

**Blind-Brook-Rye UFSD  
Professional Development Committee  
Report on Character Education in Blind Brook Study of 2006-2007**

**Respectfully Submitted to the Blind Brook Board of Education  
January 2008**

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**Introduction**

During the school year 2006-07, the Blind Brook Professional Development Committee began a year-long endeavor to look at the status of character education in the school district. The goal of examining character education was one of several outcomes of the two-year district-wide curriculum mapping project concluded the year before.

The committee charged itself with the following tasks:

- inventory existing character education components K-12;
- research effective character education program principles;
- identify gaps between effective programming and the current status of character education in Blind Brook;
- formulate recommendations to improve character education in Blind Brook;
- produce a document summarizing the committee's findings for the Board of Education.

In the course of its evaluation, the committee determined the following about the character education needs of Blind Brook:

- character education program efforts largely fail to penetrate to the core of student understandings;
- most issues troubling students fall within one of two large areas of character development: the development of empathy and the ability to make ethical decisions;
- most issues plaguing students occur in informal domains while most efforts to reach students occur ineffectively in formal domains;
- character education program efforts need to be supported by deliberate systemic policies and practices and by adult modeling;
- there is no one core character education program that can effectively address all the needs of students but rather a multi-pronged and multi-resource approach is recommended.

The findings are summarized below. First, five categories of issues surrounding students are organized into goals; four of these goals are treated in this report. Second, the domains, both formal and informal, in which these issues arise are identified. Third, both systemic and programmatic solutions are noted. Finally, what we currently do and what we need to do are presented. The next page summarizes the framework of the information that follows for each of the four Character Education goals treated in this report:

<b>Framework of Report</b>			
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Domains Formal and Informal</b>	<b>Solutions Systemic and Programmatic</b>	<b>Resources and Strategies Implemented and Recommended</b>
<p><b>Problems Identified: Empathetic Development and Ethical Decision- making</b></p> <p>Character education goals are identified in five categories. Issues of character education development are identified for four of these. The goals are:</p> <p><b>Goal I.</b> Accommodation of Diversity through Empathy  <b>Goal II.</b> Ethical Decision-making  <b>Goal III.</b> Concept of Citizenship and Service  <b>Goal IV.</b> Personal Independence and Self-care  <b>Goal V.</b> Sportsmanship (Not addressed in this report)</p>	<p>Domains localizing where problems for students surface are categorized as formal (relevant to organized educational settings) and informal (relevant to educational and non-educational settings that are not organized).</p>	<p>An inventory of solutions, both systemic (facilities/administrative) and programmatic (character education) are outlined for four of the five character education categories. Resources and strategies for improvement are identified as either implemented or recommended. While specific programs were examined and evaluated, it was not the committee's charge to select marketed products but rather to identify gaps in Blind Brook's current character education program and recommend resources and solutions.</p> <p>Key recommended resources and solutions for all character education categories include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal district articulation and commitment to resources;</li> <li>• K-12 comprehensive program coordination and transition;</li> <li>• Provision of authentic, ongoing experiences throughout curriculum and threaded through daily student experiences outside of formal settings;</li> <li>• Explicit attention to supervision of informal student venues and building climates;</li> <li>• Environmental presencing (posters, publications, Web site, local TV, morning announcements, etc.);</li> <li>• Formal curriculum integration (incl. reading lessons, role-playing, authentic experiences and writing prompts);</li> <li>• Regular programming and events (assemblies, weekly and monthly program focuses, etc.), including special programs (e.g. <i>Rachel's Challenge</i>) with follow-up;</li> <li>• Targeted professional development for staff;</li> <li>• Ongoing workshops for parents;</li> <li>• District- and community-wide values clarification forums;</li> <li>• Systematic program evaluation.</li> </ul>	

<p align="center"><b>Goal I. Accommodation of Diversity through Empathy</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Domains Formal and Informal</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Solutions Systemic and Programmatic</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Resources and Strategies Implemented and Recommended</b></p>
<p><b>Problems identified:</b></p> <p>Ia. Non-accommodation of diversity: <b>social ostracization</b></p> <p>Ib. Non-accommodation of diversity: <b>group marginalization</b></p> <p>Ic. Non-accommodation of diversity: <b>teasing</b></p> <p>Id.. Non-accommodation of diversity: <b>bullying</b>, with and without adult collusion</p>	<p><b>Formal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom (incl. library)</li> <li>• Organized extra-curricular activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School bus</li> <li>• Cafeteria</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Bathroom</li> <li>• Locker room</li> <li>• Hallway</li> <li>• Internet</li> </ul>	<p><b>Systemic Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised administrative policies and practices</li> <li>• Instructional inclusion</li> <li>• Increased student supervision and training of personnel</li> <li>• Alternative informal venues for students and supervision plan for informal domains</li> <li>• Timely access to adult intermediaries for conflict resolution</li> <li>• Deliberate, regular scheduling of student chat groups and organized clubs</li> <li>• IDEA, Discrimination and Title IX training for students</li> </ul> <p><b>Character Ed Program Solutions</b></p> <p>(Character traits of <i>Compassion, Caring, Fairness, Courage, Reduction of Self-Interest</i> and <i>Power of Conviction</i>)</p> <p>Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence in themselves, others and environment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Currently implemented:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BOE and school handbook policies and code of conduct</li> <li>• Blind Brook Character Education Mission Statement</li> <li>• Instructional inclusion</li> <li>• Access to support personnel</li> <li>• <i>6 Pillars</i> program implementation (Elem)</li> <li>• Daily, weekly or monthly announcements and/or newsletters</li> <li>• Character education building committees</li> <li>• Partial implementation of <i>Connect with Kids</i> program K-8</li> <li>• Deliberate, regular scheduling of student chat groups (e.g. “Magic Circle”, MS/HS student support groups)</li> <li>• Sporadic implementation of isolated curriculum units in all grades (e.g. <i>The Misfits</i> unit in MS ELA)</li> <li>• Occasional school-wide programs, i.e., <i>Rachel's Challenge</i>, Mix-It-Up Day, No-Name-Calling Week (MS/HS)</li> <li>• Organized student clubs</li> <li>• Professional development access to</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer resolution forums and student leadership</li> <li>• Cooperative rather than competitive activity frameworks</li> <li>• Access to feedback loop through surveys, participation in student chat groups and appropriate adult response</li> </ul> <p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher/staff training and modeling (e.g. instigation recognition training and response, identification of student-in-crisis- profiles, and “Adult Visualization” strategies apropos tolerated student behaviors (i.e. If adults were doing what students do, how would our responses change...?))</li> <li>• Parent participation and modeling</li> <li>• Parent and student workshops and public dialogue on the effect of exclusionary social practices (e.g. the wearing of “trophy” clothing [party t-shirts] to school)</li> <li>• Public discussion and modeling of values by administration</li> <li>• Access to feedback loop</li> </ul>	<p>off-site workshops for voluntary attendance by teachers</p> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive anti-bullying programs in each school</li> <li>• Peer leadership (discontinued at HS)</li> <li>• Formal study of classroom environments and grouping practices</li> <li>• Review of disciplinary policies</li> <li>• Fully implemented peer conflict resolution programs in each school</li> <li>• Annual commitment to special programs and follow-up afterwards.</li> <li>• 6 Pillars program implementation K-12</li> <li>• Expanded building and classroom book and video libraries</li> <li>• Creation of alternative informal venues for students</li> <li>• Improved supervision of informal venues</li> <li>• Periodic student climate surveys</li> <li>• Regular scheduling of student chat groups for all students</li> <li>• Formal adoption and articulation of curriculum components K-12</li> <li>• Reflection of values in district mission and belief statements</li> <li>• Formal BOE and admin recognition of character education development efforts on all levels</li> <li>• Web site and local TV channel</li> </ul>
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presenting of character education efforts, values and programs

- Ongoing, organized staff training for targeted formal programs and for informal domain awareness
- Parent workshops (particularly on parent/teacher conference nights)
- Student training in IDEA, Discrimination and Title IX

<p align="center"><b>Goal II. Ethical Decision- making</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Domains Formal and Informal</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Solutions Systemic and Programmatic</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Resources and Strategies Implemented and Recommended</b></p>
<p><b>Problems identified:</b></p> <p>IIa. Problems in making ethical decisions: <b>underdeveloped work ethic</b></p> <p>IIb. Problems in making ethical decisions: <b>cheating</b>, with and without adult collusion</p> <p>IIIc. Problems in <b>ownership of inappropriate behavior</b> (e.g., lack of respect towards others, failure to fulfill commitments, failure to make restitution, failure to accept consequences of choices, etc.) with and without adult collusion</p>	<p><b>Formal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom (incl. library)</li> <li>• Testing situations</li> <li>• College applications and resumes</li> <li>• Organized extra-curricular activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wherever assignments are completed</li> <li>• Internet</li> <li>• School bus</li> <li>• Cafeteria</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Bathroom</li> <li>• Locker room</li> <li>• Hallway</li> </ul>	<p><b>Systemic Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BOE Policy for equitable expectations and consequences of student work</li> <li>• Honor policy/code of conduct</li> <li>• Improved proctoring practices, including attention to physical spaces and seating</li> <li>• Equitable and consequential grading practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Character Ed Program Solutions</b></p> <p>(Character traits of <i>Honesty, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Integrity, Perseverance, Discipline and Power of Conviction</i>)</p> <p>Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student education about personal integrity, time/task management, plagiarism and resume authenticity</li> <li>• Peer discussion forums and student leadership</li> </ul> <p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training and</li> </ul>	<p><b>Currently implemented:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board policy</li> <li>• Code of conduct in school handbooks</li> <li>• Isolated curriculum components</li> <li>• Study skills embedded in curriculum</li> <li>• Electronic software (<i>Turnitin.com</i>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection of values in district mission and belief statements</li> <li>• Formal adoption and articulation of curriculum components K-12</li> <li>• Formal study of classroom environments</li> <li>• Review of honor codes with respect to student accountability for behavior and choices</li> <li>• K-12 articulation about homework expectations</li> <li>• 6 Pillars program implementation K-12</li> <li>• Expanded building and classroom book and video libraries</li> <li>• Teacher training in cheating and proctoring</li> <li>• Parent workshops on "helping" children with assignments</li> </ul>

		<p>modeling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent workshop participation and modeling</li><li>• Public discussion and modeling of values by administration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of commitment to behavior contracts for students, parents and school</li></ul>
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<p align="center"><b>Goal III. Concept of Citizenship and Service (Empathetic Development + Ethical Decision-making)</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Domains Formal and Informal</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Solutions Systemic and Programmatic</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Resources and Strategies Implemented and Recommended</b></p>
<p><b>Problems identified:</b></p> <p>IIIa. Non-integration of concept of service: <b>care for others</b>, non-campaign volunteerism vs. obligatory community service</p> <p>IIIb. Non-integration of concept of service: lack of demonstrated <b>care for the environment</b></p> <p>IIIc. Incomplete integration of <b>civic-mindedness</b></p>	<p><b>Formal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized classroom and school activities</li> <li>• Extended community and national forums</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spontaneous, non-organized opportunities for unrewarded personal demonstration (e.g., picking up litter, assisting another student, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Systemic Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized formal community service programs</li> <li>• District commitment to formal endeavors beyond the school district</li> <li>• Sister-school partnerships</li> <li>• Adoption of recycling policy</li> <li>• Civics education policies and curriculum</li> </ul> <p><b>Character Ed Program Solutions</b></p> <p>(Character Traits of <i>Responsibility, Caring, Citizenship, Reduction of Self-interest</i> and <i>Power of Conviction</i>)</p> <p>Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforcement of sense of ownership, pride in place and belonging to community (community spirit)</li> <li>• Understanding of purpose of</li> </ul>	<p><b>Currently implemented:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal community service programs in each building</li> <li>• Formal acknowledgement and articulated celebration of isolated efforts (annual donation campaigns, MS/HS Community Service program, Green Key program, etc.)</li> <li>• Isolated curriculum components for civic education and environment (Media Literacy, social studies curriculum, e.g. Participation in Government, etc.)</li> <li>• Organized student clubs and activities (e.g. Project Adventure, “Random Acts of Kindness” project, visits to recycling plants, etc.)</li> <li>• Established, ongoing school/community forums (Community Coalition, Project Prevention)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection of values in district mission and belief statements</li> <li>• Creation of student bill of rights and</li> </ul>

		<p>institutions rather than mere knowledge about them (e.g. the Bill of Rights)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of personal motivation and sense of reward for service-oriented behavior</li><li>• Peer discussion forums, student leadership and organized clubs</li></ul> <p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher/staff training and modeling</li><li>• Parent participation and modeling</li><li>• Public discussion and modeling of values by administration</li><li>• Full community participation in collaborative events</li></ul>	<p>responsibilities by students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal adoption and articulation of curriculum components K-12, especially apropos environmental science and global citizenship</li><li>• Expanded building and classroom book and video libraries</li><li>• Full physical presencing in buildings (e.g., celebration of community service and formal clean-up campaigns through posters, newsletters, web site, recycling bins etc.)</li><li>• Formal district-wide community service commitment to both local programs, sister-schools and extended environmental campaigns</li></ul>
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<p align="center"><b>Goal IV. Personal Independence and Self-care (Self-empathy/ awareness and Ethical Decision-making)</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Domains Formal and Informal</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Solutions Systemic and Programmatic</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Resources and Strategies Implemented and Recommended</b></p>
<p><b>Problems identified:</b></p> <p>IVa. <b>Compromised ability to resist peer-pressure and cope with stress</b></p> <p>IVb. <b>Lack of healthy responses to conflict</b></p> <p>IVc. <b>Issues with Adolescent Sexuality and Predation</b></p> <p>IVd. <b>Eating Disorders and Self-inflicted Behaviors</b></p> <p>IVe. <b>Drug and Alcohol Use and Abuse</b></p> <p>IVf. <b>Adolescent Driver Safety</b></p>	<p><b>Formal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet social spaces and media images</li> <li>• School-sponsored social activities</li> <li>• Off-campus social networks</li> <li>• School bus</li> <li>• Cafeteria</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Bathroom</li> <li>• Locker room</li> <li>• Hallway</li> </ul>	<p><b>Systemic Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of school-sponsored and supervised activities for student awareness</li> <li>• Variety of school-sponsored and supervised alternative activities for student recreation</li> <li>• Peer leadership and conflict resolution programs</li> <li>• Standards-based health curriculum</li> <li>• Crisis intervention programs, plans and training</li> </ul> <p><b>Character Ed Program Solutions</b></p> <p>(Character Traits of <i>Responsibility, Courage, Discipline, Perseverance, Integrity, and Power of Conviction</i>)</p> <p>Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivation of self-esteem based on healthy choices</li> <li>• Education in effective strategies for resolving</li> </ul>	<p><b>Currently Implemented:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate, regular scheduling of student chat groups (e.g. “Magic Circle”, MS/HS student support groups for bereavement, family issues, friendship groups, school transitioning, students in crisis, etc.)</li> <li>• Crisis intervention plans</li> <li>• Fully implemented health curriculum K-12</li> <li>• District Wellness Committee for nutritional food service monitoring</li> <li>• Organized student clubs and supervised school-sponsored activities</li> <li>• Partially implemented programs (e.g. <i>Connect with Kids</i>)</li> <li>• Peer Leadership program (MS/HS)</li> <li>• Assemblies on adolescent issues (e.g. Internet Safety)</li> <li>• Web site resources for parents and students posted</li> <li>• Community-sponsored parent workshops</li> </ul>

		<p>conflicts, both personal and with others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of ownership for own behavior rather than blaming others or circumstances</li></ul> <p>Adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modeling and encouraging ownership of behavior</li><li>• Parent and teacher training in talking to adolescents about critical issues</li></ul>	<p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflection of values in new district mission and belief statements</li><li>• Formal survey of school climate and student disposition</li><li>• Creation of student bill of rights and responsibilities by students</li><li>• Review of attendance policies</li><li>• Formal adoption and articulation of curriculum components K-12 in social and emotional literacy</li><li>• Expanded building and classroom book and video libraries</li><li>• Full physical presencing in buildings about healthy choices</li><li>• Annual commitment to special programs and follow-up afterwards</li><li>• Greater variety of school-sponsored and supervised alternative activities for student recreation</li><li>• Established school/parent partnership for adolescent emotional health</li></ul>
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**Goal V.  
Sportsmanship  
(Not addressed)**

This study did not address issues of identification with the larger community of Blind Brook, nor issues governing district athletics, equitable gender access to sports and community expectations of sportsmanship. It is recommended, however, that a continuation of an evaluation of character education and development should devote time to the examination of these topics within the framework of the District's commitment to improved character education.

**Summary**

Having met with representatives from each of the building character education committees and with support staff largely tasked with addressing the variety of non-academic issues that students face, having examined research on effective character education and having inventoried our current efforts, the Blind Brook Professional Development Committee's primary conclusion is that the most important attribute necessary for an effective character education program is also the most difficult to foment. This attribute is *the internalization of core values in each and every member of the school community and their consistent application by each student and adult throughout the course of our daily interactions and decisions.*

No less than an aggressive, fully articulated, coordinated and implemented K-12 character education program by staff, parents and students can be expected to achieve this end. It must be noted that student achievement and learning success are directly related to the conditions of the learning environment. The most successful academic programs walk hand-in-hand with successfully implemented character education programs that address the personal development of every individual as well as the conditions of the external environment in which all individuals work, interact and learn every day.

We hope that the recommendations of this report find their way toward a district-wide commitment to the resources and program planning needed to enable the Blind Brook School District to continue to develop and grow as a healthy academic community. Our thanks to Kathy Gerber, Terry Frank, Chris Griffin and the members of the character education committees in each building for their willingness to work with us as we studied our district's programs.

Respectfully submitted,

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