

PRICE LABORATORY SCHOOL ELEMENTARY CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM “Building a Caring Community”

INTRODUCTION

Many American educators have been talking about and implementing character education programs in their respective schools. Closely allied with the study of citizenship, civics, ethics, morals, and values, character education has experienced a renewed interest in schools and communities.

The rationale for this current emphasis unfortunately has haunted our local, state, national and international scenes in recent years. Youth crime, suicide, drug, alcohol, tobacco abuse, and child abuse are exposed constantly in the media. Even in communities and schools which have been known as peaceful, safe environments, youth have committed monstrous atrocities with devastating results. These incidences funnel into a deeply entrenched national concern regarding American youth. Educators, families, churches, politicians, and communities have been working collectively to face the challenge of instilling a moral conscience into our youth to assist them in becoming responsible and respectful citizens.

Much of the current literature on character education speaks to the importance of establishing a “caring community” in our schools. Schaps, Watson and Lewis, 1996, state community is not so much a place as an experience—the experience of feeling valued, connected and responsible to others. Each and every person in a “caring community” has a mutual understanding and commitment to basic moral values such as kindness, service, respect, and responsibility.

The September 11, 2001 homeland tragedy sent a stunning shock wave throughout the United States with tremors felt around the world. Firefighters, police, rescue workers, and volunteers along with families, schools, communities, churches, businesses, non profit organizations and specialty groups rallied together. Their actions time and time again portrayed extraordinary examples of what it truly means to be a “caring community”. President Bush also spoke to the children of America, asking them to extend their caring beyond our borders to the children of war plagued Afghanistan.

The Price Laboratory School’s Elementary Citizenship Program provided a safety net for students, faculty, staff, and families in the aftermath of these horrific events. Tremendous comfort was found in the rituals and traditions this program is built upon. A heightened level of meaning was felt in the hearts of many as they stood together at the September Citizenship Assembly reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, singing patriotic songs, and gathering together in their “caring community”.

PRICE LABORATORY SCHOOL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM

In April of 1993, an informally organized group of elementary educators at Price Laboratory School in Cedar Falls explored questions relative to the moral fiber of their school community. Many teachers expressed concern about students not transferring the level of respect they demonstrated in the classrooms to more unstructured environments such as recess, lunch time, and before and after school. They decided to move forward with a proactive stance to the civility concerns they saw at Price Laboratory School. These concerns were readily acknowledged by administration and other faculty and staff. There was an enthusiastic response to a school-wide effort addressing these issues. This effort was titled the Price Laboratory School Elementary Citizenship Program, which was implemented during the 1993-1994 school year.

The PLS Elementary Citizenship Program is rooted in a strong developmental and preventative philosophy. This program was established for all students. Its main goal is to develop a cohesive community of learners who value and respect one another. More specifically it emphasizes creating and nurturing a sense of community through presentation of anti-social behaviors and teaching and promoting positive citizenship behaviors.

The PLS Elementary Citizenship Program is an ongoing, process-oriented program. During the nine years of it's existence, it has been shaped and reshaped to respond to the current and most crucial needs of our PLS community. Just as we don different clothes for different seasons, the PLS Elementary Citizenship Program takes on an appearance that compliments the current climate of our school. However, nurturing the founding principles of sense of community and positive citizenship behaviors are a constant, regardless of what season we are in!

MONTHLY CITIZENSHIP THEMES

Monthly themes are selected by the Elementary Student Council for each year's citizenship program and visibly displayed in each classroom. **(See Attachment A to view photos of these displays)**

Listed below are the monthly themes for each of the years this program has been in existence at Price Laboratory School. Many of the themes are repetitive and similar as it is important to teach, re-teach, and reinforce the values and principles they represent.

1993-1994 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Rules and Safety
 October: Respect
 November: Active Learning
 December: Kindness and Courtesy
 January: Cooperation (Conflict Resolution)
 February: Friends
 March: Strengths and Limitations
 April: Good Sportsmanship
 May: End of the Year Rally

1994-1995 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Rules and Safety
 October: Goal Setting
 November: Be Thankful
 December: Thoughtful Words and Actions
 January: Rights and Responsibilities
 February: Self Confidence
 March: Valuing Our Environment
 April: Do Your Best! Don't Give Up
 May: End of the Year Rally

1995-1996 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Beginning of the Year Rally
 October: Respect Everyone
 November: Be Fair and Share
 December: Help Your Community
 January: Set a Good Example
 February: Keep Trying! Don't Give Up
 March: Caring for One Another
 April: Give a Hoot-Don't Pollute
 May: End of the Year Rally

1996-1997 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Respect Everyone
 October: Follow School Rules
 November: Value Property
 December: Listen to Others
 January: Do My Best at Learning
 February: Cooperation
 March: Kind Words and Actions
 April: Building a Safe and Happy Community
 May: End of the Year Rally

*These themes were taken from the PLS Pledge to support it's message.

1997-1998 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Beginning of the Year Rally
October: Don't Be a Fool, Do Your Best
At School
November: Use Good Manners
December: Follow the Laws of Learning
January: Treat Others With Equity
February: Be Respectful
March: Be a Good Sport
April: Make Our School Shine
May: End of the Year Rally

1999-2000 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Beginning of the Year Rally
October: Work Together for the Common
Good
November: Treat Others with Equality
December: Respect Individual Rights
January: Be Fair - Justice
February: Respect Differences - Diversity
March: Tell the Truth
April: Be a Good Citizen - Patriotism
May: Wrap It Up

*These themes were based on the Seven Core
Democratic Values taught in 5th grade Social Studies

2001-2002 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: United We Stand
October: Respect and Cooperate with ALL
Guest Teachers
November: Cooperate and WALK in the
Hallways
December: Be a Good Sport at School Events
January: Respect Differences – Value
Diversity
February: Restaurant Voice and Manners in
the Lunchroom
March: Be Careful and Safe in the Swimming
Pool
April: Be Kind and Play Fair on the Playground
May: Stay Focused: Be Star Learners!

*Most of these themes were developed to correlate with our NK-12th Grade School
Climate Common Area Plans. September was decided in response to the
September 11, 2001 national tragedy.

1998-1999 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Beginning of the Year Rally
October: Be Respectful
November: Be a Good Sport
December: Do Service and Share
January: Be Cooperative
February: Be Responsible
March: Be a Good Friend
April: Be Safe
May: End of the Year Rally

2000-2001 PLS CITIZENSHIP THEMES

September: Beginning of the Year Rally
October: Respect Other People and Property
November: Show Panther Pride
December: Help Each Other
January: Celebrate Differences
February: Try Your Best at Learning
March: Be Honest and Responsible
April: Cooperate – Be a Team Player
May: Wrap It Up With a Smile!

*These themes were tied into the PLS School Climate
Guidelines for Success (Respect, Learning, Responsibility,
Attitude, and Honesty)

STUDENT COUNCIL

For the first seven years of this program, the student council representatives were selected by a voting process in their respective classrooms for a one-year term. Often times the same students were being voted into various leadership roles at PLS including student council. Many students not elected were eager and willing to help their community in this way and were often disappointed when not chosen. Faculty and parents also noticed students with strong leadership skills and potential were being overlooked in this process.

In consideration of these factors, the PLS Student Council shifted from an electoral organization to a volunteer organization two years ago. The faculty advisor asked for volunteers from each of the classrooms and then divided them into groups with representation from each grade level and classroom into different groups for each month. This change was well received by faculty, students, and parents. Last year 112 students volunteered for this service learning opportunity. This year 127 students volunteered. Each month there is a different group (approximately 12-15 students) who function as the PLS Student Council for that particular month. The Student Council meets once a week over lunchtime.

(See Attachment B for a sample list of a monthly PLS Student Council group)

CITIZENSHIP ASSEMBLIES

On the last Friday of each month an Elementary Citizenship Assembly is held in the school auditorium or field house. These assemblies begin at 8:45a.m. and usually last from thirty to forty-five minutes. A multi media approach which includes song, dance, drama, art work, special announcements, awards, etc. results in a high interest, engaging experience for all elementary students, faculty, and staff. Parents have an open invitation to these assemblies and are often well represented. These assemblies have become a founding pillar of tradition and ritual for the PLS Elementary Citizenship Program. The fellowship is often inspirational and contagious. Many secondary students have fond memories of these assemblies. Secondary student groups such as the NU Singers, NU Student Council, the athletic teams, NU Peer Helpers, Proud Group (People Respecting Our Unique Differences) often volunteer to assist at these assemblies.

Here is the schedule for the 2001-2002 PLS Elementary Citizenship Assemblies:

Price Laboratory School Elementary Citizenship Assemblies 2001-2002

August 31, 2001	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
September 28, 2001	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
October 25, 2001	9:15a.m.	Nielsen Field House
November 30, 2001	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
December 21, 2001	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
January 25, 2002	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
February 22, 2002	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
March 29, 2002	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
April 26, 2002	8:45a.m.	Butzier Auditorium
May 24, 2002	TBA	Butzier Auditorium

*The public is welcome to attend these assemblies. Please stop at the main office for a visitor name tag first. Butzier Auditorium and Nielsen Field House are both located in Price Laboratory School, 19th and Campus Streets, Cedar Falls IA.

Each month during the week of the assembly, the elementary faculty and staff are given an agenda for that month's assembly. **(See Attachment C for a sample agenda)**

THE PLEDGES

An important component of the monthly citizenship assembly is reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and the Price Laboratory School Pledge. The PLS Pledge was developed by the 1993-1994 Elementary Student Council. Ideas from each classroom were solicited by student council representatives to be included in the PLS Pledge. Information was first synthesized into categories and then into statements that promoted students' beliefs. The elementary principal and elementary counselor facilitated this process. The final document reads as follows:

Price Laboratory School Pledge

I promise to respect everyone at Price Laboratory School, to follow school rules, to value all property, to listen to others, to do my best at learning, and to cooperate. I will not hurt others with my words or actions. I want Price Laboratory School to be a safe and happy place for all.

The PLS Pledge was enlarged, mounted, and laminated with child appropriate illustrations for display in each classroom and throughout the school. At the beginning of each Citizenship Assembly, the Elementary Student Council leads the student body in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the PLS Pledge. Although the students are not taught nor asked to memorize the PLS Pledge, most students can recite it by memory. Since it was written by students, they feel a sense of pride and ownership for it. It honestly and simply reflects the guiding principles they value for their school community. Many classrooms recite both pledges daily as a part of their opening routine.

REVIEWING AND INTRODUCING MONTHLY THEMES

At each monthly assembly the current month's theme is reviewed by a specific grade level or subject area for teacher(s) and students. Early in the school year teachers sign up their class for a particular month's assembly to plan a simple presentation (5 to 10 minutes) which reviews that month's citizenship theme. Classroom teachers and special area teachers often collaborate and share this responsibility. Also at each assembly the theme for the upcoming month is introduced under the leadership of the resource teacher and elementary counselor. They often recruit participation from the entire school community. For example, the music teacher has written original songs related to various citizenship themes. The drama teacher has assisted with skits related to the themes. The elementary art teacher has coordinated student art projects which were displayed at citizenship assemblies. The physical education teacher planned and presented a special red, white, and blue parachute dance activity for the theme, "United We Stand". The middle and high school students also assist at times by introducing themes.

Over the course of each month, classrooms implement the themes in various and unique ways. During the "Valuing Our Environment" theme, one classroom read books on recycling. Another class developed a "Beautification Project" in which sections of the school were assigned to classrooms to maintain neat and tidy. Signs were placed in each section acknowledging which class was responsible for the beautification.

During the “Kindness and Courtesy” theme, the entire school community (secretaries, principals, cooks, janitors, teacher associates, teachers, the guidance counselor, elementary students, and university students) was involved. When a student was caught giving a hand in a “random act of kindness or courtesy” the behavior was written on a green piece of paper cut in the shape of a hand. It was then placed in a box in the classroom. At the end of the day the hands were read and placed on a large piece of poster paper cut in the shape of a tree. At the end of the month, the trees were brought to the elementary citizenship assembly. Everyone could see students’ collective efforts in “Kindness and Courtesy”. The trees were also displayed in the cafeteria for the entire school to view.

MUSIC

Music has come to play an integral role in Price Laboratory School’s Elementary Citizenship Assemblies. It sets a positive tone as the classrooms are entering and leaving the assemblies.

The elementary music teacher plans ahead to coordinate songs with the particular monthly themes. Strategies frequently used are: composing original songs, re-writing works to familiar or existing tunes, and finding traditional or contemporary published songs. All of these approaches have been used effectively. For one monthly “Respect” theme, a special emphasis was to encourage students to respect their bodies. After searching for a resource and finding none, the music teacher composed the original song, “Respect Your Body.” For “Cooperation” related themes the song, “Cooperation Hop” (Holvering, 1989) has been a big hit. All elementary students were taught the song, “All You Gotta Say is NO” (Brady, 1983) which they enjoyed singing for the Red Ribbon Week during an October assembly.

There are many resources available with songs relevant to school citizenship themes. Also, traditional school songs, spirit songs, and patriotic songs often times enhance the PLS Elementary Citizenship Assemblies. **(See ATTACHMENT D for sample original songs and a list of resources)**

SERVICE LEARNING

“Rights in a democracy must always be balanced with social responsibilities.” (Landau and Gathercoal, 1999)
In 1996 under the leadership of the elementary principal and a fifth grade teacher, a service learning component was woven into the fabric of the PLS Elementary Citizenship Program. The objectives of the Iowa Service Learning Partnership actively reinforce the basic goals of the PLS Citizenship Program.

Classroom teachers and special area teachers integrated various service learning projects into their respective curriculums. Many of these projects are highlighted during the monthly citizenship assemblies.

Service learning experiences have included: First and second graders working on playground clean up and maintenance, and third and eighth graders planning a school-wide public awareness week to stop smoking with the American Cancer Society, third graders establishing the PLS Bakery, a school-wide baking project with their profits going toward needed causes. The fifth graders tape recorded children’s books and delivered them to local doctors, dentists, and hospital waiting rooms. Fourth graders participated in the Jump Rope for the Heart Project sponsored by the American Heart Association.

Service learning enhances the students’ curriculum by stretching the walls of the classrooms into communities both far and near. These experiences also foster a sense of responsibility and compassion for others. **(See Attachment E for an example of a service learning project)**

CITIZENSHIP CONCERN FORM

An extension of school-wide involvement in the PLS Citizenship Program was the development of the PLS Citizenship Concern Form. Structured around the PLS Pledge, this form was designed to provide an accountability system for situations when a student's behavior doesn't reflect the spirit of good citizenship and the guiding principles of the PLS Pledge. When an incident of misbehavior occurs, the supervisor intervenes and instructs the student to complete the PLS Citizenship Form. The form is then processed with the student and sent home for parent signature. A copy is given to the principal, the classroom teacher, and the guidance counselor. This procedure emphasizes the importance of the character education philosophy upon which this program is built. It also utilizes a team approach which includes parents and places responsibility upon the student to be a good citizen at PLS. **(See Attachment F for this form)**

ASSESSMENT

In 1998, Dr. Lynn Nielsen, former elementary principal at Price Laboratory School, conducted a qualitative assessment of the PLS Elementary Citizenship Program. His study focused on exploring these specific questions: 1) What is a good citizen? 2) To what degree do PLS students display good citizenship? 3) In what areas do PLS students need to improve in demonstrating good citizenship? 4) To what degree is the PLS Citizenship Program an effective tool in building citizenship behaviors in the lives of students? 5) What classroom qualities reinforce these citizenship ideals? (Nielsen, 1998)

Dr. Nielsen used parent, teacher, and student paper and pencil surveys with open-ended questions as his primary qualitative methodology. He also conducted interviews with one parent and five teachers.

Some conclusions this study reported are:

- 80% of the students surveyed described a good citizen as a person who cares, is respectful, or is responsible.
- Both teachers and parents definitions of "good citizenship" were more clearly delineated in 1998 than 1993.
- Data from this study suggests teachers perceive students as more respectful and responsible in 1998 than in 1993.
- Data from this study suggests that aspects of the PLS Elementary Citizenship Program reinforce and focus on the importance of adults in the school being positive role models for the students.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the ages philosophers from Socrates to Ghandi have cited virtues built upon the principles of honesty, respect, responsibility, perserverance, and generosity as necessary pillars of civilization. In 1837 Horace Mann, the founder of the common school, didn't mince words about the schools' responsibility to character education:

“The highest and noblest office of education pertains to our moral nature. The common school should teach virtue before knowledge for ... knowledge without virtue poses its own danger...” (Amundson 1991).

Just as many seasoned educators carry the imprint of the historical event of JFK’s assassination, today’s children have been imprinted by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The haunting image of the still smoking rubble speaks a silent yet profound message: we never know when any of us “everyday citizens” could be called upon to access these virtues in heroic measures. There is no graver time than now for educators to stay true to these virtues and renew a commitment to character education in their schools and communities.

The future is clouded with uncertainties as never seen before. Price Laboratory School finds strength, hope, and opportunity within the workings of its’ Elementary Citizenship Program. PLS takes seriously the charge educators must embrace to prepare students to be responsible and respectful citizens of the U.S. and the modern global society. For the future of this country’s founding democratic principles lies within the paths this generation will choose as they find their way into this emergent twenty first century.

**“We will be able to emerge from the bleak, desolate midnight of man’s inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.”
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

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ATTACHMENT A

Classroom displays of PLS monthly citizenship themes

ATTACHMENT B

Price Laboratory School
Elementary Student Council
October, 2001

Sammi LeRoy	Unit II	Mrs. Ensworth
Atiff Zaman	Unit II	Mrs. Ensworth
Raeven Wilson	Unit II	Mrs. Stichter/Miss Mohorne
Kody Brown	Unit II	Mrs. Stichter/Miss Mohorne
Joey Henry	Unit II	Mrs. Tallakson
Janae Holmes	Unit II	Mrs. Tallakson

Joanie Griffith	3 rd Grade	Mrs. Guenther
Philippe Ayala	3 rd Grade	Mrs. Guenther
Katie Mallon	3 rd Grade	Mrs. Cooney
Maddie Backstrom	3 rd Grade	Mrs. Cooney

Rhyanne Abernathy Manning	4 th Grade	Mr. Nielsen
Luke Schroeder	4 th Grade	Mr. Nielsen
Jawazaa Holmes	4 th Grade	Mrs. Rohret
Jonathan Kressin	4 th Grade	Mrs. Rohret

Jared Luchtenburg	5 th Grade	Mrs. Treiber
Megan Hills	5 th Grade	Mrs. Treiber
Alex Findlay	5 th Grade	Mrs. Lockhart

The October ESC will meet on Wednesdays, October 3, 10, 17 at 12:00 noon in Room 17 across from the lunchroom.

ATTACHMENT C

ELEMENTARY CITIZENSHIP ASSEMBLY
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2001
8:45 A.M.
BUTZIER AUDITORIUM

- I. Opening Songs..... Mrs. Swanson
- II. Pledge of Allegiance..... Mrs. Struck
PLS Pledge October Student Council
- III. Welcome...September Theme: "United We Stand"..... Mr. Krumbholz
Million Pennies Update
- IV. United We Stand Presentation Mrs. Treiber
Mrs. Lockhart
Fifth Grade Students
- V. Lunchroom Reminders Mr. Krumbholz
- VI. Introduction of October Theme: "Respect and Cooperate Mrs. Miller
with ALL Guest Teachers"..... Mrs. Struck
- VII. Closing Songs..... Mrs. Swanson

ATTACHMENT D

Respect Your Body

(refrain)

Respect your body, respect your self;
respect your brain and your muscles and your health.
You gotta do what's right.
Make good choices too.
Every day...every day of your life.

Verse 1:

So, what exactly is it that makes a choice 'good'?
Think of someone you know, who is really smart –
would they approve? Do YOU approve?
Think about the situation deep in your heart.
Are you going to feel good about it tomorrow?
spoken: and the next day and the next day
and the next day and the next...

(refrain)

Verse 2:

So what exactly is it that makes a choice 'bad'?
These are the choices that can hurt you and others.
These are the choices that can get you in trouble.
Think about the situation deep in your heart.
Are you going to feel good about it tomorrow?
spoken: and the next day and the next day
and the next day and the next...

(refrain)

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Be a Good Sport

Be a good sport, here at Price Lab School
Be a good sport, here at Price Lab School
We're learning the rules and following them, too.
'Cuz we're good sports...at school.

Copyright: Michelle Swanson

MUSIC RESOURCES

Amorosia, D. (1995). Straight From the Heart. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation.
Brady, J. (1983). Play it Smart. Volume 2. Brite Music Enterprises, Inc.
Galina, M., & Gallina, J. (1995). Celebrate the Differences. Delaware Water Gap, PA: Shawnee Press, Inc.
Helvering, S.P. (1989). Sandi Patti and the Friendship Company. Irving, TX: Word Music.
Jacobson, J. (1994). Celebrate You and Me. Mt. Shasta, CA: Emersongs.
Lightfoot, M.L. (1991). Gonna Have an Earth Day. Dayton, OH: Heritage Music Press.
Sorg, J. & Ginsburg, N. (1993). I Care About Being Me. Miami, FL: Belwin, Inc.

Original Songs and Resource List Written By:

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ATTACHMENT F

Parents/Guardian(s):

Please read, sign, and return to _____ by _____

CITIZENSHIP CONCERN FORM

PRICE LABORATORY SCHOOL PLEDGE: I promise to respect everyone at Price Laboratory School, to follow school rules, to value all property, to listen to others, to do my best at learning and to cooperate. I will not hurt others with my words or actions. I want Price Laboratory School to be a safe and happy place for all.

Student Name _____

Date _____ Classroom Teacher _____

1. What did I do? (Check all that apply)

- I did not show respect to _____.
- I did not follow school rules.
- I did not respect other's property.
- I did not cooperate.
- I hurt others with my words.
- I hurt others with my actions.

Explain: _____

2. What effect did my actions have? _____

3. What should I do in the future? _____

Issued by: _____

PLS Position: _____

Comments: _____

Student Signature _____

Teacher Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Comments: _____

Cc: Classroom Teacher
Administration Office
Guidance Office

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