

to do so. Rather than making fun of their fears, he knew their concern was valid and needed to be dealt with. Additionally, in order for the plan to work, he couldn't simply order his new friends to conform to his wishes and desires, for such control would destroy the very friendships he desired. Rather, he had to entice them, to create a vision of possibility so that they would want to participate in the venture and join in the rewards of doing so.

Habit 6: SYNERGIZE

This habit can be symbolized by the acronym TEAM: working Together, Everyone Accomplishes More. We are simultaneously members of many teams, which can be diagrammed as concentric circles of increasing size (representing our family, school, community, city, state, nation, world). Good team members encourage inclusion and welcome diversity because the different strengths of various members contribute in a complementary fashion for the good of the whole. As members of larger groups, we need to volunteer our service to the larger society.

The school of fish, swimming in synchrony as a new, larger system, is a perfect demonstration of synergy or creative teamwork. Instead of being ostracized for his different color, Swimmy plays a unique role as the eye.

Habit 7: SHARPEN THE SAW

A worker cannot continue to work (saw) without taking time for self-renewal (sharpening the saw) because the saw eventually gets dull and effectiveness is diminished. Renewal must occur in all four aspects of life: physical, social, mental, and spiritual/emotional. A successful life, then, is a life of continual growth and change as well as balance in our living, loving, learning, and leaving a legacy. We

must balance our loving and serving others (our giving) with loving ourselves (seeking the fulfillment of our own needs so that we become refreshed), so we can serve effectively once again. This habit also involves the notion of beginning anew, becoming transformed, and extending ourselves to leadership roles where we exert our talents and influence in increasingly wider circles.

The red fish became renewed as they replaced their reactive hiding behavior with the life of adventure and joy as a proactive, creative community. In order to fulfill his personal dream, Swimmy was also transformed. As he shared his vision with his new friends and then taught them to swim as one giant fish, he became a leader within the new community.

Conclusion

The tools for teaching character education extend well beyond giving students a handout listing virtues. Teachers can invite students to create art, write poetry, and perform drama (see the rap lyrics in the sidebar) that illustrate values and morals. We can get ideas from books for adults (like *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*) and make them understandable at the elementary level in a way that is true to the original work. We can encourage our students to interpret literature, to look for virtues as they are exhibited by fictional characters (as in Swimmy) and by real people.⁷ We can look for opportunities in the classroom to identify, practice, reward, and get creative with good character. ☞

Notes

1. Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990); *Living the 7 Habits* (1999).
2. Ernest Boyer, *The Basic School: A Community for Learning* (Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1995); P. Barth and R. Mitchell, *Smart Start: Elementary*

Education for the 21st Century (Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992); California Department of Education, *It's Elementary: Elementary Grades Task Force Report* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 1992); Lee Bennett, *A Children's Book of Virtues* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Marian Wright Edelman, *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993); C. L. Taulbert, *Eight Habits of the Heart* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997).

3. Michael Bernard, *Providing All Children with the Foundations for Achievement* (Athens, Canada: Hindle, 1998).
4. I sent a survey with a Likert Scale and fill-in-the-blank questions home with students in three classrooms (grades 2-4). Roughly 85% of the respondents indicated that the course was effective in improving students' attitudes and behaviors.
5. A school wide program in Georgia is described by Hang-In Kim in "Dodul-Kyoyuk: Moral Education in South Korea and Georgia," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 12, no 4 (April/May 2000).
6. Leo Lioni, *Swimmy* (New York: Pantheon/Knopf, 1968).
7. *The Dragon Lode* is published two or three times a year by the International Reading Association Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group. (ISSN: 1098-6448. Web site: www.csulb.edu/org/childrens-lit/). The IRA can be reached by phone: (800) 628-8508, e-mail: pubinfo@reading.org, or website: www.reading.org.
8. For excellent biographies selected annually as part of the Los Angeles' 100 Best Books (a balanced library acquisition program for grades K-12), see *The Dragon Lode* (15, no 2, March 1997: 17-23; 16, no. 2, Spring 1998: 30-41; 17 no. 2, Spring 1999: 21-33; and 18 no. 2, Spring 2000, in press).

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