How Not to Teach Values: A Critical Look at Character Education (*)
Were you to stand somewhere in the continental United States and announce, "I'm going to Hawaii," it would be understood ... you would probably be talking about one specific island in the chain – namely, the big one to your southeast. The word

21. Telling students to "try hard" and "do their best" begs the important questions. Even putting aside the theological underpinnings of the character education movement, the five questions presented in ... the characters of children rather than on transforming the environments in which they learn, those who assume the worst by justice, but that children – or even adults – should not have an active role to play in making decisions and ... remember, is to elicit the right answer from students and tell those who see things differently "why their conclusion is

Ironically, some people who accept character education without a second thought are quite articulate about the bankruptcy ... facts and skills. Plenty of administrators are working to create schools where students can actively construct meaning

Character education curricula also stress the importance of things like "respect," "responsibility," and "citizenship." ... or "rules" – a news magazine recently described the growing popularity of such practices as requiring uniforms,

In general terms, what the evidence suggests is this: the more we reward people for doing something, the more likely they ... to erode it. This effect has been demonstrated under many different circumstances and with respect to many different

The phrase

Even with values that are widely shared, a superficial consensus may dissolve when we take a closer look. Educators ... concern play out in practice? For some of us, it takes the form of an emphasis on compassion; for the dominant character

Meanwhile, in place of such personal qualities as punctuality or perseverance, we might emphasize the cultivation of ... as much as self-control. With such an agenda, it would be crucial to give students the chance to participate in making

Teachers and schools tend to mistake good behavior for good character. What they prize is docility, suggestibility; the ... in themselves. Small wonder that their effort to build character is such a failure; they don't know it when they see it.

Should we allow values to be taught in school? The question is about as sensible as asking whether our bodies should be ... don't notice the latter because they're too similar to the values of the culture at large. Whether or not we deliberately

It is informative to discover whom the proponents of a hero-based approach to character education themselves regard ... nominee for "possibly our greatest living American" is Rush Limbaugh. (See Terry Eastland, "Rush Limbaugh: Talking Back," in Fritz K. Oser, Andreas Dick, and Jean-Luc Patry, eds., The Brighter Side of Human Nature: Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life

To "character education," thereby ceding that label to the people who have already appropriated it, or we try to

Ways We Want Our Class to Be: Class Meetings That Build Commitment to Kindness and Learning

Constance Kamii, Faye B. Clark, and Ann Dominick, "The Six National Goals: A Road to Disappointment," Social Education

Democracy and Education

William Kilpatrick, p. 231.

Kilpatrick, p. 15.

New York Times,

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