Funding for Character Education

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When an organization calling itself the Character Education Partnership (CEP) gives away grants to schools and districts that sponsor character education program projects, it raises the question of who is defining character and values. Consequently, a closer look seems in order.

Liberal and conservative organizations intent on spreading their version of character education often hide behind names like The Heritage Foundation, and The Family Foundation. The CEP is not one of these organizations. The Character Education Partnership defines itself as “a nonpartisan coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to developing moral character and civic virtue in our nation’s youth as one means of creating a more compassionate and responsible society” [1]. It is supported by a number of corporate sponsors and sees itself as a national advocate and leader for the character education movement.

A closer look at their resource page on the web site indicates the organization supports a wide range of web sites and site sponsors that could be considered nonpartisan or neutral in their political positions. This move to the middle of the road might be criticized by some but it really solidifies a position of strength for the organization and increases the likelihood that public schools will be able to adopt character education programs.

Sponsors include organizations that support peace movements, but safe picks dominate the list. The resource page also includes a searchable database that allows you to search for resources and institutions that support character education. You are able to search using a number of different fields and words. It’s a nice feature for those folks looking to find local or national resources. You can search by issue, curricula, and audience. Of course, any organization that takes on the promotion and support of character education must have a clear strategy. In this case the strategy also involves relying on other organizations and programs that have already been created. As a result, past programs and resources are archived. In this way, the CEP is allowing the successful projects to sustain the growth and direction of the organization.
To support character education in real ways, the organization funds new initiatives as well as archives examples and resources of past successful projects. The CEP has created The National Schools of Character Program which for the eighth year is funding innovative school projects that promote character education [2]. To be eligible for funding, projects must emphasize core ethical values such as honesty, respect, responsibility and caring. They must also connect with the core eleven principles identified on the CEP site.

For example: Principle one states that an effective program must promote core ethical values as the basis of good character. While Principle talks about how a program must define character comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.

While funding for these programs exists, the CEP wants to do everything it can to ensure that the programs become a part of the school and district curricula or operational strategies. To improve the chances of schools and districts creating and adopting character education programs, CEP created a tool that allows educators to identify standards and outcomes to align their curriculum with. In addition, this tool provides a means for educators, administrators, and community members to reflect on current practices, identify short- and long-term objectives, and better organize strategic plans. In the end, this increases the likelihood that character development programs will be sustaining and a part of future strategic plans and program development for schools, districts, and communities.

References:


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