penitentiary" (p. 2).

Social Attitudes and Information

Tests of attitudes and opinions related to character were judged to be far more reliable than ratings, ranging, in fact, from .7 to .9. The assumption was that attitudes and opinions tended to be less situational or subject to change over time than moral conduct. Some of the more interesting findings included:

- College classes produced attitudinal changes in students, at least "for purposes of examination" (p. 3).
- One out of every eight college students had a change of attitude brought on by a presidential campaign
- Women tend to be more conservative than men with regard to political matters, with the exception of feminist issues.

Moral Attitudes and Information

The ongoing work of the Character Education Inquiry as described in 1926 publications was further analyzed (Watson, 1927). Characterized as tests of the knowledge of right and wrong, the thirteen tests used in 1926 included examinations of "Foresights," "Knowledge of Consequences," "Word Opposites," "Duties," and "Provocations." The "provocations" test, with reliability shown to range between .69 and .98, was intended to gauge how strong extenuating circumstances had to be before a person would agree that something he/she feels is wrong would then be viewed as acceptable. Much of the emphasis in the Character Education Inquiry studies also focused on social pressures. Approval from adults and peers were found to override moral constructs. A child would cheat to gain parental approval or "please" a teacher with a higher grade. Perhaps most importantly, the Character Education Inquiry found that there is little relationship between scores on "character tests" and moral behavior.

In another major study of 1926, fifteen thousand boys were tested by the YMCA. Results indicated that:

- Knowledge about the Bible and religious concepts is not an indicator of the ability to answer questions about good and bad behavior.
- These same boys showed no change in ethical ideas between entering the YMCA summer camp and leaving it. "The results spoke better for the reliability of the tests used than the contribution of the camp to moral growth" (p.4).

Other studies in this category showed that:

- Children who preferred pictures showing good deeds were also the ones acknowledged by teachers to have high conduct ratings.

- College women and “delinquent” women arranged offenses in the same order of “badness.”
- The development of “ethical vocabulary” was highly related to the development, or lack thereof, of other vocabulary and was unrelated to conduct.

Within this category, Watson concluded that “...until further evidence is accumulated, the so-called ethical knowledge tests must be regarded as measures of intelligence, home background, and the type of group with which the individual associates, rather than of his actual behavior” (p.5).

Other Attitudes and Information

Findings from two studies in this category are particularly interesting. First, it was found that a person’s ability to understand and interpret the Bible is correlated with “mental age,” but in no way with Sunday School attendance. Another study showed that “...when it comes to predicting teaching success, a test of social information used by Knight and others had a higher predictive value than did tests of intelligence, academic skills, or knowledge of the theory and practice of teaching” (p.5).

Case Studies

Few case studies were found that added new information to the subject of character testing. Evidently, the year’s findings only confirmed such understandings as, “court problems are really clinical problems,” and that “gifted children are sometimes handicapped by social maladjustment and by parental ambitions” (Watson, p. 7). The one new idea coming from this category was a methodological one of interest to today’s advocates of qualitative studies – that at least one researcher was finding that “more satisfactory results are obtained by free description than by the following of any form” (p. 7). In his ensuing discussion, Watson argues that while more information may be gathered using a form, that information may be less useful than unrestricted narrative.

Questionnaires

A play study in this category found that African American children tended to prefer social games to individual games. Zane Grey, Edgar Guest, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and the *American Magazine* were favorite reading material for high school and college students, which Watson suggested might be an indication of character among American youth. Other studies supported the Character Education Inquiry finding that consciousness of social approval inhibits respondents, even on questionnaires.

Conduct Tests

The Character Education Inquiry (Hartshorne and May, 1928-30) was also found to be central within this category. In this instance, deceptive behavior, from changing a grade on a paper, to cheating in a game or taking money from a collection box, deceitful behavior is unpredictable. Further, one’s behavior in one situation is no indicator of what it will be in another, and neither age nor intelligence played a role, nor did moral knowledge. Even Sunday School attendance and enrollment in character training organizations were poor predictors. Only “home background” – or more specifically, where “parents stood on the occupations scale” –

seemed to serve as a predictor of honest and helpful behavior. Children whose parents were lower on the scale were less likely to demonstrate these traits.

Concluding Themes from the 1926 Character Tests

Watson reported two additional ideas generated by the year’s research that are worthy of mention. First, one author (unnamed) suggested that researchers of the day were ignoring an important aspect of character. Character in his view was not a collection of discrete traits, but rather an intricately woven set of notions in which some components may ebb and flow, substitute for one another in specific situations, and which is made to fit the purposes and drives of the individual.

A second suggestion was that character tests were focusing too much on responses and too little on situations. Here, Watson posits that morals are socially constructed and not within human nature. He raises a related question in his final comments: “Most traits are, as suggested by Folsom, products of conventional ethics, not of analysis of the fundamental behaviors of organisms. They are creations not of biology, but of law and custom.

Acknowledging that this “flood” of studies was more an indication of enthusiasm for examining character than wisdom about doing so, he seems to conclude that attempts to measure character are not impossible. However, he notes that the task is so complex that it should not be undertaken by teachers. Rather, character testing should be limited to a class of professionals specifically trained for this purpose. Instead, he cautions that teachers “may best be advised to seek the indices of character... [in] the quality of home..., the kind of companions with whom [the child] plays, the use made of leisure time, and the relation of school achievement to the possibilities indicated by intelligence” (p. 13).

Reporting Character to Parents in New York, Pennsylvania, and Denver

While character tests as well as character education programs indicated that there was a keen interest in measuring and teaching about such traits as honesty, sportsmanship, cleanliness, and respect for adults, it appears that educators exercised greater caution in reporting matters of character to parents. According to McClellan, “in many schools, they could now include citizenship grades on their report cards. Although these grades were often little more than the deportment grades of the nineteenth century, some schools used them as measures of moral development” (1992, p. 59). An interesting comparison can be made between report cards in use during the 1920s and 30s with lists of character traits serving as a basis for character education programs during this time period.

Nickell and Field (in press) examined 1928-29 materials from New York that listed the twenty most frequently named character traits reportedly being taught in character education programs around the state. The New York study, the lengthiest of the three reports referenced here, synthesized organized efforts toward character building. Information was provided in the form of syllabi and outlines, codes, local studies or investigations, activities of pupil organizations, guidance reports, report cards, school assemblies, and alliances with “week-day church schools.” It also involved the examination of all reports sent to the state-appointed evaluation committee by different districts statewide to identify

character traits most often listed as goals. These appear as Figure 1.

Figure 1: Character Traits Most Listed by New York (State) School Districts In Order of Frequency, 1928-29 (18)

1. Responsibility	11. Neatness
2. Initiative	12. Loyalty
3. Cooperation	13. Patriotism
4. Courtesy	14. Punctuality
5. Honesty	15. Appreciation
6. Sportsmanship	16. Unselfishness
7. School spirit	17. Morality
8. Healthfulness	18. Respect for authority
9. Leadership	19. Self-control
10. Fair play	20. Service to Society

A 1931 report (Hansen) exhibited a copy of a report card used in Schenectady, NY. A facsimile of this data source appears as Figure 2 on the next page.

As this report card indicates, the character traits most often taught, and apparently highly valued, show great variance from what was being reported to parents. The two most often listed as being taught – responsibility and initiative – are arguably present, but renamed and spread throughout a number of the traits on the report card. For example, one could argue that responsibility is characterized in “is careful of property,” “completes what he begins,” etc. Similarly, it could be argued that neatness, morality, and service to society are embedded in the list on the report card. However, honesty, sportsmanship, school spirit, leadership, fair play, loyalty, patriotism, punctuality, appreciation, unselfishness, and respect for authority do not appear in any form.

The report card used during the time period in New York City presented an even sketchier version of such traits. In grades K-1, the first section of the report card, appearing before “scholarship,” listed traits included in “Training in Personality.” These included two sections – “Good Personal Habits” and “Good Social Habits.” The “personal habits” section listed “posture (sitting, standing, walking correctly), cleanliness (keeping hands, nails, face, and teeth clean; keeping hands and materials away from mouth, using a handkerchief, covering mouth when coughing, keeping clothing clean); and ability to dress alone.” “Good Social Habits” included “working and playing well with others, responding to signals promptly, and respecting the rights of others.” (New York City Public Schools Records, undated).

In grades 2-6, students were evaluated on “Training in Personality: Desirable Traits” including, “works and plays well with others, completes work, is generally careful, respects the rights of others, practices good health habits, and speaks clearly. At grades 7 and 8, “plays” is left out of the first trait, but the rest remains as it is in grades 2-6. At all three levels, teachers were to mark the traits with S (satisfactory), U (unsatisfactory), or I (improvement is shown).

In Nickell and Field’s previous study, it was found that in 1931, the Pennsylvania Department of Education had also compiled

a list of character traits meant to be taught in schools. It issued a report highlighting the traits shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: List of Character Traits, State of Pennsylvania, 1931

Characteristics that civilized peoples, in general, accept as eminently desirable:

The individual who possesses these characteristics is

Honest	Self-respecting
Fair	Truthful
Courteous	Kindly
Reliable	Charitable
Thrifty	Courageous
Self-controlled	Persistent
Has strong family feelings	Has a sense of duty
Gives credit where credit is due	
Has self-protecting recreational assets	
Is a faithful worker, whatever his field...	

Characteristics specifically essential to the highly effective American citizen

The individual who possess these characteristics is:

- Conscious of his responsibility as a member of a universal governing class
- Appreciates the attainments and possibilities of the nation
- Is a defender of the right
- Considers the greatest good in his political judgments
- Insists that law and order operate
- Seeks a knowledge of current problems affecting the nation and the world
- Actively seeks the truth
- Is forward looking
- Meets new conditions and needs logically and intelligently
- Analyzes the needs of the community, state, and nation
- Is capable of successful teamwork
- Is intensely interested in constructive and protective health measures
- Recognizes the dignity of labor
- Protects children in their right to physical care and mental development
- Appreciates the relationship between self-government and education
- Consistently expresses his convictions through the ballot

However, a 1938 bulletin from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction entitled, “Reporting Pupil Progress,” recommended two alternative report card forms that are highly inconsistent with suggested character traits to be taught. On the first suggested form, the “Citizenship Record” section has two categories in which students are marked 1 (satisfactory progress), 2 (reasonable progress – “pupil would do better if more effort were put forth”), or 3 (need for improvement). This section precedes the scholastic progress section, an indication of its importance. In the first category of the section, “Work Habits,” students are marked on “works independently,” “finishes a reasonable amount of work in a

Figure 2: Page of Report Card Used in Schenectady, New York, circa 1931

Pupil Name			
Last Name		First Name	
PROGRESS IN HABITS, ATTITUDES, AND CHARACTERISTICS			
Objectives	First 6 Weeks	Second 6 Weeks	Third 6 Weeks
I. As an Individual - Personal 1. Has good health habits 2. Obeys promptly and cheerfully 3. Does the right thing, whether told or not 4. Is careful of property 5. Takes pride in his work 6. Calls for help when necessary 7. Offers helpful suggestions 8. Completes what he begins 9. Has critical attitude toward his work II. As a Member of the Group - Social 1. Cooperates with the group in work and play 2. Has self control 3. Show proper consideration for the rights of others 4. Does his part in keeping the school attractive 5. Claims only his share of attention 6. Is courteous to others			
SPECIAL INTERESTS AND ABILITIES			
This pupil has shown a special interest in			
This pupil has shown a special ability for			
The pupil is not marked on an objective unless he is exceptional one way or the other. If he excels, the objective is marked (1). If he is in much need of improvement, the objective is marked (3).			

given time," "finds worthwhile things to do after finishing assignment," "does neat work," "and is careful in use of property and supplies." In the second category, "Social Habits," student progress is reported in "works well with others," "accepts criticism courteously," "recognizes and respects rights of others," "obeys group rules promptly and cheerfully," "and practices health habits that have been taught" (Pennsylvania, p. 36).

The second suggested form once again places citizenship/character progress first on the report card. before scholastic progress, and again divides the list into two categories, "Your Child in Work and Study Habits" and "Social and Personal Traits." Within the first, the child is marked on "begins work promptly," "works without wasting time," "follows directions without unnecessary questions," "is accurate," "does work neatly,"

"asks for help when necessary," "completes assignments," "participates freely and courteously in class discussions and activities," "finds new tasks when assignments are finished," "and is attentive." Within the second category, students are marked on "works and plays agreeably with others," "tries to do his share in the group," "is courteous toward others in classroom, halls, lunchroom, basement and on the playground," "is careful of school materials and property," "is dependable," "and accepts criticism in good spirit and tries to profit from it" (Pennsylvania, p. 37). As is apparent, character traits of honesty, self-respect, fairness, truthfulness, kindness, charity, thrift, courage, and so forth are either reworded or not reported at all. What are termed "Characteristics specifically essential to the highly effective American citizen" on the list in Fig. 2, important as they seem, are

also not included as part of the recommended report card forms. Under the "Science and Social Science" section of first recommended form, the only indicator to be marked is "Is observant of the common things in nature" (p. 36). On the second form, we find under the heading "Social Science," "is thoughtful in discussing problems and in reporting related personal experiences," "remembers the important facts," "is interested in reading supplementary material," and "selects and contributes appropriate material relating to topics being studied."

The Denver character education program was published as a monograph in 1929. It described an initial, "tentative" report of what public schools were doing in response to a district policy "to organize and direct a broad and varied program, curricular and extracurricular, the natural consequence of which is the learning of social as opposed to antisocial behavior." An unnamed "committee" compiled this report.

Short of recommending a list of character goals, authors of *Character Education in the Denver Public Schools*, in examining current practice in district schools, listed those traits mentioned on report cards at grades 1 and 2, and at grades 3-6 (See Figure 4, this page). These traits were organized into five categories of health, thrift, reliability, social attitudes, and clear thinking. According to the report, teachers at all grade levels were engaged in character education activities. Preferred methods of character education included a combination of direct and indirect instruction. Categories of activities reported by the Denver Public Schools included report cards, social-civic activities, student participation in school government, teacher advisers, home room and assembly, and celebration of special holidays. (Insert Fig. 4 about here)

Reporting Character to Parents Elsewhere

Rowna Hansen (1931), "Junior Specialist in Kindergarten-Primary Education" in the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Education, compiled a report entitled, "Report Cards for Kindergarten and Elementary Grades." This was a study drawn from 628 report cards in use in 515 school systems around the nation. Hansen examined 20%, or 126 report cards, which were matrix sampled by grade level and size of community. Her purpose was explained in this way: "Feeling the need for giving parents more information about pupil achievement in relation to the modern school program, many school administrators are now at work revising report cards. That a few facts which might be serviceable to those constructing new cards might be determined concerning the cards now in use, this study...has been made" (Hansen, 1931, p.2). She further notes, "The report cards have been analyzed for the achievement and behaviors rated...[in terms of] the frequency of occurrence, ...[and] terms used." (p. 3).

According to Hansen, "...major emphases in [school curriculum] have been expanding during recent years from subject matter learnings to include pupil behaviors..." (p.1). And later in the report she states, "Increasing significance is being attached to the importance of attitudes and behavior in relations to learning and in relation to social adjustments. Furthermore, behavior is being interpreted in relation to specific situations rather than being measured by one such general term as 'deportment'" (p. 8). It should come as no surprise that this increase in attention to behaviour and greater specification thereof would follow on the heels of greater

Figure 4: Character Traits Appearing on Elementary Report Cards, Denver Public Schools, 1929 (19)

Grades 1-2	
1.	Is cleanly in person and dress
2.	Observes health rules
3.	Sits, stands, and walks correctly
4.	Uses time to good advantage
5.	Keeps books and property in good condition
6.	Is trustworthy
7.	Perseveres in spite of difficulties
8.	Works well in a group
9.	Is courteous
10.	Concentrates on the task in hand
Grade 3-6	
1.	Health
a.	Is cleanly in person and dress
b.	Observes health rules
c.	Sits, stands, and walks correctly
2.	Thrift
a.	Uses time to good advantage
b.	Keeps books and property in good condition
c.	Is careful in the use of materials
3.	Reliability
a.	Is trustworthy
b.	Completes tasks at the appointed time
c.	Is at the right place at the right time equipped for work
d.	Secures consent before using property of others
e.	Perseveres in spite of difficulty
f.	Exercises leadership in things worth while
4.	Social Attitudes
a.	Takes pride in his group and the school, and tries to foster the right spirit
b.	Works well in a group
c.	Gives and takes criticism in a courteous manner
d.	Is respectful and courteous to his associates
e.	Is tolerant of opinions and actions of others
5.	Clear Thinking
a.	Discriminates between essentials and nonessentials
b.	Keeps to the point
c.	Concentrates on the task at hand
d.	Is open-minded, revising opinions in light of facts
e.	Takes the initiative in presenting new ideas

attention to character education. But what did her study reveal about the traits found on the report card she examined?

Figure 5 (see facing page) reproduces the table of "behavior qualities and working habits" and their frequencies among the 126 report card examined. Referring back to the most listed character traits being taught in the state of New York in

1928-29 (see Fig. 1), we find that

Figure 5: Traits and Their Frequencies on 126 Report Cards (Hansen, 1931)

<u>Positive</u>		<u>Negative</u>	
Courteous	13	Careless	9
Cooperative	13	Inattentive	6
Responsible	11	Indolent (including lazy)	6
Industrious	9	Wasteful	6
Thrifty	7	Discourteous	4
Orderly	6	Annoys others	4
Attentive	6	Lacking in cooperation	3
Self control	6	Lacking in initiative	3
Resourceful	5	Mischievous	2
Perservering	5	Lacking in perseverance	2
Prompt	5	Too impulsive	1
Effort	5	Dependent	1
Obedient	5	Indifferent	1
Sportsmanship	4	Lacking self control	1
Initiative	3	Irresponsible	1
Honest	2	Lacking in leadership	1
Conscientious	2	Talks too much	1
Commendable attitude	2		
Application	2		
Accurate	1		
Interested	1		
Independent	1		
Enthusiastic	1		
Courageous	1		
Respectful	1		
Considerate	1		
Concentration	1		
Speed	1		
Observation	1		

there is some correlation. Courtesy, responsibility, and cooperation occur near the top of both lists. Initiative, honesty, sportsmanship, leadership, neatness (“orderly”), respect, and self-control appear on both lists in some form. However of the traits most frequently taught across the state of New York in 1928-29, school spirit, fair play, loyalty, patriotism, punctuality, appreciation, unselfishness, morality, and service to society did not appear on any report card of those gathered and scrutinized in Hansen’s study.

Based on the earlier work of Nickell and Field (in press), a comparison of character traits taught in the state of New York, Pennsylvania, Denver, and Washington, D.C. with behavior qualities most frequently found in Hansen’s study, there were fewer commonalities than differences. Courtesy and trustworthiness or honesty were the only two traits found in all cases, and cooperation,

thrift, self control, perseverance, initiative, and respect were the only ones found in at least three of the five documents. Oddly enough, kindness, fairness, punctuality, concern for the property of others, reliability, good workmanship, and wholesome use of leisure time were commonly mentioned among character traits but did not appear among “behavior qualities and working habits” in the Hansen study. Health was also frequently mentioned within character education programs and guidelines and Hansen found this frequently reported on grade cards as well, but reported it in a separate section from behavior.

Another important consideration when examining report cards is the inclusion of character traits advanced by W.J. Hutchins in 1917. Hutchins’ award-winning Children’s Morality Code offered ten general traits of desirable character for teaching in schools. While we do not know how widely used this code was in schools, we do know that it received a great deal of attention among children’s organizations and in preparation of state and school district character education mandates. Hutchin’s “ten laws of right living” included self-control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork. Only three – self-control, sportsmanship, and honesty/truth were found on report cards, while good health, reliability, good workmanship, kindness, and duty were often found in character programs but did not appear on the report cards examined in this study.

Discussion and Conclusion

The character education movement era of the 1920’s and 1930’s may also be characterized as a time when school testing and reporting processes were undergoing rapid change. Clearly fueled by the promise of psychometrics, teachers and administrators responded by revising report cards to indicate some of the scientific measures. Robert O. Evans determined that by 1938, reporting to parents about children’s progress had evolved in measurable ways. These included increasingly detailed permanent records and report cards meant to more clearly reflect the entire school curriculum. The school curriculum for the 1920’s and 1930’s included a heavy dose of character education. Given the increased attention to reporting instruments at about the same time, one would have expected to find a better match between character goals and behaviors reported on the nation’s newly-revised report cards. To be sure, the Denver and Schenectady, New York, report card examples do portray the reporting of some character traits but they did not exemplify the majority of report cards across the nation. It might also be argued that “progress in habits, attitudes, and characteristics” is different from character, but the point remains that if the development of children’s character was a major concern of the day, then the same would be reported to parents in some large measure and on the majority of report cards across the nation from the 1920’s-1930’s. We simply did not find that to be the case.

What lessons may educators take from knowing about how and how often character education was reported during an era, which like today, had character education programs being taught in every state and in most school districts? What can be made of the apparent lack of critical linkage between school and parent on the topic of character education? If educators believe that what gets

reported will be what gets taught, should more of an effort be made to include character traits in our procedures for reporting to parents? And if not, why not?

Assessment/accountability lends credence to what is deemed important in schools. Reporting results of measures and teacher-perceived progress to parents seems to be more than mere assessment of a child's work. It also serves as a validation of the school curriculum. A persistent, underlying notion remains that if it (a disciplinary subject, a trait, a behavior, a desired outcome) isn't reported, it must not be important. Reporting progress in a particular area, or NOT reporting progress in a particular area, sends a powerful message to parents— "we value/do not value this." Character education was valued in the 1920's and 1930's by many educators, yet it was reported neither fully nor in a way that reflected the values of the period.

As many school districts today embrace a new character education reform movement, perhaps as much attention should be paid to how a child's progress in a character education program will be assessed and reported to parents as is paid to implementing any particular character education program. Finally, before embarking upon the implementation of a school or district-wide character education program, critical questions should be asked, such as, What is this program intended to do? Have all constituents been included in the development of the program? Are the goals of the character education program attainable? Has mindful attention been paid to outcomes, such as a progression of meaningful learning activities meant to direct students toward social action? Along with questions pertaining to purposes for the program, planning for character education programs should also be accompanied by critical questions, such as: What will children learn? Why and how? How will it be assessed? Can it be assessed? and How will a child's progress be reported to parents? Based upon what we have learned about character education programs of the past, tendencies to rush to develop and implement the latest mandates from the state legislature or school boards, those of character education, may well produce overly-simplified, low-level, redundant "trait of the week" programs that will be virtually ineffective.

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