

The Iowa Council for the Social Studies Journal

EDITOR

Lynn E. Nielsen
Price Laboratory School
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa



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FORWARD



This issue of the ICSS Journal features *CHARACTER EDUCATION*. While this movement is in current vogue with the education community and is generating a revival of interest within school districts nationwide, it is not a newcomer to education. Our great-grandparents and their parents saw the purpose of education very clearly--to make students smart and to make them good. In the past, character education was a regular and expected part of schooling.

Over the course of the twentieth century we have witnessed unprecedented advances in technology while the same cannot be said of morals and ethics. Rather, it could be argued that the history of the twentieth century exhibits an inverse relationship between technological advancement and moral and ethical progress. Indeed we have replaced the carriage with Cape Canaveral; the chalkboard with the calculator; and visits in the neighborhood with surfin' the net. However, while machines and computers have shifted work from our backs to our brains our hearts have often remained untouched.

Technological advances have clearly made our lives more comfortable and efficient but they are of little value in checking our moral compass. Repeatedly the unprecedented technological efficiency of this century has been applied recklessly to the detriment of masses of human beings. On the international scene, the shameless events surrounding the holocaust in Europe, the war in Viet Nam and more recent terrorist acts for example, only underline the fact that the path of scientific advancement comes with no moral road map. On the local level, our sense of community is premised on the bedrock of shared values and a common moral resolve. As our moral confidence waned over the last four decades, our sense of community diminished as well. We replaced our front porches with privacy fences as we exchanged community and shared moral purpose for individualism. As a result, we face rising violence and a shocking lack of civility on the part of today's youth. From coast to coast, educators, business leaders, parents and politicians are calling for a return to shared values and a common sense of social order.

In this issue of the ICSS Journal, we hear five diverse voices representing a cross-section of the educational community. In the first article A. John Martin, Executive Director of The Character Education Partnership (CEP) in Washington DC, details the purpose and function of CEP as it works to promote character education in schools across the nation.

Perry Glanzer, Educational Policy Analyst for the national organization, Focus on the Family, discusses common ground and concerns regarding character education from the perspective of a religiously affiliated organization.

Pat Conn from Northern Trails Area Education Agency describes a pilot program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, which assists school districts in the AEA to build strong moral communities through collaboration.

Paula Fraser, an elementary teacher in Bellevue, Washington shares how she has used the developmental theories of Kohlberg and Gilligan to help her students mature in personal reflection and moral development.

Clare Struck and Kim Miller, faculty members at Price Laboratory School at the University of Northern Iowa, describe an elementary citizenship program they have designed to help students embrace respect and assume responsibility for their own behavior.

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