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# Circles of Influence:
# The Role of School-Community Partnerships
# in the Character Formation and Citizenship
# of Secondary School Students

*Partnerships between schools, families, and communities provide a support net for each student and play a role in promoting academic success (Epstein, 1995; Shapiro, Ginsberg, & Brown, 2002) and moral development. This article is based on a qualitative study of a secondary school with numerous partnerships selected from a southern Ontario school board characterized by economic and cultural diversity. Drawing on the analysis of archival data, observations, and 19 interviews with the educators and community partners at one of the schools, it was found that the study participants shared an understanding of education as the joint responsibility of the school and the community. This article discusses the partnership practices and in so doing, the roles of community partners in encouraging moral development by supporting students academically, emotionally, and socially. When community partners provided learning opportunities and resources not available in the school, the students enhanced their skill sets and were exposed to diverse community values. Through partnership activities, civic responsibility was promoted, and students' social capital was strengthened as they established their own links with the community in which they lived.*

*Les partenariats entre les écoles, les familles et les communautés constituent un réseau d'appui pour chaque élève et promeuvent le succès académique (Epstein, 1995; Shapiro, Ginsberg, & Brown, 2002) et le développement moral. Cet article repose sur une étude qualitative d'une école secondaire ayant conclu plusieurs partenariats et faisant partie d'un conseil scolaire du sud de l'Ontario caractérisé par la diversité économique et culturelle. L'analyse de données d'archives, des observations et 19 entrevues auprès d'enseignants et de partenaires de la communauté ont permis de conclure que les participants à l'étude partageaient une vision selon laquelle l'éducation était une responsabilité conjointe de l'école et la communauté. Cet article porte sur les pratiques du partenariat et donc du rôle des partenaires communautaires dans l'incitation au développement moral par l'appui académique, émotif et social. Quand les partenaires communautaires offraient des occasions d'apprentissage et des ressources qui n'étaient pas disponibles à l'école, les élèves pouvaient améliorer leurs habiletés et leurs connaissances de diverses valeurs de la communauté. En permettant aux élèves d'établir des liens avec leur communauté, ces activités ont favorisé le développement d'un esprit civique et ont renforcé le capital social chez les élèves.*

It's very healthy for communities to be involved in the school. Why should schools be just little islands? It's a very bad way to educate people. The more people we bring in, and the more resources we can bring into our schools, it's much healthier for the students, it's much healthier for the school. And we, it, the school becomes part of the greater community, which is what we are

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educating the kids for. We educate kids to become citizens. (Guidance
Department head and teacher)

Reflected in this quote from a secondary schoolteacher is the need for education to provide youth with the tools that promote their socialization and enable productive contribution to a community. Toward that end, education to encourage citizenship and personal growth plays an important role in moral development. It enables exposure and sensitivity to others' values and the development of one's own values that in turn make personal fulfillment possible economically, intellectually, and relationally (Noddings, 2002) in the social environment. Indeed, "education for the whole, individual person will result in the practical, creative, and moral growth necessary in today's society" (Richards, 1980, p. 47).

Yet also intimated in this educator's quote is a call for participation in educational processes by those beyond the walls of the school. As with academic and vocational training (Davies, 2002; Epstein, 1995, 2001), education that focuses on character formation and citizenship and the teaching of values cannot and should not be accomplished solely in schools. A great deal of moral education takes place in all aspects of a person's life outside the school (Sichel, 1988). Lickona (1996) notes that parents are the most important moral educators of children. He expands on this notion by claiming that the efficacy of school-parent partnerships in promoting values will be enhanced with the involvement of community organizations such as businesses, religious institutions, youth organizations, and the government. The responsibility for influencing students' character formation extends beyond parents and teachers into the broader community, for as Socrates noted some 2,400 years ago, everyone in society is a teacher of values commensurate with individual capacities.

In this article I illustrate an alternative to school character or values education programs. Through partnerships between schools and their surrounding geographic communities, the needs of students might be met, and character formation and citizenship may be addressed. I highlight partnerships as a means to establish close school-community ties and to create activities that enhance students' exposure to the varied and diverse values beyond the walls of their school. I focus on a secondary school in a southern Ontario school district that participated in a research study on school-community partnership development. I discuss the collaborative activities that were found to promote the moral development of the students, and I outline the benefits to be gained from such relationships. In so doing I emphasize the crucial role that school-community partnerships at the secondary school level in particular play in the moral preparation of youth transitioning from the school environment to that of the workplace or postsecondary environment in the greater community.

*The Intangibles of Education for Character Formation*

In order to determine which educational approaches might enhance the moral development of youth, an examination of moral development itself provides guidance. To begin, Sichel (1988) offers a useful definition of character.

> A person's character is dependent on the possession of coherent moral
> excellences that have become dispositions or habits with the potential for active
> moral engagement. In commonsense, everyday situations personal desires,

impulses, and interests usually conform with possessed moral excellences. These moral excellences are formed from and based on a reasonable way of life that in most cases develops within some community. (pp. 82-83)

According to Nyberg (1990), to act morally an individual must believe in a set of values and act in accordance with it. Yet there is more to morality than consonance between values and actions. In his discussion of values education, Carbone (1970) states that moral development takes place in two stages. First, children and adolescents are exposed to the values, attitudes, and standards of behavior, or norms, modeled by others in their social environment. Once these are internalized, the goal for individuals is to become "reflective agents," moving beyond acceptance of prevalent norms to critical, autonomous judgments of these values. Subsequent actions reflect "reasoned justification" for the values that guide behavior because "there are no absolute, invulnerable guidelines to the 'virtuous life'" (pp. 601-602).

Oser (1996) notes that moral learning takes many years, with development of moral motivation occurring much later than the acquisition of knowledge about moral norms. Kohlberg (1975) outlines the stages of moral development and provides insight into the passage of time for moral learning. Although Gilligan (1985) cautions that individuals given a moral dilemma to solve may be able to provide more than one solution conforming to various stages of development, Kohlberg's stages provide a useful scaffolding. Stage One is the obedience and punishment orientation, characteristic of elementary school-aged children. At Stage Two individuals possess an instrumental relativism whereby the right action is the one that satisfies the self's needs or on occasion, those of others. Individuals at these levels demonstrate deference to superior power or prestige, and moral value is not seen to be found in persons or standards.

As individuals progress through adolescence, they are in the Stage Three orientation to approval, affection, and helpfulness. For them moral value involves conforming to roles perceived as good, right, or those of the majority, and meeting and maintaining the expectations of others. By age 19 individuals are at Stage Four according to Kohlberg (1975). This is a social order-maintaining orientation in which individuals have respect for authority and its expectations and regard for maintaining the given social order of rules and rights.

In Kohlberg's (1975) research, individuals reach Stage Five's social contract legalistic orientation by their mid-20s. They act in accordance with generally accepted rules or expectations by which they agree to live, and they avoid violating the will or rights of others. The final Stage Six is the conscience or principle orientation. Kohlberg found that individuals in this stage of development use their conscience and principles of choice, not just generally accepted social rules, as direction for action. In both the fifth and sixth stages of development, Kohlberg notes that moral value is found in conformity by the self to shared standards, rights, and duties, or those with the potential to be shared.

This depiction of a moral agent is reflected in Starratt's (1994) discussion of the characteristics of ethical persons. Here he notes that autonomy—or the ability of an individual to act independently based on his or her perception of what is right or appropriate—exemplifies an ethical person's actions. Further, these are supported or constrained by the individual's relationships with others and mediated by transcendence, or the quest for excellence and relations

with others characterized by empathy and collective activity without a focus on self-interest, for example (Noddings, 2002; Nyberg, 1990; Starratt).

From these descriptions of moral development, several implications for education are salient. Although it cannot induce students to reflect and to become moral agents, education can be seen as a necessary component of character formation and citizenship (Mabe, 1993; Oser & Schläfli, 1985), introducing them to the values and standards of behavior in the community. Values cannot be taught like multiplication tables (Noddings, 2002), by rote and in isolation from other people. As Starratt (1994) posits, it is not possible to conduct oneself in an ethical manner in the absence of social relationships. Morals and values, as well as the actions based on them are, therefore, relational. As a result, children and adolescents in the process of their moral development can benefit from situational exposure to values in the broader community as well as those in the schools (Mabe). Partnership activities involving the students in the community are the vehicle by which the youth experience a variety of values through their activities that are compatible with their Stage Three or Four level of development.

Predictably, there will be conflict about the potentially more diverse sets of values in the community (Nyberg, 1990; Ryan, 1999) than experienced in schools. Nyberg observes, "we will always have to live with conflict; we have no hope at all that everyone will agree on anything really important" (p. 596). Yet an introduction to such values diversity needs to be part of education if youth are to be prepared to interact with others in the community and to face life situations involving values conflicts. Exposure to diverse values and acknowledgment of any values conflicts encourages evaluations of the values and making choices between competing or conflicting values. Kohlberg (1975) and Berkowitz (1985) note that situations involving values conflicts are an essential component of moral education. Moral development is promoted if individuals' moral reasoning is insufficient to resolve the dilemma but they possess a level of moral development to contribute substantially to a discussion of differences with their associates (Berkowitz; Kohlberg). This process entails reflection and is necessary for individuals to become critical thinkers, or reflective agents, regarding their actions.

The question then arises as to which values (Noddings, 2002) and which interpretations of these values are to contribute to character formation and citizenship. As values and needs articulated by groups in communities become more diverse, the quest for a universal set of principles is increasingly elusive (Ryan, 1999). Even if consensus can be reached, it is entirely possible that conflict will occur among individuals who embrace the same values (Carbone, 1970) in terms of their interpretation of those principles. This tension has a direct effect on education.

Although no specific values may be prescribed or taught, the attention of community members and educators alike needs to be directed to the development of children as moral people and citizens, as well as their intellectual development (Noddings, 2002). Education directed toward character formation is necessary for individuals to be capable of productive work and emotional bonding with others, and more broadly for a moral society (Lickona, 1996). The nature of moral education may take many forms and include a variety of values held by members of the community in which the youth are preparing to

participate. For example, building personal skills and cultivating caring relationships with others are components of the moral development process (Noddings) for adolescents. As Noddings notes, "Admirable qualities of mind, body, and spirit all contribute to the health of relations and cannot be ignored in an adequate approach to moral education" (p. 6). Toward this end, the partnerships established in this study illustrate the vocational and social skills, social capital, exposure to community values and civic responsibility, as well as the self-esteem development that may serve to contribute to such moral education.

### Schools, Communities, and the Nature of their Partnerships

Before describing a school-community connection that is conducive to partnership development and collaboration, it is helpful to establish a working definition of *community*. It is a contested term, for there is no universally accepted definition of the sociological phenomenon of community (Furman, 1998; Furman-Brown, 1999; Stefkovich & Shapiro, 2002). Steiner (2002) observes that community is both a place and a process. The creation of community entails communication and the subsequently developed relationships among individuals. Yet a community is bounded by the proximity of individuals to one another, for physical distances between the individuals limit opportunities for interaction. A community, then, is a geographic location in which interpersonal relationships take place.

For the purposes of school-community liaison, the community is made up of the school personnel and all the individuals and organizations outside the school with a common interest in education (National Network of Partnership Schools, n.d.). They may include businesses, health care facilities, educational institutions, faith organizations, cultural groups, recreational facilities, government and military organizations, in addition to other community-based organizations and individuals (Epstein, 1995; Hands, 2005; Sanders, 2001).

The permeable borders of schools and communities allow for a bidirectional "flow of information and products" (Campbell, Steenbarger, Smith, & Stucky, 1980, p. 2) between the entities (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1990). This type of relationship between schools and communities in turn yields the opportunity for the two-way cultivation and maintenance of partnerships and collaborative activities between school-based and community-based individuals or groups (Hands, 2005).

Partnerships can be described as the "connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development" (Sanders, 2001, p. 20). They are characterized by shared responsibilities among institutions, with an emphasis on coordination, cooperation, and complementarities of schools and families (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 1993; Epstein, 2001) as well as communities (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Moreover, the goals of the liaisons are viewed as unattainable by any one group acting alone (Hargreaves & Fullan; Keith, 1996).

In the sections that follow I outline the methodology used in the study and use research data to illustrate the relationship between the school and the community. In addressing secondary school students' collaborative work with community members on partnership activities, I highlight the community

members' contribution to the moral development of youth as outlined by scholars such as Noddings, Kohlberg, and Starratt.

*Methodology*

In this article I examine the partnerships cultivated by a secondary school that participated in a case study of partnership establishment between schools and their surrounding communities. Conversations with the school's principal confirmed the presence of partnerships with between 75 and 80 community partners. During the data collection process, I conducted 19 interviews with the principal, with five teachers, and with the school office manager during four site visits at the school, as well as with 14 members of the community who were involved in partnership activities with the school (e.g., individual community citizens and contact people for businesses, government offices, senior citizens' organizations, and health care institutions). The interviews were semistructured and open-ended and were approximately 45 minutes in length. Although I did conduct two focus group interviews, I conducted most of the interviews individually. In addition, observations were conducted in the school, and documents that were pertinent to the partnership activities, including the school's mission statement, memos, school plans and meeting minutes, were gathered from school staff and community partners.

A snowball technique (Merriam, 1998) was used to obtain community participants for the study. During interviews with school personnel, the names and contact information of their community partners were requested. The community partners were then contacted, interviews and observations were conducted, and documents were collected. Multiple sources of data were sought to establish construct validity through the triangulation of the data (Merriam; Rothe, 2000; Yin, 1994).

Once the interviews had been transcribed verbatim, the collected data were coded and analyzed for emerging categories and themes. The constant comparative method was used in which the data obtained from each participant were continually examined and incidents were compared across the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Merriam, 1998). In this way new categories and themes were developed and existing ones were evaluated and modified. The case that I describe below begins with an examination of the community and school contexts in which the partnerships occurred.

*Willowbrook High School and the Surrounding Community*

Willowbrook High School was located 120 kilometers from a large urban center in the hamlet of Newtonville and drew its student population from the town and the expansive rural community surrounding the school. Pseudonyms are used for the names of schools, participants, and communities to protect their anonymity. Located near Newtonville's main street, Willowbrook was within walking distance of the small business district, as well as local community resources such as a public library and an art gallery. The institution operated as a full-service semester school with a wide range of programs in keeping with Principal Monica Kenny's focus on meeting the needs of all the students in the area and with the understanding common among the educators that most of the students would transition from school to work.

Recognizing the low socioeconomic status of the community in general and many of the students, Monica advocated for the development of numerous

liaisons throughout the community to ensure that the academic, physical, and emotional needs of the students were addressed. The teachers assessed their school's internal capacity, and if the students' and their programs' needs were not satisfied in terms of the resources available in the school, they sought outside assistance from community members. As such, partnership cultivation was a fundamental strategy for the school personnel to enhance student support. This school culture and philosophy of support is reminiscent of Noddings' (1992) views in which she argues that "the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for the students" (p. 14).

Newtonville was resource-poor in economic terms and public services by virtue of being situated in a large, sparsely populated rural region. Nevertheless, community involvement was reflected in Newtonville's relationship with Willowbrook. From the community member perspective, a local nursing home rehabilitation coordinator had an appreciation of the relationship between the school and the community through her involvement as a Willowbrook Community-based Education (Co-op) partner. Of the school and its partnerships, she said,

> They are a part of the community. And it makes them more a part of the community. You know, working, interacting and working together and fulfilling the needs of the students, the teachers, the residents. It's just kind of a continuous interaction that benefits all.

This was a common sentiment among the community partners. In addition to the teachers actively seeking liaisons with community members, potential partners needed to realize the benefits of partnering. Willingness on the part of community members to collaborate on educational issues was considered essential in the development of the numerous partnerships that the school had cultivated with Newtonville citizens and organizations.

### Willowbrook's Promotion of Moral Development

The school culture, combined with the teachers' and community members' personal philosophies about the active role that communities should take in education, enabled the educators and their partners to address the students' needs through partnerships. This was not to say that the liaisons were one-sided; rather, they were reciprocal relationships as described by Hargreaves and Fullan (1998), Sanders and Harvey (2002), and Keith (1996). Community partners realized benefits from their collaboration such as access to school resources and public recognition for their efforts. For their part, community partners acknowledged that they exposed the students to a broader range of experiences, values, and support than the school or its personnel alone could provide. Moral development requires opportunities for thinking, feeling, and doing (Lickona, 1996; Mabe, 1993). The partnerships and collaborative activities involving the students at Willowbrook provided these opportunities.

### Material and Social Support for the Students

The teachers interviewed acknowledged that their programs could not function without their partnerships. Life skills teacher, Sandra, explained:

> We have a very wide range of abilities in our classes.… Using community resources helps us cope with that wide range.… We'll start [the students] with

the work ethic kind of thing. But things like lunch hour, and what you do at break time, is where most of the students really fall down. It's those social skills and that kind of thing. We can't artificially set that up in the classroom effectively. But if they're going to be in a real community, they have to learn to be in a real community. That's where they're going to be, that's where it has to take place.

The Community-based Education, History and Family Studies department heads and the alternate education teacher also noted that both a lack of material resources and social opportunities in the schools prompted them to partner with community members. Thus the teachers saw community involvement as a means by which resources and social experiences for the students were enhanced.

*The students' engagement with community values.* For their part, several community members expanded on the social value of their involvement for the students and the schools. A local grocery store owner introduced the students to values they would not have occasion to appreciate fully in the school. Through their work placements in the various departments in his grocery store, students were exposed to a broader understanding of some of the values initially presented at the school level. The business owner focused on teaching the students about work ethics and occupational responsibilities. In his words,

If you want to be working in my store, in my business, I feel I have an obligation to teach you what the work force is really about. I have an obligation to teach you about responsibility in the workplace. And not only for you today, but it will help you all the way through your life.… If you learn a good work ethic, it will help you no matter what you do. Even in your studies.

Thus community involvement was not viewed as valuable solely because of the ability to address programming needs. Moral education was provided by the community partners, for they exposed the students to the greater community and to the values held by its citizens, a prerequisite to becoming a morally developed, reflective agent in their broader social environment (Carbone, 1970). Further, the community partners provided the students with opportunities for ethical action. As Lickona (1996) notes, students learn best by doing, and to develop good character they need numerous diverse opportunities to apply values such as responsibility and respect in everyday interactions with others and to gain a practical understanding of the moral skills and behaviors that comprise ethical action. In addition, the partners saw the values imparted by community members and the actions consistent with these values as applicable to other situations and social environments. As Begley (2003) observes, the values of the individual in one role "readily spill over" into other social roles as attitudes reflected in actions stemming from this "extended influence" (p. 103).

Partnering was considered as a step toward contributing to improved relations in the community, and more broadly the society. In particular, the grocery store owner and the town's leisure services manager, who coordinated a senior citizens' lunch program hosted by the students in the school's hospitality classes, talked of reducing the amount of vandalism caused by the youth through partnership activities involving the students. In the store owner's words,

> It's all part of giving to the society, to make it a better society. I think that's
> what the achievement should be, and maybe businesses and so on have to be
> told that. We all talk about our storefronts getting kicked in at night, but maybe
> we have to play a better role in order to see if we can't stop that. And this is
> through education, through opportunity, and so on.

According to these partners, through community members taking a role in education and participating in partnership activities that incorporated skills acquisition and exposure to the values and norms of others in the community, antisocial values and subsequent antisocial behavior were discouraged. In their opinion, partnership activities involving the students encouraged citizenship and community-oriented values that demonstrated respect for persons and property and a desire to contribute to community well-being were promoted.

*Prospects for building social capital*. In addition, through their experiences with community partners and the citizens in the broader geographic community, the students expanded their opportunities to build relationships with other community members. As noted by scholars such as Starratt (1994), Lickona (1996), and Mabe (1993), ethical behavior cannot happen in a vacuum; rather, ethical behavior involves sensitivity and responsiveness in interpersonal relationships and is influenced by the circumstances and the context in which it occurs.

For a general practitioner who had provided work placements in his medical office for students in the Community-based Education program, community involvement exposed the students to social skills and knowledge beyond that offered at the school. In the physician's view,

> I think that getting the kids out and working in businesses, and trying to help
> them understand how businesses work, and [introducing them to] … people
> outside of the classroom, is very important to them. Especially if they're
> interested in fields like we are here, in nursing or medicine, where you're going
> to be seeing people every day, and you have to deal with people. And so I
> think it's really important that they spend some time out of the classroom.

In this community partner's opinion, school settings were limited in their ability to provide students with exposure to people in the broader community. Consequently, it was important for the students to be exposed to learning opportunities and social situations out in the community, especially as many of the students would be engaged in careers beyond the school walls. As such, social capital was best established in the community itself.

In so doing, the provision of student support is facilitated, and these links enable students and community members to interact with and to get to know one another. "By building dense sets of networks" (Mawhinney, 2002, p. 251) between schools and communities, student access to community facilities and organizations is enhanced, and access to knowledge for the success of all students is fostered. The students developed social capital through their engagement with their community, for they expanded their resources through their positive collaborative relationships with community members, which enabled subsequent productive activity (Coleman, 1988), in keeping with Starratt's (1994) notions of ethical behavior.

*Students' Personal Development and Self-Esteem*

Moreover, community involvement was valued on its own merit as a tool for influencing the growth and development of the students as people and community citizens. As the general practitioner pointed out,

> The experiences you have, and not just the ones in the classroom, will shape where you go in the future. And … if you do a co-op [placement], and it's not something that you actually end up doing, it doesn't mean it's not of value to you.

In the same manner, a provincial ministry program coordinator provided a work placement for students to assist ministry workers in conducting angling and fisheries surveys on a nearby lake. He noted,

> I think we all at some point, need a starting place. And so this is, in my mind, probably a pretty good place. This would be a good chance for a kid to begin his work career, even if he did not end up working in the [Ministry].

Other community partners were more specific about the personal development provided by the partnerships. The director of a child and youth mental services organization noted that youth mental health issues needed to be addressed with multidisciplinary treatment that required partnerships between the school and her organization. In order to deal with behavioral, social, and emotional issues affecting some of the students at Willowbrook, services and counseling were brought into the school. In this way students' mental health and well-being as well as their interpersonal skills were promoted to enhance their ability to learn and to make positive contributions to their social environment.

In other liaisons, student involvement in partnership activities in the community provided youth with moral guidance, emotional support, and skills. A theater costumer who involved the students in costume-making for both the amateur and professional theaters stated, "Young people today have to grow up with some sense of values," and this viewpoint was the driving force behind her efforts to involve Willowbrook students in the community. Through their work with the costumer, the students contributed to the community's cultural activities, they gained an appreciation for the arts, learned about historical periods, garnered some practical skills such as sewing and pattern-making, and in some cases obtained subsequent employment in the costuming departments in the theaters.

Further, through their exposure to caring community members, students' involvement with the community elevated their self-esteem. According to the social director of a senior citizens' organization and the theater costumer, many of the youth have baggage. In the costumer's view, much of the difficulty experienced by the youth stemmed from their home life; that is,

> Single parents, out working. The students are home alone all of the time. There are siblings at home with them, they're babysitting. They have no respect for themselves, so through partnerships and working with the community, I try to get them out and to respect themselves, and feel good about what they're doing. A lot of them are never told what they're doing is right.

Similarly, the owner of the grocery store noted the importance of including the Community-based Education placement students as "part of the team" in his business.

> When a kid comes in, you give him a name tag, give him a hat, get him a shirt. The kid just lightens right up. He just can't believe that you're recognizing him. Because a lot of these children have got a problem.… But when you pay a little attention to them, and so on, I find you get it back. Then they take an interest in you. They say, "You know what? This guy cares about me. People care about me." And I think one of the biggest things is letting them know you care about them.

Therefore, through a compassionate approach, caring relationships were cultivated with community members and the youths' self-esteem was enhanced, which facilitated the acquisition of skills to further augment their self-worth. In the words of the executive director of a church-affiliated conference center,

> We feel that everyone is worth something. Sometimes we get kids who feel they're worth nothing. And our mandate would be to increase their self-worth. Our mandate would be to give them something that's productive, to give them the ability to learn to do different things. Our staff here, we are a family and we are a team. When [the youths] walk in here, they walk in knowing that they're part of a team. And they feel good about coming here.… I think it's our approach to these folks: "Hey, you're a part of us. We want you here. You're not sent here. We want you here."

The adolescents assisted the director and his community coordinator in the day-to-day running of the conference center, from setting up meeting rooms and painting the buildings, to chopping wood and clearing the center's grounds. Whether they were youths assigned to community service as part of a court order or Willowbrook students engaged in a work placement, the focus was on building personal skills and fostering self-esteem. Further, participation in partnership activities improved their attitude toward community members, their work, and their efforts toward the acquisition of skills. Ultimately, in the words of Willowbrook school council community representative and community liaison, a partnership "gives [the students] an idea that the people outside the school care."

The partnership activities provided the students with opportunities to develop their interpersonal and vocational skills and self-esteem. As Noddings (2002) notes, these personal characteristics are essential building blocks of healthy relations with others, and therefore must be addressed in moral education. At Willowbrook, then, the school-community partnerships enabled youth to cultivate these personal traits necessary for moral development.

*Encouragement of Civic Responsibility*

In addition, students' involvement in their communities encouraged civic responsibility. In the theater costumer's opinion, "Besides themselves, there are other people out there that they can help. And really get involved in their communities." The Newtonville leisure services manager noted that partnerships were one way to achieve this goal.

> We always say we have to give, give, give to the youth. But I think if they take a partnership in it, and help work toward the outcome of something, then I think they do take pride in it and care more about it.

Consequently, over the course of her tenure with the town, the leisure services manager frequently recruited youth to volunteer for Newtonville events such as setting up or participating in the annual winter carnival. By the students taking part in partnerships or volunteer activities in the community, the partners felt the activities discouraged an egocentric focus and stimulated students' outward-looking attitudes, as well as sensitivity to and interest in citizenship called for by scholars such as Keith (1996, 1999), and Westheimer and Kahne (2002).

From the school's perspective, the same focus on reciprocation was expressed by teachers Sandra and Frances, with the community contributing to the school and the students contributing to their community as much as they were able. Of her life skills class, Sandra noted that,

> Our students tend to get a lot. So we try and say that, "If you can, it's a good idea to give back." That's kind of my philosophical bias, though. We talk about voting and citizenship and being part of the community, and part of that is that we do give back.

The head of the Family Studies Department, Frances, involved her students in several volunteer activities to encourage citizenship.

> A lot of the stuff that we do is sort of on a volunteer basis. I want them to understand that when they get older, it's nice to give back to the community. And they're at that age in their lives, "It's all me, me, me, me."… We partner with the Boy Scouts of Canada, we make their scarves for two Boy Scout packs every September.… We sewed for the whole of Newtonville minor hockey, all the letters and patches on the back of the jerseys.… Then all of a sudden the figure skaters for their little carnivals came and we designed a whole show for little kids and all the clothing for that.… Once a week we go over [to the seniors' club] and we do crafts with the seniors and then the crafts are sold at their bazaar.… And for Newtonville, now we're working to do sails for the light standards down the middle of the road in the spring.

Although not considered strong partnerships because of the sporadic nature of the collaborative activities, these activities were part of a reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationship between the school and the community.

Through participation in these volunteer activities, the students gained an appreciation for the broader community and the people in it. An informal component of civics training, these activities effectively sensitized the students to community events and promoted an outward-looking approach to the students' attitudes and subsequent behaviors. In this way, the moral development of the students was guided and encouraged, for the partnerships redirected the students' egocentric focus on themselves toward an awareness and interest in others conducive to the empathy and transcendence necessary for ethical behavior (Starratt, 1994).

### Conclusions

In this article I highlight the important role that partnerships can play in the education and moral development of youth. Although future research would benefit from an examination of partnerships from the perspectives of the students, insight was gained into the moral contributions of liaisons from the educators' and community members' perspectives. In this case study the principal played a crucial role in shaping and maintaining the school's vision for

community involvement, and her capacity-building among school staff enabled the teachers to be receptive to, and to seek, liaisons with community members. In practical terms the financial, intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of the students and the nature of the school's programs dictated that the teachers establish partnerships with individuals and organizations outside the school.

In essence, all the members of a community are responsible for education. As character formation and citizenship are components of education, the community needs to be involved in moral education. In this study the educator and community participants alike acknowledged that education and learning took place in the schools and beyond. They shared a similar conception of the school as an integral part of the greater community. This conception entailed a community responsibility for education and the creation of learning opportunities within and outside the school. Such an outlook was considered essential if partnerships were to be successfully cultivated.

Although actively sought and established by the participants in this study, it is important to note the limitations of partnerships as well as their strengths. Like forms of values education such as character education programs, they do not inevitably lead to moral development. They do not assist in the psychological development of values and morals, nor do they make individuals reflective agents. As Kohlberg (1975) notes, education for moral development is not effectively provided through direct instruction. He found that individuals employ self-generated thought processes and principles that change over time. The school- or community-based teacher's role is that of facilitator for the process. That said, opportunities for social participation as well as exposure to contradictions in one's own moral views or in relation to others' views, and opportunities for active discussion promote moral development according to scholars such as Kohlberg and Berkowitz (1985).

Partnerships serve to guide and enhance moral development through education, and they have the capacity to encourage and stimulate the reflection necessary for individuals' moral development. Toward that end, the partnership activities in this case study educated the whole person. The community partners introduced the students to a variety of the diverse values existing in the youths' social environment and assisted the students in developing their interpersonal and vocational skills. The community members' involvement provided support in the form of expanded social networks and social capital. Further, the partnership activities enhanced the students' self-esteem over the course of their personal development and encouraged civic involvement. In this way the adolescents were provided with fodder on which to reflect in terms of the variety of values they encountered and the tools with which to address the values conflicts that are inevitable in a society characterized by diversity.

If "moral life is grounded in social life" as Noddings (2002, p. 77), Starratt (1994), and other scholars suggest, it is essential to foster school-community relationships to facilitate youths' moral development. Partnerships, then, are a promising avenue for character formation and citizenship education. Moreover, the practicality of this approach is all the more meaningful and relevant for secondary school students who are preparing to venture beyond the school setting and into the broader community as postsecondary students, or more

commonly, as members of the work force. Ultimately, the goal of the partnerships voiced by the school personnel and their community partners was to ensure that the youth in their community were able as citizens to engage productively in the community and the broader society. In the youth mental health organization's director's words, "We have a responsibility to ensure that kids can actively participate in society … We have an obligation to these kids. We all do. As a society, as a community." Through the provision of this type of education, we as educators and citizens nurture caring, competent people (Noddings, 1992), who are able to contribute to their society, which is the essence of an ethical person.

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