



4-H Youth Development

2000 Programs of Excellence

Life Skills

Ethics & Character

Building Character Statewide *Texas*

Situation

In 1998, a total of 125,608 juveniles were referred to Texas juvenile probation departments by police agency referrals, social agencies, parents, schools, and the Texas Youth Commission. The number of incarcerated adults, individuals who abuse drugs, pregnant teens, and school violence issues drains precious resources from other needs.

During 1999, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service held the Texas Community Futures Forums in all 254 counties. Citizens across Texas gathered to discuss and identify key issues that needed to be resolved to improve the quality of life in their county. Youth issues were identified by 209 counties as one of their high priority concerns. These issues included character, ethics, morals, pregnancy, drug education and job preparation. In addition, counties identified a high need for character education in families, in schools and in the community.

The Extension Service has a long history of effective outreach programs in 4-H youth development and parenting education, and of working with coalitions of organizations to address local needs. Texans Building Character is a 2000-2002 statewide initiative of the Extension Service which will bring our educational resources to bear on this stated need of Texas communities.

Training in character development theory, program planning and resource development has been of critical importance as more than 150 Texas Agricultural Extension Service (TAEX) agents and specialists have been trained to deliver the Texans Building Character program at the county level. Agents will form coalitions of community organizations to deliver character education to young people and adults and will train other adults

to serve as teachers for a variety of community groups and organizations as well.

Texans Building Character Program goals and objectives include:

- To train TAEX agents and volunteers in 209 counties to plan, deliver and evaluate character education programs through eight program models: Schools, Livestock, Workforce, Sports, Youth-at-Risk, 4-H, Organizations/Agencies and Community.
- To increase skills and build strong character in children, youth, adults and families across Texas. To date, Texans Building Character programs have been delivered to: after school programs, child care providers, schools, Teen Leader retreats and labs, contests, Parent/Leader Associations, 4-H clubs, in-service for teachers/counselors, Tech Prep centers, churches and boys and girls clubs.

Program Description

Texans Building Character is a character education program that develops knowledge, skills and abilities that enable the learner to make informed and responsible choices. It involves a shared educational commitment that emphasizes the responsibilities and rewards of productive living in a global and diverse society.

Accomplishments and Impacts

County efforts by Extension Staff to deliver programs in character to Texans have resulted in marketing the program to a wide variety of groups, potential program recipients and collaborators such as youth at risk, Girl's Clubs, schools, churches, Family Community Education groups, parent educators, County Commissioners, Extension Program Councils, fathers, 4-H leaders and clubs as well as agencies such as the Texas Workforce Commission.

Since January 2000 county Extension professionals have trained to initiate Texans Building Character programs in their counties, as a result more than 9,000 individuals across Texas have participated in Texans Building Character programs, where they have developed their skills in caring for others, showing respect to peers and adults, taking increased responsibility for their actions, being more trustworthy, exhibiting citizenship and showing fairness in their actions.

Collaborators

Texas Education Agency, Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Texas Department of Health, Farm Bureau, Texas Association of Family and Community Education

Contact Person(s)

Charla Bading, Extension Program Specialist, Extension Program Specialist, P.O. Box 1849, Uvalde, TX 78801, Phone: (830) 278-9151, Fax: (830) 278-4008, E-mail: c-bading@tamu.edu.

Linda Ladd, Ph.D., 4-H Family Development Specialist, 311 History Building, 2251 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843, Phone: (979) 845-3803, Fax: (979) 845-6496, E-mail: ladd@tamu.edu.

Character Education

Louisiana

Situation

Negative behavior of school age youth has caused educators across our nation to recognize the need for character education. The Louisiana State University (LSU) Ag Center's character education program began with the school system because a true readiness for character education existed there.

Program Description

The LSU AgCenter's character education program is based on six pillars of character: trustworthiness; respect; responsibility; fairness; caring and citizenship. Age appropriate lessons for children 4 years old to 18 year old youth are taught across the state in mostly classroom settings. Seven activity-based lessons are taught for each age group, one for each pillar of character plus one for decision making. At the conclusion of each lesson, students are encouraged to commit to a change in personal behavior and community involvement using what has been taught. The program is being conducted in 62 of 64 parishes (counties). LSU AgCenter personnel have developed numerous resources to help school principals create a positive climate for the six pillar behaviors.

Resources include:

- *Exercising Character in School* - A set of 35 interactive, age-appropriate lessons for youth ages 4 to 18 years old to be presented by youth or adult instructors.
- *Exercising Character in the Community* - A set of 35 interactive, age-appropriate lessons for youth ages 4 to 18 years old to be presented by youth or adult instructors. (Available 2001)
- *Character Critters* - Program to teach the six pillars of character to Pre-K children through the telling of appealing stories about cute animals on story boards.
- *Tool Box of Good Ideas for Helping Elementary School Students to Exercise Character in School and Toolbox of Good Ideas For Helping Secondary School Students Exercise Character in School* - Two separate compilations of wonderful activities and information gathered by LSU AgCenter personnel as they travel across the

country.

- *Cafeteria Character* - Summary of the six pillar behaviors expected of students in a school cafeteria.
- *School Bus Character* - Summary of behaviors expected of students who ride the school bus.
- *Student Character* - Summary of six pillar behaviors expected of students at school and when on school sponsored trips.
- *School Staff Character* - Summary of six pillar behaviors expected of all school personnel.
- *Sports Ethics* - Manual and lesson plans for teaching character in sports programs.

The vision for character education in Louisiana includes expanding the positive climate from the schools into the community. Resources to help in this area are:

- Workplace Ethics - Seven interactive lessons for teaching the six pillars of character and decision making in high schools or in workplace settings. Included are ways the six pillars can be integrated into policies, procedures and daily work practices.
- A Guide for Getting Your Community Involved in Character Education - Step by step guide for building community support for and involvement in character education.

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Fifteen FTE's from LSU AgCenter's Cooperative Extension Service are committed to the project. Lessons are presented in classrooms throughout the school year and the frequency varies from lessons being taught and/or reinforced through integration into total school programs on a daily basis to at least once a month lessons in single classrooms. The outstanding parts of the program have been the involvement of youth trainers who go into the classrooms of younger children to present the lessons, peer teaching and general involvement of youth in the program.

Accomplishments and Impacts

98-99 school year – 48 of 64 parishes reported reaching 93,965 children 75% of 735 teachers observed "some" to "very much" improvement in classroom behavior after lessons were taught.

99-00 school year – 44 of 64 parishes reported reaching 147,306 children; it is estimated that a total of 175,000 were actually reached. 75% of 200 principals observed "some" to "very much" improvement in behavior in their schools.

Resource Commitment

The state has appropriated \$300,000 per year to provide training and educational materials to all schools involved.

Collaborators

Louisiana Department of Corrections, Safe and Drug Free Schools, School to Work, Head Start, parish (county) school superintendents, state superintendent of Education, state department of education and FCE members.

Contact Person(s)

Donald R. Hammatt, Specialist, 4-H Youth Development, LSU AgCenter, P.O. Box 25100, Baton Rouge, LA 70894-5100, Phone: (225) 578-2196, Fax: (225) 578-2478, E-mail: dhammatt@agctr.lsu.edu.

Other Base Program Areas This Program Applies To

Natural Resources Environmental Management, Community Resource & Economic Development, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Family Development & Resource Management, 4-H Youth Development

Character Counts Toward Healthy Youth Development

Michigan

Situation

Michigan 4-H Youth Development is one of several programs across the country using the character education framework of CHARACTER COUNTS! to strengthen positive youth development efforts in communities. Through a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health Office of Drug Control Policy, Michigan 4-H is working as a catalyst to build community-wide collaborations in two communities. These community partnerships include people who work with schools, churches, parenting programs, law enforcement, businesses and other youth and family agencies. Adults who work with and interact with young people are encouraged to teach, enforce, advocate and model the ethical principles of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Michigan 4-H Youth Development has a strong partnership with the National CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, an initiative of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.

Program Description

One of the counties that received funding to strengthen community collaborations and character education through the Office of Drug Control Policy grant is Muskegon. Muskegon County is located in the western lower region of Michigan. Although the county has seen improvement in its teen violent crime arrests, it still ranks in the lower worst tier for major risk factors. For teen violent crime arrests it ranks 72 out of 83 counties, 80 in births to teens and 68 in high school drop outs (Source: Kids Count in Michigan). To reduce the occurrence of

these and other risk factors, Muskegon County 4-H Youth Development established a CHARACTER COUNTS! coalition representing a wide variety of agencies and organizations. Adults who work with young people integrate character education concepts into in-school and out-of-school programs and others in the community such as pastors and law enforcement personnel help with training, advocacy and mentoring. Learning experiences that promote adult development and youth development help to create caring, moral communities where all are expected to put the pillars of character into action in their daily actions and decisions.

Stakeholder Satisfaction

Stakeholders in this project had two primary objectives: first, to bring community members together to develop, implement and evaluate a character development program for adult and youth development; and second, to facilitate positive youth development experiences to reduce the incidence of risk behavior among community youth. The keys to success for this project were the commitment to community involvement and the focus on adult development as well as youth development. The CHARACTER COUNTS! initiative together with principles of positive youth development provide promising strategies in character and community development efforts. State and local commitment involved the work of three FTE's assigned to the project.

Accomplishments and Impacts

A small town elementary school within Muskegon County was targeted for intensive impact evaluation efforts. Within this site, 74 students (aged 9 to 12) completed pre- and post- surveys that showed statistically significant changes in their attitudes about their school environment, about each other and about moral and ethical behavior. Seventy-four percent of the students responding stated that they had changed as a result of learning about the six pillars of character. They reported change in statements such as: "I don't fight as much." "I respect people more than I did." "I show caring for the other children." Specifically, responses to the following questions showed significant improvement:

- I'm proud to be a part of my school (pretest mean: 4.08, post-test mean: 4.35)
- All students in my school are treated fairly by the school staff. (pretest: 3.80, post-test: 4.36)
- Student discipline problems often interrupt my class. (pretest: 3.54, post-test: 3.17)
- I don't get along with people who are not like me. (pretest: 2.69, post-test: 1.74)
- I prefer to fight over a problem instead of talking it out. (pretest 2.21, post-test: 1.74)

Parents also expressed seeing differences in their children's attitudes as a result of the programming. Eighty-four percent of parents who responded reported that their child's knowledge of the six pillars of character had improved. Sixty-one percent of the parents reported that their child's behaviors had improved and Fifty-three percent reported that their own behavior had changed as a result of their child's involvement in character education.

Resource Commitment

The initiative in Muskegon County was made possible through a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health Office of Drug Control Policy to Michigan 4-H Youth Development. The total grant amount was \$75,000 with Muskegon County receiving \$25,250 for community education training, supplies, materials and resources. Additional dollars from the grant supported technical assistance and evaluation expertise to support local educational efforts.

Collaborators

Community members who have participated in Muskegon County character education efforts include a county commissioner, a school counselor, the sheriff, a health education consultant with the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, business leaders with local companies, director of alternative education, a youth program coordinator for the City of Muskegon, 4-H volunteers and staff members who work with the Michigan State University Extension 4-H Youth Development in Muskegon County and many others. Leadership was provided at the state level by two campus-based members of the Michigan State 4-H staff.

Contact Person(s)

Janet Olsen and Karen Pace, Associate Program Leaders, 4-H Youth Development, Michigan State University Extension, 168 Agriculture Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039, Phone: (517) 432-7575 Fax: (517) 355-6748, E-mail: olsenj@msue.msu.edu or pace@msue.msu.edu.

Other Base Program Areas This Program Applies To

Community Resource & Economic Development, Leadership & Volunteer Development

4-H Focus on Character

Illinois

Situation

Citizens of Illinois communities have noted declining character locally as has been demonstrated by national surveys.

Examples from Josephson Institute of Ethics 1998 survey show 70% of high school students having cheated on an exam, 92% having lied to their parents and 47% have stolen something in the last 12 weeks. The survey of *Who's Who Among American High School Students'* honorees found this elite group reporting the highest level of cheating (80%) in its 29- year history, yet over half (53%) said it was "no big deal" and 95% were never caught. These top students also showed a significant increase in prejudice against homosexuals, blacks, and hispanics. Forty-six percent of these same students named "a decline in social and moral values" as the biggest problem facing their generation. 4-H clubs have also faced the problem of cheating, especially in 4-H livestock shows and other competitions.

Program Description

University of Illinois sent a team of five field educators and an Extension Specialist to the first invitational Extension training on character education in October, 1996. During a statewide Extension staff training, participants recommended Illinois place emphasis on teaching ethics to 4-H members. They requested a new curriculum be designed specifically for 4-H volunteer leaders. Illinois 4-H clubs include potential audiences of approximately 146,000 youth (8-19) in the 1998-2000 program years with both urban and rural residents.

4-H Focus on Character introduces "Six Pillars of Character" to 4-H members between 8 and 12, the ages most prevalent in clubs. Teens may lead the activities. The curriculum is a set of eight meeting plans, one for each of the Six Pillars of Character, an introduction to character, and ethical decision making. Each meeting plan includes: suggestions for roll calls, community service and recreation; directions for an experiential activity and challenge; mini-poster and a family take home page; ties to existing 4-H programs, projects, and activities; and press releases and newsletters to reinforce the work at the club level as well as inform the public. All materials are in an easy to use copy-ready format. Introduced statewide and made available to all counties, this curriculum has completed its third year of use and is part of the National 4-H Curriculum. Illinois has made the curriculum package available to 20 other states and given permission for them to reproduce it for use by county staff and volunteers as needed. Training for staff and volunteers was offered throughout the state. At the end of the 1998 4-H year, telephone surveys conducted with club leaders who had attended training and used *4-H Focus on Character* in their clubs. The findings were incorporated into the enhanced *4-H Focus on Character* curriculum.

Stakeholder Satisfaction

At the end of each year, a Progress Report Form was mailed to leaders on training lists. Fifty-seven percent of the reporting

clubs used *4-H Focus on Character* in six or more of their meetings. Approximately two-thirds of those returning Progress Reports said they intended to use *4-H Focus on Character* materials again. Some of those plans included:

- ". . .start at the beginning and go over the sessions again and find new ideas."
- "We are planning on using the *4-H Focus on Character* in each of our monthly meetings and will have junior leaders preparing the lessons."
- "We will remind members of the pillars.", "We intend to use the officer installation ceremony and complete activities we didn't have time for last year."
- ". . .ask families to be in charge, one per meeting."

The state team and local staff have devoted at least 1.25 FTE to developing and implementing *4-H Focus on Character*.

Accomplishments and Impacts

4-H Focus on Character was offered to all 102 Illinois counties each of the last three years. Two hundred seventy-three names of volunteer leaders were reported after attending training. Of those leaders, 34 clubs completed and returned a post-evaluation at the end of the first two *4-H* years. The pre/post-evaluations both contained the same 24 questions, four questions for each of the six pillars. Leaders were asked to reflect upon the actions of their club members and rate their behavior at the time of training and again at the end of the year. When these ratings were compared, 13 of the 24 questions showed significant improvement (at 0.05 level) in the actions of *4-H* members in those clubs. Eight items showed significant improvement at the 0.01 level.

Comments on the Illinois *4-H* Club/Group Award Applications give evidence from the "What did the group learn?" section that many clubs have begun to bring an awareness of the importance of positive character traits.

"The members, leaders and parents all learned the importance of these values and how they need to be a part of our everyday life. Focus on Character was excellent for opening the discussions about values that many of us take for granted and never take time to think about and how we could improve our own character. We learned the importance of being considerate of others. . . . The lessons learned were also obvious at club meeting; when someone would speak out of turn or say something inconsiderate, others would remind them of respect, caring, fairness, etc. Hopefully, by raising the awareness of the pillars, we all became more sensitive to the feelings of others. . . . Many times, observers would comment how it seemed that older members really

'looked out for' the younger members. We all became better citizens."

"The members became aware of others' feelings and how hurtful some actions can be. They learned to take responsibility for completing tasks and committee assignments. They learned to think about other people's needs."

Resource Commitment

Resources used to produce and introduce 4-H Focus on Character drew upon existing Cooperative Extension funding sources. A small grant was provided by the Illinois 4-H Foundation for recognition patches for 4-H clubs.

Collaborators

Extension educators from the Youth Development and Community Leadership and Volunteerism Development Teams drew upon and adapted with permission from curriculum developed by Nebraska and Missouri Cooperative Extension staff and materials published by the Josephson Institute of Ethics and Cokesbury Publishing.

Contact Person(s)

Mary Kay Munson, Extension Specialist, 4-H/Youth, University of Illinois Extension, 302 E. John Street, #1901, Champaign, IL 61820, Phone: (217) 333-0911, Fax: (217) 333-9287, E-mail: m-munson@uiuc.edu.

Other Base Program Areas This Program Applies To

Community Resource & Economic Development, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Family Development & Resource Management.

