Eliminating Problem Behavior in Schools: Creating a Culture of Civility

K. Richard Young
Lynnette Christensen
Paul Caldarella
Brigham Young University

Richard P. West
Utah State University

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The Big Picture

We envision schools that foster nobility by enlightening the mind and inspiring the heart through nurturing:

- development of social emotional and behavioral skills
- competencies and characteristics necessary for meaningful relationships
- individuals’ ability to deal with adversity and stress.
Putting the Big Picture Together

- Self-Mgmt
- SEL
- SWPBS
- Clear Expect
- Positive Reinforce
- Character Ed
- Mentoring
- Social Skills
- PLC
- Data
Schoolhouse outline over the triangle or triangle within it
What are the most important outcomes for students and schools?
The 3 C’s

Character

Conduct

Citizenship

It is well for educators everywhere when teaching the young to have in mind the three “C’s” as well as the three “R’s” mentioned so proverbially...

David O. McKay
The 3 C’s

Character

Conduct

Citizenship

In my opinion the highest, noblest purpose in all our education, from the grades to the university, is to teach citizenship and noble character.

David O. McKay
Character + Conduct + Citizenship = ?
What is civility?
Historical Roots of Civility

- Latin roots *civis* (citizen) and *civitas* (city)
- Ability to work as a citizen
- Maintain a functioning society
- Enjoy benefits and carry responsibilities

(Shulman & Carey, 1984; Boyd, 2006)
Civility: A Timeless Virtue

- Manners, courtesy, politeness, consideration, other formalities in everyday life
  (Boyd, 2006; Ferriss, 2002; Hinckley, 2000; Peck, 2002)

- In this view, to be ‘civil’ is to speak or interact with others in ways that are polite and socially acceptable
Civility carries with it the essence of courtesy, politeness, and consideration for others. All of the education and accomplishments in the world will not count for much unless they are accompanied by marks of gentility, of respect for others, of going the extra mile.

Hinckley (2000)
Standing For Something
How has civility historically been integrated into public schools?
Civility Instruction Historically

• Aimed to prepare students to nurture civil society by teaching them to be good citizens (Peck, 2002)

• Civility and manners were valued equally with academic material (Berman, 1998)
“Every action done in Company, ought to be with Some Sign of Respect, to those who are Present.”

“Speak not injurious Words neither in Jest or Earnest Scoff at none although they give Occasion.”

“Labor to keep alive in your breast that Little Spark of Celestial fire called Conscience.”

(George Washington’s Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour)
McGuffey Readers

• Sold 120 million from 1836-1960
• Since 1961, average sales 30,000/year
• Helped students learn to read while exposing them to culture and civility
• Emphasized character, moral integrity, and individual responsibility
• Along with the Bible, they were the sole source of enlightenment in many homes
• Indoctrinating
  (See Peck, 2002; Field, 1997)
• The first 1841 reader introduced children to McGuffey's ethical code

• The child modeled in this book was prompt, good, kind, honest and truthful

• This first book contained fifty-five lessons.
LESSON II

*Time to Get Up.*

1. James, it is now morning. The sun is just peeping over the hills in the east. Get up, my boy, for the sun has just risen!

2. I hope you have said your prayers and thanked your Father in Heaven for all His goodness. I hope you have thanked Him for your good health, and the blessings of a home, for kind parents, for tender friends, for pleasant books and all your other enjoyments.
LESSON II
Time to Get Up.

3. Never forget, before you leave your room, to thank God for His kindness. He is indeed kinder to us than an earthly parent.

4. Let us now go out of doors. How beautifully the sun shines upon the hills! How glorious a thing is the sun. How much like that Being who dwells in the Heavens, sending down His mercies upon mankind, as the sun sheds light and its warmth upon the world!
You Can Do This: An Approach to Raising Wonderful Children

You Can Do This
www.education.byu.edu/YouCanDoThis
Is it time for a return of civility in education?
Today’s schools... 

- Faced with an increasing number of difficult challenges
- Have become more culturally and behaviorally diverse, as children with all types of backgrounds, languages, and areas of risk are educated together
I need not remind you that the cities of America are in trouble...the problems will largely continue until many more people get at the root. That root, I believe, lies in two places: in our schools and in our homes.

Hinckley, September 1998  
The United States Conference of Mayors
Many Americans report they believe incivility is a serious problem that is growing worse with problems ranging from uncivil language, rudeness, intolerance, antagonism, to violent activities.
What do today’s educators think?

The Civil Behavior of Students: A Survey of School Professionals

On-Line Survey (N=251)

- 63% from Utah, 29 states, 4 countries
- 79% female
- 94% White
- 67% suburban
- 17% rural
- 16% urban
Results

- Civility should be fostered in schools in a variety of ways including modeling and directly teaching civil behaviors.
- Civility needs to be primarily taught in the home.
<table>
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<th>intervention Ideas</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct instruction</td>
<td>62.53%</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home and societal influences</td>
<td>43.53%</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>Modeling by school professionals</td>
<td>36.47%</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>School-wide positive behavior support</td>
<td>31.76%</td>
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<td>Rules, expectations, and classroom structure</td>
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<td>Character Education</td>
<td>7.06%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zero-tolerance policies</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
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What do you think?
We think . . .

Schools need to invest more in ensuring not only students’ academic success, but the development of civil behavior which students need to successfully meet the challenges of life.
Why teach civility?

• To create a culture of civility in homes, schools, and communities

• To shape future citizens

• To replace problem behaviors with civility in schools
By keeping the levels of incivility down, we keep the levels of violence down. . . . If we teach youngsters of all walks of life how to manage conflict with civility-based relational skills, we will have a less uncivil society, a less violent one.

P. M. Forni
Pieces of the Big Picture

• Training in problem-solving, social skills, anger management, self-esteem  
  (Caldarella Christensen, Kramer, & Kronmiller, 2009; Stover, 1999)

• Integrating themes of civility into academic curriculum  
  (Marchant & Womack, 2010; Nilsen, 2008)

• Building positive relationships between students and faculty  
  (Stover, 1999; Young, et al., 2008)

• Praising students for promptness  
  (Caldarella, Christensen, Young & Densley, In press)

• Praising appropriate cafeteria behavior  
  (West, Smith, Sanders, & Wheatley, 2006)
Call for Civility

Civility is fading.

We see it as an essential part of society and as a powerful agent for change in our schools.

Can we survive without a culture of civility?
Brigham Young University
Positive Behavior Support Initiative

http://education.byu.edu/pbsi/
http://education.byu.edu/youcandothis

richard_young@byu.edu
lynnette_christensen@byu.edu
paul_caldarella@byu.edu
rich.west@usu.edu

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