Educating the Head, Heart and Hand for the 21st Century
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The 21st century is placing great demands on our students and educational system. To meet those demands, we recognize that educating the head (cognitive domain), exclusive of the heart and hand (affective and behavioral domains), is no longer educational best practice. We know this because schools are communities of learners in relationship with one another. As educators, we must help our students develop a high degree of behavioral competence (hand) to learn within these communities. Meaningful learning then requires affective engagement (heart) with the material to achieve cognitive mastery (head). It is the education of our students' heads, hearts and hands that will genuinely prepare them for success in college, career and civic life.

Still to be broadly accepted however, is the approach school administrators should endorse in attempting this integration. Among the many options in the movement to educate the head, heart and hand are three approaches recognized as Character Education, Social-Emotional Learning and Whole Child Education. Each of these approaches is informed by research in child development and each is championed by a particular organization, respectively, the Character Education Partnership, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, and ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).

Collectively, we have worked with these organizations and approaches and find that they have considerable overlap (Figure 1). This overlap defines a realm of best practice that should be part of systematic planning by all school leaders who hope to prepare their students for future success.

Each approach also has its own unique emphasis that adds depth and value to those of the others. If you are new to these approaches, starting with any one of the three would be a responsible and valuable direction for your school. If you are already implementing one of these models, we will recommend you consider the unique aspects from the complementary approaches, to add meaningfully to what you are already doing through your school improvement plan.

The Three Approaches

Character Education is focused on the broader goal of promoting positive youth development with an ethical lens. It is the deliberate use of all dimensions of school life to have students and adults able to ethically analyze and evaluate academic material and life and choose to demonstrate prosocial character. This comprehensive approach utilizes every aspect of schooling – the content of the curriculum, the process of instruction and professional development to support it, the quality of all relationships, the handling of discipline, the conduct of co-curricular activities, the outreach to parents and community and the ethos/climate of the total school environment, which seeks to foster good character in all school members. Character educators recognize the need to integrate the knowledge of the good (head), love of the good (heart) and doing the good (hand) through the school curriculum and culture as role-modeled by adults in the community.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) shares many of the same implementation principles of character education and specifically involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge (head), emotional competence (heart), and skills (hand) necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible and ethical decisions.

SEL programming is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging and meaningful. A strength of SEL programs is recognized in the implementation support systems that require students to learn, practice, and internalize social skills for their own success and the success of others in a variety of contexts, both academic and nonacademic.

The Whole Child Initiative is an approach that seeks to prepare students for 21st century challenges by addressing students' comprehensive needs through the shared responsibility of students, families, schools and communities.

School leaders recruit students, parents and the community through assessment and dialogue to achieve a school culture where each student is engaged intellectually (head), in healthy, safe, and supported (heart) learning communities and challenged to demonstrate their learning (hand). The Whole Child model seeks to work with best practices to achieve engaging and challenging instruction, develop a school culture that promotes a healthy and safe climate for student learning and leadership that involves faculty, students, parents and the community to maximize the supportive potential in school and provide for long-term student success with sustainable strategies.

Shared Objectives

We compared the published outlines of the Character Education, Social-Emotional Learning and Whole Child models with the goal of seeking shared objectives and strategies. While each model has its own unique objectives, the overlap of their broad goals is a powerful testimony of the research support that undergirds each approach. We recognize there are other outlines that might have resulted from this analysis, but we suggest the following nine objectives as common ground to advance the education of our students' heads, hearts and hands for their successful preparation to enter college, career, community and civic life. All three approaches--

1. Define and unify their school community around shared values and their behavioral definitions. Emphasis varies among the models, but each one recognizes the importance of identifying shared community values to guide policy, set behavioral expectations and define the parameters for ethical decision making.

2. Teach and practice skills of self-management within the school curricula and extra-curricular activities to demonstrate caring and respectful behavior for positive youth development. All three models recognize the importance of the social nature of schools and places emphasis on teaching

and student practice of skills that lead to supportive learning environments and the demonstration of prosocial character.

3. Teach and practice ethical analysis and decision making within the school curricula to support ethical reasoning and action. The skill of ethical decision making is highlighted in each model with the understanding that this skill is not generally understood or widely practiced in our public schools.

4. Create a safe and caring community that emphasizes meaningful relationships for positive youth development. Research has often validated that the success and resiliency of students can be attributed to students' sense of safety in school (protected from physical or psychological threat) and their recognition of positive and appropriate relationships with adults at school. All three models affirm strategies from class meetings, a variety of extra-curricular offerings and in-school advisory programs to help students make positive connections with peers and adults.

5. Engage students in relevant learning utilizing all dimensions of school life to promote leadership and service to help them develop socially, emotionally, ethically and civically. There is an emphasis of "doing" while learning with the demonstration of ethical behavior (hand) in all three models. Service-learning is cited in all three models as one example of how student leadership can be cultivated to demonstrate prosocial/civic character.

6. Define all adults in the school community as role models. Each model recognizes the implementation of their objectives as not being done "to" students, but that the model itself is a reflection of adult belief and role modeling and the "program" represents how school is lived, not just taught.

7. Engage parents as the first educators and the community to teach and model shared values. Parents and the broader community are recognized as critical resources to leverage the mission of the school for student success. Outreach to parents to develop awareness and the ability to support program objectives is shared by all three models.

8. Require research-based professional development to support best practices by all adults as a key to program success.

9. Incorporate well designed evaluation that guides practice, where evaluation results are utilized to make continual progress to advance a caring, challenging and respectful learning community for students and adults.

An Ethical Obligation

School administrators can feel highly confident in the research support for all three approaches. Each supporting agency has a well developed website that provides links to research and descriptions of best practices in schools using their model. While we acknowledge school leaders are under great pressure to achieve quantitative results on standardized measures, we urge that educating for the head, heart and hand offers the best potential for success in academic measures. More importantly, it offers the best potential for students' success in life. In addition, we

understand there are heavy demands on our colleagues who are implementing Common Core Standards. We believe that engaging the head, heart and hand of our teachers and students is the most responsible and effective way to achieve real progress in achieving the goals of Common Core in a way that we assert is an ethical obligation. We applaud those who are trying to integrate instruction for the head, heart and hand and welcome all others to begin a strategic process to research and implement the shared objectives of character education, social-emotional learning and The Whole Child.

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Character Education
Application of moral & performance character to recognize prosocial values that support the excellence of interpersonal relationships and one's potential for excellence in all endeavors

Unique feature

Shared Objectives

1. Define & unify community around shared values
2. Teach & practice skills of self-management to demonstrate respectful behavior
3. Teach & practice ethical decision making
4. Create a safe & caring learning community
5. Engage students in relevant learning, leadership & service
6. Seek all adults to be role models
7. Engage parents & community
8. Require research-based professional development
9. Incorporate evaluation that guides practice

Social-Emotional Learning

Lessons to teach and practice specific skill sets to practice self-awareness, self-management and respectful relationships

Unique feature

Whole Child

Focus includes student and adult health and well-being by addressing the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of health
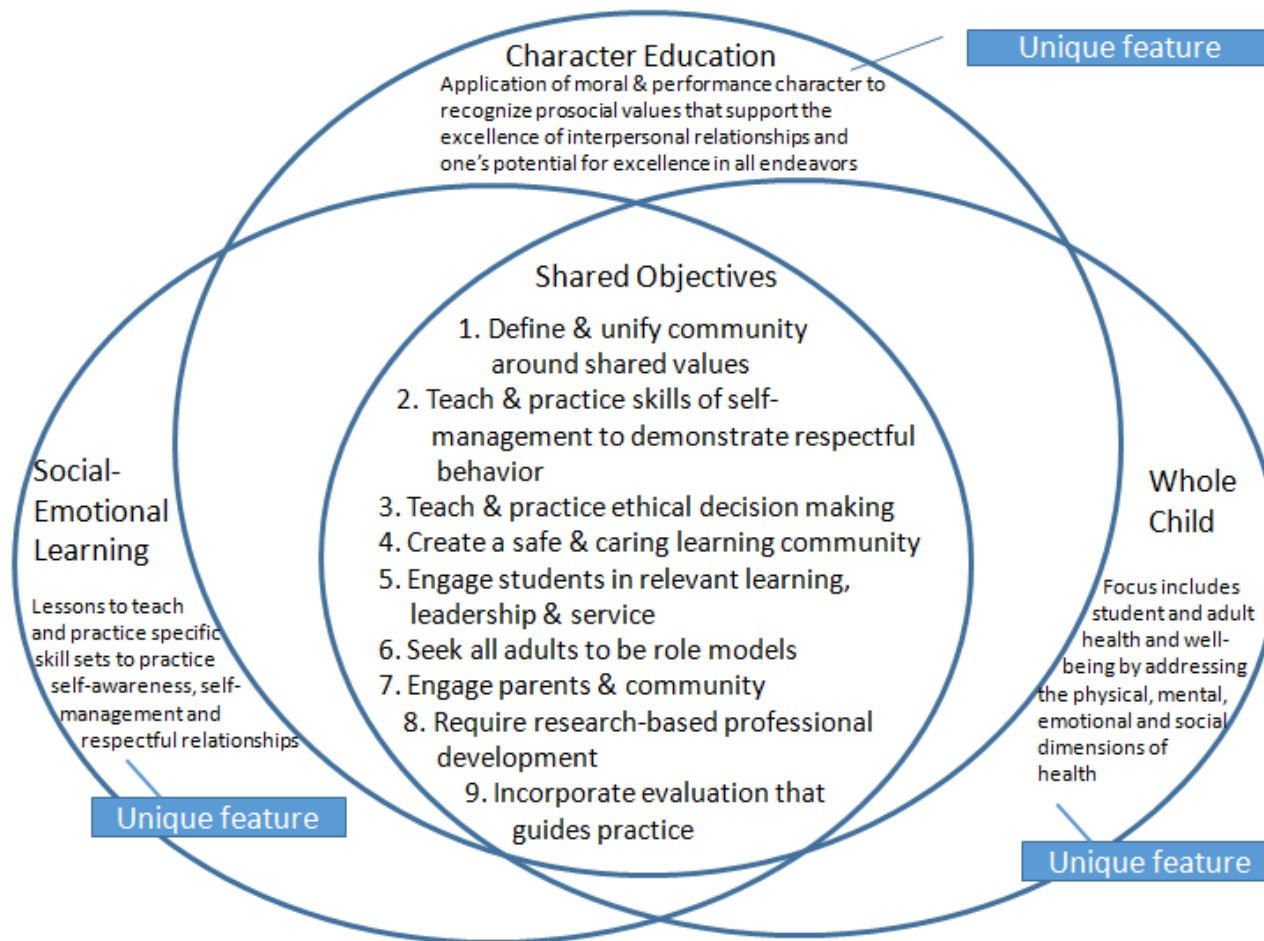
Unique feature

Figure 1. Recognition of shared objectives of three educational approaches supported by child development research where Character Education, Social-Emotional Learning and the Whole Child approach are compared as defined by published material on the websites of The Character Education Partnership, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, and ASCD respectively.