

## MONROE TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CASE STUDY

Staff from the Radix Elementary School in Monroe Township, New Jersey developed a homegrown character education program, which was enhanced by the adoption of an evidence-based program, Community of Caring. As interest in the program spread to teachers in other schools in the district, they met and decided to create an authentic assessment tool to measure students' understanding of good character that was consistent with the state's mandated Core Curriculum Content Standards in Language Arts Literacy. It was important that the instructional strategy and assessment process also mirror and reinforce skills that students would need to have to perform well on the state's standardized test, New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, which was part of the state's compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act.

With administrative support, the teachers proposed to develop character education writing prompts with an accompanying rubric. They would assess the students' writing using the character education rubric to see how well they understood good character, and use the state's writing rubric to measure their writing ability. The goal of the character education curriculum was to improve the student scores by at least one level on the rubric scale between the beginning of third grade and the end of fourth grade. Scores from the cohort after two years of school showed a movement of 1.3 levels on the character education rubric.

### **Process and Procedures:**

The following processes and procedures were used to develop the character education rubric and plan for administration, scoring and analysis of the students' work products:

1. A character education rubric was developed during a summer working session by a representative sampling of district elementary teachers.
2. Teachers developed writing prompts for students in grades three and four using curriculum-based scenarios.
3. One of the writing prompts was randomly selected as a pre-test and given to all third grade students in September of 2002. The students were given 30 minutes to write. Students were assigned a number to write on their paper so that the scorers could not identify students' papers by name.
4. This same cohort of students took a different writing prompt in the spring of 2004.
5. *Scoring:* Using the rubric as a guide, a random sampling of students' writing was scored to develop a scorer's guide to increase the uniformity of the scoring process for two raters (teachers who had created the prompts). A third rater was used if the two raters were more than one score apart.

6. *Analysis:* The average of the two (or three) raters' scores was calculated. The value of each score was calculated by multiplying the average score times the number of student products with that score. Finally, an average score on the rubric was calculated by dividing the value by the number of student products.

**Monroe Township Character Education Assessment Rubric**

<b>SCORE AND CONTENT</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Understanding</b> of character trait	Identifies character trait but gives no description of trait	Identifies character trait and makes an attempt to describe trait	Identifies character trait and gives basic description of trait	Identifies character trait and gives detailed description of trait
<b>Relation</b> of character trait to self	Attempts to make a connection of trait to a personal experience or action	Limited connection of trait to a personal experience or action	Proficient connection of trait to a personal experience or action	Substantial connection of trait to a personal experience or action
<b>Application</b> of character trait to other people	Attempts to show a relationship between trait and others' actions	Shows limited evidence of a relationship between trait and others' actions	Shows proficient evidence of a relationship between trait and others' actions	Shows substantial evidence of a relationship between trait and others' actions
<b>Association</b> of identified character trait to other character traits	Shows little or no attempt to relate identified trait to other character traits	Shows limited attempt to relate identified trait to other character traits	Shows proficient attempt to relate identified trait to other character traits	Shows substantial attempt to relate identified trait to other character traits
<b>Evaluation</b> of character trait	Shows appropriate/inappropriate judgment of character traits with little or no support	Shows appropriate/inappropriate judgment of character traits with limited support	Shows appropriate judgment of character traits with relevant support	Shows appropriate judgment of character traits with substantial support

**SCORE - 0 Non-scorable responses**

- FR (fragment) – Student wrote too little to judge comprehension accurately.
- OT (off-topic) – Student did not write on assigned topic or task.
- NE (not English) – Student wrote in a language other than English.
- NR (no response) – Student refused to write on the topic.

### **Character Education Writing Assessment Third Grade: Teacher Instructions**

1. Distribute a writing Task Sheet and Student Writing Sheet.
2. Tell students that they have 30 minutes with which to write the essay.
3. Students may print or write in cursive, whichever is more legible.
4. After five possible minutes of note taking and webbing, remind students that they should begin writing their essay. (You may want to provide scrap paper for note taking/webbing. Collect and discard all scrap paper.)
5. Notify students when there are five minutes remaining. Tell them that if they want to review and revise anything in their essay, they need to do so now.
6. After thirty minutes, tell students to put down their pencils and collect their essays.
7. Collect the students' essays, writing task sheets, and prompts and place them back in the special folder. Return the folder to Chrissy's mailbox once all of your students have completed this assignment.

## **Perseverance: Third Grade Pre-Test Prompt**

**To be read aloud to the students...**

Read the information about Harriet Tubman and then write your answers to the following questions.

*The students, then, write their responses to the writing prompt.*

1. How did Harriet Tubman show perseverance? How would you describe that trait to one of your friends?
2. Was there a time that you had to keep going even though it may have been very difficult? Tell about this time.
3. Who else do you know that has worked very hard to achieve a goal? Tell about them.
4. Do you think that Harriet Tubman showed any other good traits or qualities? If so, what are they?

### **Responsibility: Fourth Grade Pre-Writing Prompt**

Read the scenario and respond to the following questions. Remember to answer all parts of the question and state your ideas in a clear sequence.

Your best friend, Bob, asked you to take care of his dog, Max, while he was away on vacation for two weeks. You have reminded your parents that you wanted a dog of your own. They have said that it was too big of a responsibility for you. After three days, you realize that Max is missing!

- Explain what would be the responsible thing to do and why.
- Explain what other positive character traits you may have demonstrated throughout this scenario.
- Tell about a time when you were responsible for something that didn't belong to you.

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- Tell about a time when you were responsible for something that didn't belong to you.

*Look for students' explanations of taking responsibility for their actions (i.e. tell parent or owner, ways of looking and finding dog). Anything but ignoring the situation. Explanations may include trying to show parents that he/she can be responsible for own dog someday.*

*Honesty ... told truth about missing dog to parents, owners, etc.*

*Caring ... took care of dog before it was lost, cares that dog is missing.*

*Kindness ... toward dog before it was lost or after it was found.*

*Respect ... toward parents' wishes that he/she cannot have a dog yet.*

*Patience/Tolerance ... during the time when the dog was lost, waiting for his/her parents to let him/her have a dog.*

*Courage ... looking for dog by himself/herself.*

*Citizenship ... helping another friend by watching his/her dog.*

*Trustworthiness ... friend trusted him/her with dog; therefore, he/she keeps promise of watching dog while the friend is away.*

## Rater Scoring Guide

Remember it is to be a graded holistic = information can be found anywhere in the writing

Focus Areas:

Understand responsibility

Relates to self (Discusses time he/she had to be responsible for something.)

Applies how to act responsibly in this scenario (actions)

Associates with other traits may have demonstrated

Evaluation is supported with an explanation of why he/she would act responsibly

Ignore any irrelevant information

Ignore spelling and grammar errors

0 = usually too little but can be total misunderstanding

Ask yourself, "Does child show a clear understanding of the trait?"

Divide  $\frac{1}{2}$       and       $\frac{3}{4}$   
unclear                  clear

Don't feel like you are giving too many 2s and need a 3

Can put in piles and then go back and score, just re-number before giving back to your partner to grade

### **Character Education Writing Assessment Rubric-Scored Results September 2002**

Range of scores -	Score	Number of pieces within this score	Value
	0	38	0
	0.5	13	7.5
	1	31	31
	1.5	17	25.5
	2	15	30
	2.5	7	17.5
	3	10	30
	3.5	1	3.5
	4	0	0
Total		132	145

Average: 145 divided by 132 equals 1.098

### **Character Education Writing Assessment Rubric-Scored Results June 2004**

Range of scores -	Score	Number of pieces Within this score	Value
	0	0	0
	0.5	1	.5
	1	17	17
	1.5	15	22.5
	2	25	50
	2.5	30	75
	3	17	51
	3.5	17	59.5
	4	16	64
Total		138	339.5

Average: 339.5 divided by 138 equals 2.460  
Growth: 1.302