ABSTRACT

The Examined Life: A Transformational Journey Towards Holistic Education

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Within a changing world, education is continuously being molded to address the specific needs of both students and communities. For the development of schools to be effective, students must be at the center of all educational decisions because they are the primary reason for the existence of education. Through the work of the U.S. Department of Education, they have defined four specific areas of focus that play pivotal roles in developing character within students. One of the focuses is on teacher training. Therefore, to strengthen character development within schools, the work of Nel Noddings, Parker Palmer, Maxine Greene, and various experts on education will generate an instructional model that will be a tool for teachers as they engage in transforming the lives of all students. The model will focus on teaching to the mind and heart, but will be applied through relationships and experiences, ultimately cultivating caring and confident global citizens.

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THE EXAMINED LIFE: A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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By

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DEDICATION

To the Lord for his faithfulness.

To Dr. Talbert for believing in me.

To my amazing family who has taught me what it means to dream big and care well.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Education is a process. The continuous development of education is in direct

relationship to the changing patterns and needs of society. New strategies are created to

fit the new demands placed on our nation's students. For development of schools to be

effective, students must be at the center of all educational decisions because they are the

primary reason for the existence of education. Furthermore, before development can

begin, the end goal of education must be defined so that the process towards change is

clear and effective. Thus, the goal of education that this thesis will develop is grounded

on the words of Ernest Boyer, a key developer of the Carnegie Foundation for the

Advancement of Teaching, in his speech "Making the Connections," "I know how

idealistic it may sound, but it is my urgent hope that in the century ahead students in the

nation's schools will be judged not by their performance on a single test, but by the

quality of their lives. It's my hope that students in the classrooms of tomorrow will be

encouraged to be creative, not conforming, and learn to cooperate rather than compete"

(qtd. in *The Big Picture* 4*).* The goal of education is to equip students for meaningful

lives and work. If life is meaningful, the process of education and learning must be

meaningful and engaging. Education must be rooted in the development of the whole

student. For the purpose of advancing both pedagogy and relevancy within education, this

thesis will explore the process and implications of implementing a character education

instructional strategy within each classroom.

The notion of educating the whole person is defined by Chris Watkins et al in

partnership with the Institute of Education in London as, "learning . . . that reflective

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activity which enables the learner to draw upon previous experience to understand and evaluate the present, so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge" (1). Education is an engagement experience of all participants. Education is not merely offering knowledge, but equipping students with the tools to process the knowledge learned and providing students with emotional resilience techniques. Therefore, to understand and develop a working strategy of what it means to both teach and educate holistically, Nel Noddings, Parker Palmer, Maxine Greene, and various experts on education will play pivotal roles as their years of research form into one cohesive instructional model. The purpose of teaching is not to just attain academic success, but rather to guide students to true knowledge of themselves, the world, and others.

To facilitate in the process of an examined and engaged education, 16th century writer and poet, Thomas Moore writes in his book, *The Education of the Heart,* that "deep education entails an emergence of character and personality, and often takes the form of initiation . . . to be educated, a person doesn't have to know much or be informed, but he or she does have to have been exposed vulnerably to the transformative events of an engaged human life" (3). Furthermore, Benjamin Franklin writes, "...nothing is of more importance for the public weal, than to form and train up youth in wisdom and virtue" (qtd. in "Character Education"). Ultimately, education is the bridge between content knowledge and life understanding. Students will be faced with not only academic questions throughout their life but will be required to address their own internal motivations and decisions. Therefore, it is imperative that within schools, we simultaneously teach the two together so that students understand the role of both the mind and heart in all of their actions. Individuals actions are rooted in both the

understanding of their heart and educational principles. When the two are combined through a process of examination and reflection, students will leave their educational career understanding their role in relationship to their own soul, their interactions with others, and their responsibility in serving the world through their choice of work.

The cultivation of holistic education is created between schools, parents, students, and health professionals all striving for the same results: developing capable students mentally, internally, relationally, and experientially. The United States Department of Education presents an article entitled "Character Education . . . Our Shared Responsibility" highlighting and explaining how character development is at the heart of the American educational system plan. The United States is serious about building students of character because through the process of education, citizens are created. In the article, the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan for Education is presented stating how one of the six main goals of the U.S. Department of Education is to "promote strong character and citizenship among our nation's youth" (qtd. in "Character Education"). The article suggests that implementing character development within schools must be a partnership among school's administrators, teachers, parents, and individuals within the community. Ultimately, the Department of Education outlines how character education "teaches the habits of thought and deed that help people live and work together as families, friends, neighbors, communities and nations" which "enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others" ("Character Education"). Furthermore, the article shares that if the goal of education is to build students of character, students have to be at the center of the experience through

leadership and involvement. In addition, schools must specifically design their character plan that is based on student needs, provide teacher training, connect with families and communities, and provide space for educators, parents, and communities to model examples of character ("Character Education"). When each of the components are effectively contributing, student achievement and wholeness will improve.

Yet, the daunting reality lies in the questions about whether parent partnerships are able to be formed. While schools can only transform what they are given, the students, it is their desire to impact and partner with parents and communities during the process of education. Therefore, in some areas, if parent partnerships are a new endeavor schools must work towards creating their school to be a safe and stable environment for their students. At the core of education reform, it must be remembered that all students have a desire for knowledge and care, despite student background and demographics. To ensure that all students receive high qualities of knowledge and care, each school's focus must be on creating stable and safe school environments. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can help guide schools in building stability while also incorporating character development. Psychologist Abraham Maslow studied basic trends in each individual, which ultimately led to his creation of the hierarchy of needs which outlines categories of basic needs that are universal for all people. Gerald Corey and Marianne Schneider Corey help guide individuals in understanding the effects of using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs within their article, "Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization." The categories begin with basic needs then move towards holistic development and purpose. The hierarchy is as such: physical and survival needs, safety needs, love needs, ego and esteem needs, and need for self-actualization (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al 107). The first four needs are rooted

in stability and creating a healthy lifestyle by providing basic necessities for individuals. Without these four needs met, students and individuals are unable to move to places of reflection and examination. Thus, within the school setting, it is necessary that students are safe. Creating a place of stability through providing food, access to health needs, and emotional encouragement are foundational for developing students through character enrichment. Once students feel safe, they then can begin to engage in meaningful ways as they develop their own moral compass. Hence, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to build stability for students at school will assist in providing students with access to a holistic education. Educators must remember that learning is a process and is based on the students and their location within the hierarchy. The goal of education is to form citizens who are self-aware and culturally responsible, but the process in which schools and teachers guide their students to this goal will look different based on student need. As a response, based on the U.S. Department of Education's character development plan and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, an instructional strategy that targets student needs, personality, and passions will be developed to fully educate each student.

The ultimate desire of both teachers and schools is that they would be a part of facilitating in developing capable and confident students. Character education has been researched and developed for many years, highlighting the benefits and needs for holistic education within schools. While each educator pursues a meaningful career, the process of developing students is sometimes unclear. The issue does not lie in educators not understanding the importance of character education, but rather the reality of how to practically engage in character reform within the classroom. Within the writing of "The Rebirth and Retooling of Character Education in America," author Russell Sojourner

shares how "less funding, time, commitment, and resources for character-based programs and dwindling associated professional development and teacher training all have hampered the character education reform movement in this country" (9). He includes research from Lapsley and Yeager revealing that "many educators are reluctant to give up much of the instructional day… given widespread anxiety about producing adequate yearly progress on high stakes academic achievement tests. Moral culture, it seems, has given way to testing culture" (qtd. in Sojourner 9). With this in mind, it is imperative to understand that the task of educating students holistically is expansive. With research that points to standard based learning becoming central to education, educators must not release character education, but rather find a bridge to connect the two within the classroom. In view of the nation's desire to help develop students of character, this thesis will endeavor to encourage teachers in their pursuit of holistic education, while continuing to meet state standard requirements.

Nel Noddings, Parker Palmer, and Maxine Greene are exceptional teachers who have spent a majority of their lives within classrooms, teaching students content, while helping students in the process of shaping their moral compass. They are also acclaimed authors and speakers who are working towards transforming education that is rooted in student development. Each of these authors will contribute to a revised model of teaching that will guide teachers in incorporating both standards and character within their teaching. Noddings is an advocate for holistic education and strives to develop educators for a calling in creating classrooms and school systems that are defined by care. Noddings taught mathematics for seventeen years and is currently a Professor of Education at Stanford University. Within the work of Noddings, she continually writes

about education being a place that fosters and teaches care. She gives an example in her article, "A Morally Defensible Mission for Schools in the 21st Century," of a woman whose identifying factors are listed beside her, such as size, weight, race, gender, career, etc., but at the core, "whoever she is at a given moment, what she is engaged in, she needs---as we all do---to be cared for" (368). The power of this statement is that despite social status, economic level, or any identifying factor each person needs to be cared for. In addition, the work of Parker Palmer is powerful, groundbreaking, and honest. He is bold in his writing because he is not afraid to discuss the truth about how both life and teaching are hard. Writing from a perspective of both a student and teacher, Palmer shares why the heart is not being unlocked in the classroom and sheds light on the changes that can be made to help the heart be exposed, encouraged, and enlightened. Lastly, Maxine Greene, a writer, researcher, and teacher, explores the ideas of imagination and awareness as key factors in addressing issues of social justice. Greene has worked tirelessly to train and develop teachers and individuals to not only use the classroom to engage in content discussions, but rather discussions that engage both the soul and the world around them. Maxine Greene has worked on presenting the dichotomies that exist within education, such as factual information and moral issues, but merge them together to formulate a more holistic approach to both learning and teaching. Ultimately, Greene establishes principles that assist in making student learning personal. The model that their research inspires has four strands: knowledge, heart, relationships, and experiences. Within each strand, the student's needs are addressed, while pairing academic content with student interests and perspectives that will ultimately lead to learning that is instilled through practical experiences. Each strand works simultaneously

together to develop a transformed student who understands the role of knowledge and character in a changing world.

Educational models offer educators guides for how they can structure lessons. Based on the U.S. Department of Education, one of the key components of building students through character development is found in teacher training. Therefore, the research presented within this thesis will focus on developing an instructional method that equips teachers with the guidance in how to incorporate character training within their classrooms every day. Research reveals the benefits of having a strong moral development focus within schools, while also showing how standard based schools guide students to greater understanding. The task of educating students holistically is daunting. The partnerships between schools, educators, parents, and communities are pivotal in the process. Thus, the educational route that must be given intentional focus is that of teacher training and support. For schools to be effective at educating the whole student, teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills of implementing models that meet the intellectual, emotional, and even spiritual development of the student. Holistic education is a long-term strategy that integrates the elements of knowledge, heart, relationships and experiences into a student-centered system of learning and living. Therefore, the question addressed through this research is how can teachers take the model of knowledge, heart, relationships, and experiences and implement it in K-12 to reach the full potential of a child.

Chapter 2

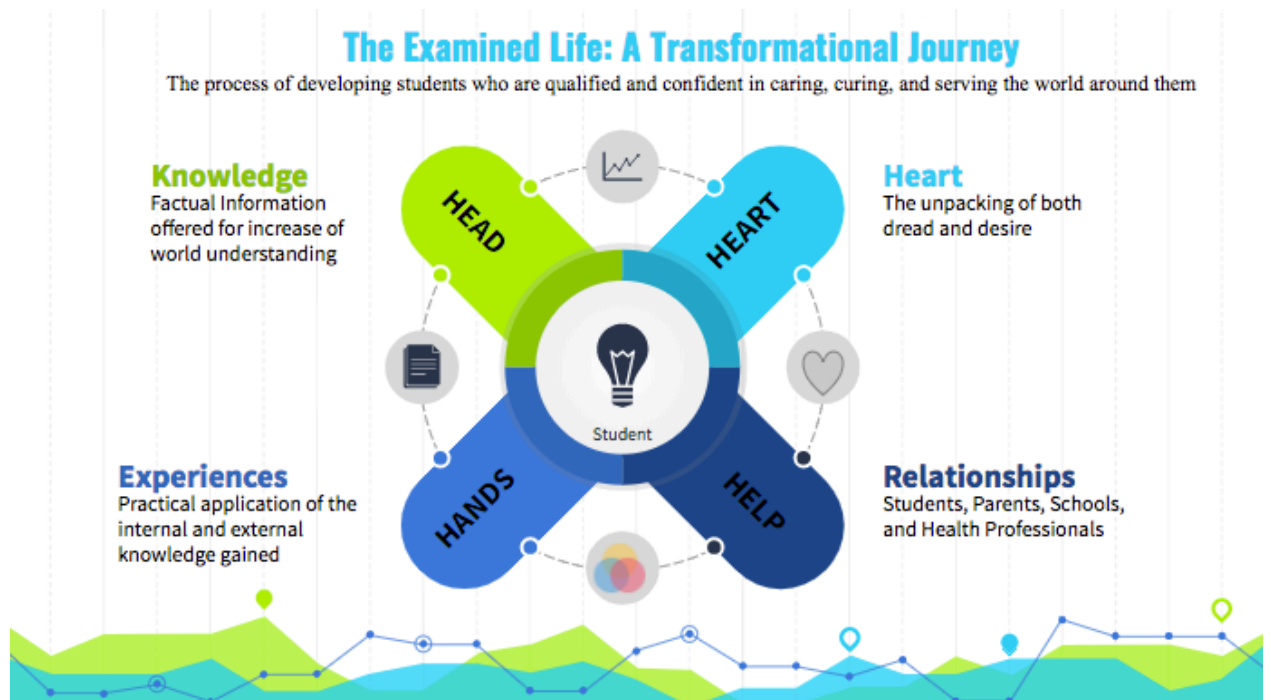Designing Holistic Classrooms

Instructional Method

Figure 1.1: The instructional model designed to assist teachers in fulfilling state standards, while incorporating character development principles within each class session.

The purpose for this study was to develop a practical instructional model that meets the obligations of local, state, and national curriculum and assessment standards while fully integrating a holistic theory of the student development (i.e., knowledge, heart, relationships, and experiences). Figure 1 reflects the instructional model that will be discussed throughout this thesis. The model is grounded in the academic knowledge that each student must attain in each class to enhance dialogue and community among students and society. The class materials and discussions will have their focus outlined by the students: their passions, learning styles, experiences, and stories. With students as the

focus, each classroom will be geared toward cultivating the values of students as they discover new knowledge. Through a process of relationships and experiences within the classroom, the students will be given opportunities to make their learning personal, engaging, and realistic. Each facet of the model will be explained throughout this thesis to help guide teachers in the process of teaching character through a holistic approach. The instructional model is practical, simple, and transformational. Ultimately, the model connects with all schools because it does not require additional resources or funding, but rather more intentional planning on the teacher's part to create her classroom into a learning experience. The examined life model introduces both students and teachers to a learning that prioritizes achieving goals and developing character, producing not only learners, but engaged citizens.

Establishing a Safe and Stable Classroom

Before learning can occur, it is essential that the space in which students are learning is prepared and effective for student vulnerability and exploration. Drawing again from the work of Maslow that was presented in the introduction, without creating a stable classroom environment and culture, students will be unable to learn, focus, or develop. Thus, before teachers begin teaching content, they must understand the needs of their students so that they can prepare a space of learning that facilitates in their discovery and connection without hindering their personality. Establishing a safe and stable classroom entails various aspects such as: a visually welcoming space, emotional support, student voice, and student achievement goals. When students enter their classrooms, they are not just bringing their supplies, but rather all of themselves: their fears, doubts, dreams, demographics, experiences, and stories. Therefore, as teachers it is

imperative to understand the emotional and psychological side of students. This information will aid in the development of students and the role that both the student and teacher will play in the classroom. Steven Farr, in his book, *Teaching as Leadership*, addresses the various emotional aspects that might hinder students from feeling comfortable in their own classroom, "perhaps a student has been called derogatory name by a classmate; or a student is self-conscious because her clothes are more worn that someone else's; or some aspect of a student's identity causes the student to feel isolated from others; or a student picks up on a teacher's subtle preference for a particular group" (73). These emotional situations that students carry with them are inevitable but must be addressed by the teacher so that students feel supported and safe in their classroom.

To extend the conversation of building stable and safe classroom experiences for students, research points to the importance of developing strong relationships with students. L. B. McCombs and J. Whisler in their work, *The Learner-Centered Classroom and School*, highlight how "students identify a teacher's care and concern as the number one factor that influences their learning" (qtd. in Farr 75). Connecting with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Steven Farr, in *Teaching as Leadership*, responds by sharing how "students who feel personally cared for by their teacher are freed up to pursue other needs, like achievement and success" (Farr 75). Ultimately, building relationships develops trust, a "trust between you and your students is at the root of students' willingness to take academic risks, try new skills, and learn from mistakes" (Farr 75). To affirm these statements, researcher Robert Pianta has found that "emotional support in the classroom correlates with closing the achievement gap, growth in students' functioning, and growth in reading and math achievement" (qtd. in Farr 73). Pianta's research

correlates strategically with the instructional model developed because it highlights how the focus must be on the student, not the academics. In the process of investing in the whole student, the academic achievement of all students will improve, which is the whole goal of education; engage the student so that they can achieve their academic goals. For the purpose of student acceptance and academic growth, creating a safe culture for students is found in investing in relationships with students. Before content is addressed, the student's needs must be understood and dealt with accordingly.

Relationships are foundational to a sustaining classroom culture. To provide practical strategies for teachers to implement relational engagement the term care must be addressed. Care is something felt by another person. Care is both personal and relational. Care must be modeled. To reinforce the idea of care, Lynn M. Owens and Catherine D. Ennis strive to reveal the necessity of care education within schools. Within their article, "The Ethic of Care in Teaching: An Overview of Supportive Literature," Owens and Ennis draw from Nel Noddings to formulate their own model and understanding of care education. Referencing authors Gordon, Benner, and Noddings, Owens and Ennis define care "as a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility. This definition [stated Owen and Ennis] emphasizes that caring occurs within relationships" (Owens and Ennis 393). Therefore, if care is a relational act, the process in which individuals learn to care, must be done in relationship. Noddings writes about how individuals learn how to care through the process of being cared for, thus, care must be modeled (*Philosophy of Education 230*). As a result, if students have not experienced healthy care, they will be unable to healthily care for those around them. The classroom

is the laboratory for experiencing and learning to not only care for one's self, but to care about people, ideas, and the world. Noddings argument starts from the position that care is basic in human life – that all people want to be cared for (*Starting at Home* 11). All people want to be cared for because all people were made for relationships and when relationships are broken that is when individuals perceive and act out of a distorted example of care. Within Noddings writing, she divides caring into two sections: caring about and caring for. Noddings shares that:

> The key, central to care theory, is this: caring-about (or, perhaps a sense of justice) must be seen as instrumental in establishing the conditions under which caring-for can flourish. Although the preferred form of caring is cared-for, caring-about can help in establishing, maintaining, and enhancing it. Those who care about others in the justice sense must keep in mind that the objective is to ensure that caring actually occurs. Caring-about is empty if it does not culminate in caring relations. (*Starting at Home* 23-4).

Ultimately, Noddings reflects on how many individuals care about many different things, but when it comes to their actions it does not prove that they care for those things. The gap that is presented is the action. When individuals understand what they care about and then are given opportunities to express that care, that is when they truly learn, truly understand, and truly become a pivotal part of the world around them. Therefore, the classroom allows opportunities to define what students care about and provide a community that encourages and provides experiences for expressions of care. As teachers model caring relationships, students will feel safe to share and engage.

Learning Defined

When care is established in classrooms through personal relationships, learning can begin from a place of trust and understanding. For the purpose of this research, it is helpful to understand the purpose and meaning of transformational learning that is rooted in student voice. The authors of "Embracing Multiple Definitions of Learning" make note that there are various purposes and methods of assessing learning based on specific disciplines and results desired. Through their research, they have noted that the common theoretical framework for learning is found in the definition that "learning is a structured updating of system properties based on the processing of new information" (Barron et al. 405). This generic definition notes that learning is an ongoing process that filters new information to establish a basis for knowledge. In connection, "experience is strongly linked to the learning concept because experience is assumed to be the source of the information that is learned" (Barron et al. 406). Students must experience learning for it to take root and produce not only a cognitive shift, but a behavioral change, resulting in value-based decisions and actions.

Based on the information, an educationally based definition of learning must be understood in addition to the broad ideas of the purpose of learning. Authors Suzanne M. Wilson and Penelope L. Peterson, in their work "Theories of Learning and Teaching: What Do They mean for Educators," share that learning can be divided into three facets: "learning as a process of active engagement; learning as individual and social; and learning differences as resources to be used, not obstacles to be confronted" (2). Within the understanding that learning is active engagement, it is noted that Plato and Socrates were of the first to reveal that students were not just mere "empty vessels and blank

slates," but rather ongoing learners of the world around them (Wilson and Peterson 2). While this understanding is not new, the U.S. system of education has not adopted their theory, but rather have encouraged teacher talk and student listening (Wilson and Peterson 2). Each student does not begin learning each year at the same level but learns and converts the information given to them through a filter that is specific to their beliefs and experiences. Therefore, Wilson and Peterson suggest that students "interpret" the information given to them, meaning that they articulate the "information and ideas they encounter in the world through the experiences and theories they bring to school" (3). Therefore, this means that the teacher's role is very different than just providing knowledge, rather their role is to "diagnose interpretations and help students alter, edit, and enrich them" through various methods of experience and reflection (Wilson and Peterson 3-4). Understanding that students interpret the information they are given is pivotal in the role of learning and assessment. Therefore, before learning can occur, it is important to understand the unique lens that each student is engaging with in the classroom so that true enrichment can occur. When students interpret in various ways, it is vital that they reflect on what is guiding their understanding and belief and seek to understand the views of others so that they can learn and interact with them. Thus, it is important to note that "knowledge is inseparable from practice: we know by doing" (Wilson and Peterson 4). In addition to community learning, students are unable to transfer their knowledge unless they receive "frequent feedback" that helps students "monitor their learning and actively evaluate their strategies and their current levels of understanding" that will help them translate their learning to new problems and contexts (Wilson and Peterson 6). Therefore, learning effectively takes place in group settings

with opportunities to reflect on work, building "metacognitive awareness" (Wilson and Peterson 6). Learning is an active process focusing on content understanding, personal experience, and community reflection.

In a similar form, Nel Noddings defines education as "a constellation of encounters, both planned and unplanned, that promote growth through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and appreciation" (qtd. in Coleman et al. 2). Ultimately, education is about making sense of students' experiences and helping them understand their place in the world. Education is the bedrock for true formation that is rooted in the identity and stories of students. Math, science, English, history, band, and athletics are all interwoven because they have the opportunity to provide encounters for students where they learn the values of life and the purpose for their existence. Therefore, teachers help students make sense of their lives and the gift in each of their experiences. With this being said, schools must understand the role they play in shaping lives and foster innovative ways to make the encounters of their students holistic and refining.

Chapter 3

Knowledge

Education's purpose within the lives of students' is to assist in further developing

them as individuals that will eventually will impact their future jobs and culture.

Educators must make sure that the focus of learning is structured around effective

learning methods for students. For the most part, the knowledge that will guide each

classroom is composed from the standards developed by each state. The state standard

discussion is multifaceted and for the sake of this research, the focus of the development

of effect knowledge presentation will not stem from the state standard debate. Although,

the standards already outlined by the state will guide the type of products the students

will need to produce throughout their learning, the learning process will stem from

student needs and areas of particular interest. When student interests and topics of choice

are included within the classroom, students are involved in their learning decisions and

feel a deeper investment in what they are learning. Within this section, academic growth

will be outlined through a process of character engagement and knowledge rigor that

directly correlates with their personal experiences and areas of interest.

Learning Styles

Connecting back to the need for creating a safe classroom environment, when

beginning to address content, it is imperative that students are engaging in a manner that

correlates with their specific learning style. To enhance an understanding of various

learning styles, the work of Arthur Chickering and Nancy Schlossberg, in their article

"Your Preferred Learning Style," will be addressed. Teachers must understand that

"different types of learning call for different approaches" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 161).

Therefore, teachers must assess students learning styles so that they can effectively engage students in learning that connects with how they interpret information. Drawing from the experiential learning cycle created by David A. Kolb, Chickering and Schlossberg highlight four different learning styles: divergers, assimilators, convergers, and accommodators. Students who are divergers are "tuned into their feelings, and [are] concerned about meaning and values," assimilators find their strength "in creating theoretical models," convergers "excel at problem solving and decision making," while accommodators "are action oriented and good at implementing plans and doing things" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 162). Looking back at the instructional model, each one of these learning styles connects with an element of the strategy. For example, divergers coincide with the heart element, assimilators with knowledge, convergers with experiences, and accommodators with relationships. Therefore, the learning styles of each student will be addressed each day if teachers implement the instructional model and are intentional about incorporating each element within the lesson. On a larger scale, consider a class discussion or research project, each student could play a role in the process by using their learning style, ultimately engaging in all of the elements proposed in the examined life instructional strategy. Teaching students about their learning styles and engaging in activities that foster development of their learning will help equip students for greater personal development and concept understanding. The retaining and application of knowledge begins with understanding how students learn and tailoring activities and lessons that activate their learning curiosity through personal interest and learning style.

Care Curriculum

Analysts Kevin Coleman, Lanie Depp, and Kimmy O'Rourke in their article, "The Educational Theory of Nel Noddings" address the various ways that Nel Noddings introduces building care within the classroom. Because academic standards offer a product desired, the teachers have the authority to choose the content that will lead the students to the results. Therefore, Nel Noddings suggests incorporating themes of care and character within each unit or standard addressed. Students can grow academically and socially through the form of thematic units that focus on qualities that develop character, preparing students for life beyond the classroom. Noddings firmly believes that "caring teachers and students should discuss questions about life openly and in all subjects" (Coleman et al. 1). Noddings believes that religion and morality cannot be taught but taught about (Coleman et al. 1). This means giving students the opportunity to discuss, wrestle, and articulate what it is that they believe, ultimately leading to educated and articulated decisions. The questions of morality and religion are at the core of each student, therefore, opportunities for students to engage in reflection helps them process what they believe. In so incorporating the questions of morality and religion within the classroom, "Noddings stresses the importance of adapting the curriculum for the personal interests of the students and of making the core subjects applicable to real life" (Coleman et al. 1). To engage the "whole person" and ultimately the whole world, Nodding emphasizes incorporating a "political education" that constructs an understanding for students about the role of time and money that govern our lives. Furthermore, she adds that reflection should be central to teaching to allow students the opportunity to understand and record shifts in their thinking and beliefs, helping them understand how education and knowledge change the way we see the world and the value we put on our

lives and the lives of others, which is central to unity and cohesion within society"
(Coleman et al. 1). In her recent book alongside Laurie Brooks, *Teaching Controversial
Issues,* Noddings reminds teachers that "our purpose in shaping young minds is to
produce people who can think for themselves and, eventually, reject further attempts to
control their decisions or prescribe the form of their rationality and purpose. That is why
so much attention must be given to critical thinking and its connections to moral life" (8).
Therefore, elements of reflection must be incorporated into knowledge content so that
students are able to decipher what it is that they believe and defend their ideas against
opposing views. To understand Noddings views on critical thinking, she notes that
finding meaning in what we are reading or discussing is essential, "when we search for
meaning, we often move back and forth between what an author (or speaker) meant and
what we might mean by the same words" (Noddings and Brooks 30). Ultimately, critical
thinking leads to a pursuit of meaning. To find meaning in a text which produces critical
thinking, students must search the text for the meaning of the author, find their
arguments, assess their motives, and then compare their findings to their own beliefs
(Noddings and Brooks 32). Critical thinking requires moving into another person's mind
and understand the world through their lens, ultimately teaching students about the
importance of relationships and reflection. Once understanding has been formed, students
are then able to reflect on what they believe and make accurate assumptions, decisions,
and beliefs.

To further her discussion of care, she has written an article, "Teaching Themes of
Care," that provides practical steps for teachers and schools to take in developing
students who care. Noddings believes that incorporating care within the educational

curriculum will transform classrooms. Noddings writes "we should want more from our

educational efforts than adequate academic achievement [and] we will not achieve even

that meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and

learn to care for others" ("Teaching Themes" 1). Within her work, she also notes various

purposes for including care within curriculum and those include: "themes of care help us

to connect the standard subjects, care connects our students and our subjects to great

existential questions, [care] connects us person-to-person, and care implies a continuous

search for competence" ("Teaching Themes" 2). Care is connected with the idea of

diversity because it can be expressed in various forms. Noddings divides care into five

main groups: "caring for self, for intimate others, for strangers, global others, human-

made world" ("Teaching Themes" 1). From her suggestion, Noddings encourages

teachers to incorporate these four areas of care within their curriculum, focusing on

literature, articles, and stories that deal with themes in these spheres of care. For example

she notes, "in the domain of caring for self . . . we might consider life stages, spiritual

growth, and what it means to develop an admirable character; in exploring the topic of

caring for intimate others, we might include units on love, friendship, and parenting;

under the theme of caring for strangers and global others, we might study war, poverty

and tolerance; in addressing the idea of caring for the human-made world, we might

encourage competence with the machines that surround us and a real appreciation for the

marvels of technology" ("Teaching Themes" 2). Likewise, John Miller reviews Noddings

book, *Critical Lessons: What Our Schools Should Teach,* and shares how "Noddings

argues that critical thinking should be linked to important social issues and not just taught

in a formulaic way (91). In addition, Noddings and Brooks write *Teaching Controversial*

Issues, focusing on the controversial issues of religion, race, gender, public life, entertainment, sports, media, capitalism, socialism, money, class, poverty, equality, justice, freedom, and patriotism. The issues that interest the students and that are controversial in our world today must be addressed so that the students can gain their own perspective and views. To further this discussion, Noddings reflects in her book *Philosophy of Education* on the idea of critical thinking and its direct connection with critical issues. Within the text, it is explained that within the discussion of critical issues, individuals will have varying perspectives, connecting "to feeling and culture-sensitive thought," but should not ultimately be a reason for schools to ignore these discussions and topics (*Philosophy of Education* 101). It is noted that the Common Core, a set of state standards, does not address many critical issues within the curriculum which ultimately reduces critical thinking because students are not given the opportunity to fully process their beliefs about certain issues and see a more holistic view of pivotal issues. Noddings shares how:

> It is hard to see how we can honestly recommend the teaching of critical thinking if we refuse to address critical issues, but perhaps we can make some progress by directing critical thought at itself and engaging in persistent dialogue and a search for common ground with the understanding that we can work together on some important projects despite irresolvable conflicts in belief. (*Philosophy of Education* 101).

Ultimately, curriculum must be rooted in the ideals of care. By creating a caring classroom, cultural conversations about critical issues will be invited and used to bridge barriers and create community.

Furthermore, Noddings adds that for the implementation of interdisciplinary, thematic units, teachers must be highly engaged and passionate for the students to be impacted. Many times, in the traditional classroom, each subject area is divided, focusing on their own topics. While it is very difficult to coordinate all the content areas into a interdisciplinary unit, Noddings suggests that "such themes as war, poverty, crime, racism, or sexism can be addressed in almost every subject area" ("Teaching Themes" 3). Therefore, she encourages each subject area to discuss a central theme that could be incorporated throughout each content area but be addressed in ways that fit that specific subject. This process allows students to interact with that theme consistently, helping them understand how care is not only an emotional endeavor, but can be an act of our gifts whether that be in the sciences, mathematics, literature, or the arts. The process of interdisciplinary education requires strong relationships with other teachers, but ultimately the investment of the school in character education.

Drawing from the work of Maxine Greene in her work "Curriculum and Consciousness," she notes that "learning, to be meaningful, must involve such a "going" beyond" (3). Greene presents the reoccurring reality in many classrooms, "rarely does [curriculum] signify possibility for him as an existing person, mainly concerned with making sense of his own life-world" ("Curriculum" 2). Greene adds that "we pay too little attention to the individual in quest of his own future . . . we are still prone to dichotomize: to think of "disciplines" or "public traditions" or "accumulated wisdom" or "common culture" as objectively existent, external to the knower---there to be discovered, mastered, learned" ("Curriculum" 1). In addition, students should always be asked how the information they learn is going to affect current actions in their life. If

students merely memorize information, they are not fully using the learning to engage their lives. The privilege of education is that it allows individuals to understand different theories, time periods, historical decisions, mathematical equations, all in effort to help students use what they have been given in their own lives and in the world around them. For this to occur, Greene suggests that "in order to penetrate [literature], to experience it existentially and empathetically, he must try to place himself within the 'interior space" of the writer's mind" ("Curriculum" 2). Therefore, learning is about movement, both mentally, internally, and externally. Learning must move the mind to wonder, move the heart to assess, and move the body to take action based on the new knowledge presented.

Relevance of content becomes the overarching idea that has been discussed throughout the instructional element of the knowledge section. For student engagement and achievement to increase students must understand how what they are learning applies to their lives. Steven Farr highlights how "teachers should address and answer the question, 'Why are we learning this?' and that the teacher's answer should involve students' interests and aspirations" (98). Furthermore, in the book, *Increasing Student Motivation: Strategies for Middle and High School Teachers,* author M. Theobald explains how students need to recognize and find relevance to their own lives in what you are teaching. If students can make a connection to what they already know about in their lives and experiences, it is more likely they will be interested in what you have to say" (qtd in Farr 99). If relevancy matters to students, it must be the teacher's priority to effectively understand student's experiences, stories, and interests. Teachers must adapt content to fit student understanding, while also exposing students to new ideas and perspectives. To address Noddings idea of care, students must understand and learn about

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what they care about and then move into learning how to care for others and the world. Content should not be chosen for students, but be directed by student choice, experiences, and needs.

Chapter 4

Heart

The second element of the examined life instructional model is the heart, the internal design and motivation of students. The idea that the heart is the avenue to the mind is presented in the work of Thomas Moore in his book *The Education of the Heart*. Moore explains that "because the soul has such deep roots in personal and social life and its values run so contrary to modern concerns, caring for the soul may well turn out to be a radical act, a challenge to accepted norms" (13). Parker Palmer defines the heart, in his book *The Courage to Teach,* as being "in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self" (36). Knowledge will not be fully digested and transferred to the actions of a student, unless their heart is engaged. To teach and be educated is to know and unravel the heart. Based on the definition, the heart is where all of life is contained, meaning that it can be a place of utter joy or deep hurt, therefore, both students and teachers will wrestle with what is inside. In addition, within the book *Feeling Power*, Megan Boler reveals that "education aims in part to help us understand our values and priorities, how we have come to believe what we do, and how we can define ethical ways of living with others. Emotions function in part as moral and ethical evaluations; they give us information about what we care about and why" (xv). Boler effectively presents the blending of both knowledge and heart together. Emotions, the heart, reveal our motivations and ultimately what drives our decisions. Each student brings their emotions into the classroom and through the learning process they engage in activities, discussions, and reflections, that enable them to assess their motivations and alter their behaviors for the common good. The true emotions of students must be

understood before education can occur. Emotions guide each student's educational process. Therefore, it is vital that classrooms become a place that is defined by safety, both academically and emotionally. The partnership between health professionals (counselors), teachers, parents, and students must be further strengthened. If we want to experience radical shifts in education, we must be dedicated to helping grow these partnerships so that student have access to the support that they need. Drawing from the research presented in the knowledge chapter, it becomes imperative that content is connected to student's interests. If this bridge is made, students will feel more comfortable in engaging in learning because they have a place of common ground. When students understand that they relate to the topic or have prior knowledge, their sense of safety increases, allowing them to become more open as they process the new information through the lens of their heart and experiences.

In the same light, developing character is grounded in creating meaning within someone's life. Reggie McNeal in his book, *A Work of Heart*, outlines how God shapes spiritual leaders. In an equal manner, teaching is about influencing and shaping the lives of students who will become future leaders. McNeal notes "values, attitudes, convictions, motivations, beliefs, vision, hopes, dreams, ambitions. These are the things people live and die for. These are the things that give meaning to life. These are the building blocks of legacy. They are far more enduring than wealth or fame. Heart decisions affect generations because they change lives" (187). Individuals, especially students, are not mere knowledge consumers, but rather strategic components to a larger story. A student's mind is a key player in their identity, but only a piece. From the work of McNeal, it is evident that the core of an individual is motivated and determined by the condition of

their heart. His statement about how "heart decisions affect generations because they change lives" is powerful (McNeal 187). So goes the heart, so goes generations. The heart echoes pain, while also inspiring imagination. Maxine Greene eloquently writes in her excerpt, "Teaching as Possibility," that teaching in times of darkness and constraint "is a matter of enabling [students] to remain in touch with dread and desire, with the smell of lilacs and the taste of a peach" (23). Greene notes that teaching is a transformational journey, where students experience the fruit of life, the delight in the ordinary, while wrestling with the entanglements of the soul that deprive them of daring to dream. Therefore, teachers must understand the dichotomy that is present: dread and desire. There are realities of dread continually surrounding each individual; consequently, how do we help our students cope with the pain they have endured and are enduring? Through the process of dealing with the dread, teachers are able to bring light into their lives and inspire a desire for the greater, for the extraordinary, for the incredible, for the transformational, and ultimately for the act of vulnerability.

Regarding creating a stable and safe classroom environment, an important factor within teaching that must be addressed is that of the fear students might feel because of their lack of academic competence or emotional needs. Fear fills every crevice of humanity: fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of others, fear of self, and fear of the truth. Palmer writes in his work, *The Courage to Teach*:

> If we embrace the promise of diversity, of creative conflict, and of "losing" in order to "win," we still face one final fear---the fear that a live encounter with otherness will challenge or even compel us to change our lives . . . otherness . . . always invites transformation, calling us not only to new facts and theories and

values but also to new ways of living our lives---and that is the most daunting

threat of all. (38)

Education's foundation is rooted on that of the other, learning and growing in community

both with self and others. Based on the reflection from Palmer, he notes that people are

fearful of change, fearful of finding a new way of life. This might be the case because

individuals have not been taught how to listen, engage, and transition. Students must

understand, see, and experience the power in change, in shifting one's thinking and

behaviors based on what they learn and experience through community. The way in

which we all behave is based on our experiences, both good and bad. Therefore, if

students have had an experience in the classroom that produced a negative effect they

might not engage in classroom discussion. As a result, we have students moving

throughout school in a state of fear, not freedom. Among all students, there is a sense of

fear, whether that being in fear of the content, of relationships, of change, or of personal

experiences. In response, teachers must engage with their students in their fear through

strategies, encouragement, and care.

Bridging the work of Palmer with that of Brene Brown proves beneficial because

Brown discusses how to overcome fear and the factors that heighten fear. Brene Brown is

a social worker and shares how fear is a result of individuals striving to become and

remain perfect, "imperfection brings shame, and working to hard for perfection brings

shame" in her book *I Thought It was Just Me* (183-184). Shame and fear are a result of a

loss of self-respect and a pressure to present oneself to others as perfect. Fear breads lack

of vulnerability. Therefore, as teachers we must use our platform to teach how wholeness

is the goal. Embracing vulnerability is done through a process that includes recognizing

triggers, practicing critical awareness, reaching out, and speaking into shame (B. Brown 193-195). This process engages the heart, cultivates communication, and empowers the student to move forward in their fears and discover freedom over shame. The teacher must model the process for it to translate and be effective in the life of their students. To connect, Palmer writes "for all the fearful efforts we make to protect ourselves by disconnecting, the human soul yearns eternally for connection" (*Courage to Teach* 85). It is natural to disconnect when we feel inadequate, but yet our souls long for community. Now a dichotomy is presented; Palmer writes how the heart needs to learn how to change, yet it desires only to be noticed. Thus, it is imperative for the heart to be seen before it can begin to desire to change. Connecting with the previous chapter on knowledge, when students reflect on what they know, and teachers begin each unit based on what students already know, students will build confidence that encourages them to share and engage in future discussions and topics that are less familiar. The primary focus on a teacher needs to be on using their content to help students unfold the internal so that they can develop externally. It would be wrong to state that this process is easy and that when we do it it will be a straight path. Educators must understand that our human qualities are the very thing that make us unique, but always are the reason that can cause difficulty in becoming who we were made to be. Parker Palmer addresses the reality of educating. He effectively writes in a manner that allows teachers to understand that fear is natural, but that staying in that place is neither effective or safe. Fear is normal for all humans, especially educators because as a teacher you are given students each year to build up in knowledge, truth, and identity. Teachers are given a large task. While the task might be daunting, the freedom that Palmer offers is one of letting go of perfection and

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moving towards wholeness through empathetic listening and brave steps towards giving space for students to process and engage their hearts in the classroom. The steps towards honesty are not easy, but ultimately will provide opportunities for both teachers and students to begin making changes in their own lives and how they engage in caring and curing the world around them.

Drawing again from Wilson and Peterson, they share how "teachers cannot create a bridge between subject matter and student without having a clear sense of what students know, care about, can do, and want to do" (6). Therefore, it is without a doubt that learning cannot be internalized if the heart and passions of a student are not encouraged or supported. It is the responsibility of the teacher to work with the student and families to understand the cultural identity of their students so that their lessons may have depth and personal connections with students, helping students interpret information in personal ways, ultimately leading to deeper understanding. Similarly, not only do beliefs about controversial issues matter within the classroom, but beliefs about student achievement affect learning outcomes. Within the book, *The Leadership Challenge,* J. Kouzes and B. Posner explain how "many highly successful teachers (and education experts) boil the idea of student investment down to two factors: students' belief that they are able to achieve at high levels alongside their desire to do so" (qtd. in Farr 57). In response, teachers, as they develop curriculum and thematic units, must think critically about how they present the information to their students. Students must be given confidence in their strengths to help them understand their achievement goals, while also helping them develop a desire for the content. Referencing the information previously presented, if student interests are guiding each lesson, students will have a desire to engage. Teaching

is about empowering students through their interests into topics and experiences that seem achievable. In response, connecting back with learning styles, students will learn differently, therefore the process in which students master a new idea will vary. If students experience a classroom that is intentionally designed to fit their learning needs, they will understand that they have been given specific care and attention, increasing student engagement, vulnerability, and care for the topic.

To understand the heart, educators must understand that motivation is not from external factors, but internal motivation. Researcher, Bob Sullo, in *Activating the Desire to Learn,* reflects on the current methods of teaching and how change must be incorporated for both schools and students to develop. Sullo writes how "most schools and classrooms operate on the reward or punishment model, and use stimulus-response, behavior modification, or assertive discipline" (5). While this is the way most schools have taught and encourage their students in behavior control, they have failed to understand where true motivation of students is developed. It is clear to see how reward and punishment model is the simplest model because it is an immediate response, while internal understanding takes time and development because it is dealing with the student's heart and motivations. Sullo references William Powers, who developed the perceptual control theory, which was among the first developed theory on internal control, "people control their own experiences. The only way you can truly force them to behave as you wish is through the threat or actuality of overwhelmingly superior physical force---and even that is only a temporary solution" (6). Therefore, it is clear that the system of development and discipline that we have within school systems currently is one that is not bringing about true change because it is about power, not connection. In

response, it is noted that "internal control psychology is based upon the belief that people are internally, not externally, motivated" (Sullo 7). One of the statements that Sullo addresses is that individuals are given information from what surrounds them, but it does not cause individuals to do anything (7). Individuals internal motivations guide their actions. This theory directly connects with teaching because teachers can attempt to provide punishment, rewards, or discipline, but what is truly a transforming factor in the lives of students is their heart. Sullo addresses the barrier of why the method of internal motivation has been ignored and not incorporated is because there now is "a population alarmingly unwilling to accept personal responsibility and to recognize that our lives are largely a product of the choices we make" (8). This information proves staggering because it addresses the reality that the work of the heart is difficult, but ultimately is the center for which true change and transformation is ignited. To confirm this idea, Sullo incorporates the biological theory presented by William Glasser, emphasizing how all individuals are born with specific needs that must be fulfilled. The psychological needs that he addresses are those of belonging or connecting, power of competence, freedom, and fun (Sullo 8). Sullo advocates that when teachers create environments in which students can engage in these four areas of needs, students engage in learning with greater interest, involvement, and meaning. The primary focus for teaching with the heart in mind is to help teachers engage students in learning because the heart is the lens in which students see the world. Thus, if student's view of knowledge and themselves are clearly established, students will be able to make decisions that are beneficial for both themselves and others around them.

Teaching care must be done with great thoughtfulness and understanding. Noddings states that "it is morally irresponsible to simply ignore existential questions and themes of care; we must attend to them. But it is equally irresponsible to approach these deep concerns without caution and careful preparation" ("Teaching Themes" 3). Teaching with care is not an easy endeavor, but one that must be overcome despite the fear and factors involved. In addition to this discussion, Noddings notes how teachers need to be prepared for the various discussions students will engage in, such as death, family relationships, etc. It has been stated by Noddings that "too often schools rely on experts . . . when what children really need is the compassion of adults who represent constancy and care in their lives. Artificially separating the emotional academic, and moral care of children into tasks for specially designated experts contributes to the fragmentation of life in schools" ("Teaching Themes" 4). She goes on to discuss the impact and need for health professionals, but addresses the reality that teachers are the consistent figure in student's lives during the school day, therefore, teachers must be trained, prepared, and engaged in the life discussions of students, addressing pivotal needs both in personal conversations and themes addressed in class. When students are enabled to discuss the gripping issues of their lives, whether that be sports, friendships, identity, or simply the frustrations of life and those themes are used to teach content needs that is when true learning is developed.

Palmer invites the idea that listening is a crucial factor in the road to personal and global advancement. Within the article, "What Happens When You Really Listen: Practicing Empathy for Leaders," Valerie Brown writes how "listening, deeply listening, is a greatly underrated life and leadership skill" (1). This reality is a result of a lack of

teaching that is focused on serving others and the high-speed culture that is present today.

Valerie Brown notes that "listening for genuine connection and understanding, listening

that engenders trust and authenticity, asks so much of us" because "when two people are

in dialogue, there are actually three conversations going on. The first conversation is the

external conversation between the two people. The other two conversations are each

person's internal dialogue" (1). Thus, listening is both an internal and external process.

Valerie Brown quotes the late Dutch theologian, Henri Nouwen in her work, "true

listening demands much of leaders. It requires "interior stability," the capacity of inner

resilience, the inner equilibrium that allows leaders to be both attuned to self and attuned

to others" (2). Listening is demanding because it requires a personal awareness that is

directly linked to the needs of others. Thus, the methods in which leaders, teachers, and

students must adopt are process based and require the personal expression that leads to

understanding their meaning in connection with the lives of others. Therefore, true

change only occurs when individuals are fully listened to, thus, to change culture,

individuals must have a deep personal reflection that helps them as they engage with

others. In this intermingling of souls, the needs of both parties are addressed, along with

the internal conflicts that may arise. Forming listening relationships is a process that

requires trust and in the words of Parker Palmer, "takes people who are explorers of their

own inner lives" (qtd. in V. Brown 2). Henri Nouwen is referenced in addressing the idea

of trust in listening as "listening as spiritual hospitality" because it welcomes various

perspectives and emotions without judgement so that a spirit of care and compassion can

be shown (qtd. in V. Brown 2). Listening is developed through practice and can be

addressed through paraphrasing, asking questions, expressing empathy, engaging with all

body movements, avoiding placing judgement or sharing opinion, and taking turns (V. Brown 3).

As teachers, if we truly believe that the heart is the soul of the student that guides their decisions, actions, and morals, then we too must be engaged with our heart, quick to share, quick to model, quick to feel, and quick to be vulnerable. Teaching is a form of transformation; therefore, the individuals that choose to teach must be transformed and understand the power in teaching not only to the standards, but to the heart of the students and their relationship to the world and those around them. Within the collection of writing, *Teaching*, Parker Palmer passionately writes how "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (qtd. in Jossey-Bass Inc. 4). Palmer defines identity as the converging of both "the inner and outer forces that make me who I am" and integrity as the vulnerability in "becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am" (qtd. in Jossey-Bass Inc. 7). Therefore, to become fully human means to articulate both the internal and external processes with honesty to ultimately form meaning and connection with one's soul and relationships with others. Educators must be honest with their situation and the difficulties that are present within the classroom and relating with students. If one believes that teaching and the pursuit of life fits the model presented by Palmer, it must be true that "the connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts---meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converse in the human self" (qtd. in Jossey-Bass Inc. 5). Due to fact that analyzing ourselves requires honesty, "to grow as teachers---we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about inner lives" (qtd. in Jossey-

Bass Inc. 5). In contrast, if teachers fail to lead with vulnerability, they "disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves" (qtd. in Jossey-Bass Inc. 10). Ultimately, teaching and learning are a simultaneous endeavor to express the realities of life, understand knowledge that drives understanding, and develop as advocates of wholeness. Connection is a part of being human and if educators fail to connect not only on an academic level, educators fail to fully advance students to wholeness.

As students vulnerably share their hearts, it is necessary for teachers to provide encouragement. Noddings explains how "in caring or maternal thinking, we often use caring occasions to confirm the cared for. The idea here is to shape an acceptable child by assisting in the construction of his ethical ideal . . . As we come to understand what the child wants to be and what we can honestly approve in him, we know what to encourage" ("An Ethic of Caring" 223-224). Noddings continues to add the high importance that conformation has on the lives of students' confidence in themselves and their growth as a learner. As teachers, we have the unique opportunity to help in the process of academic and personal transformation, therefore, we must seek out ways and be intentional in affirming and celebrating the growth that we see within students. As student understand the teachers care for them, they will feel comfortable in learning process that is filled with areas of both failure and success. Therefore, teachers must keep a record of student comments, observations, beliefs so that they can purposefully encourage their students. Logging this information is helpful because it will track student growth and provide direct feedback to the students, helping them ultimate assess their success and push them towards achieve their goals. The hearts of students must be affirmed throughout the process of learning.

Chapter 5

Relationships

The goal of the U.S. Department of Education implementation of Character

Education assists schools in developing engaged citizens. Societies are sustained through

the investment of the citizens working together towards common goals. Therefore, if the

schools' role is to assist in developing citizens, then the classroom must become a space

where students engage in conversation, understand the benefits of learning from one

another, and learn the process of listening, yet disagreeing with someone in a respectful

manner. The element of relationships is multifaceted because it addresses the various

relationships that students have within their lives: themselves, family, friends, others, and

literature. Students must learn how to engage respectfully and thoughtfully within all of

their relational connections. As students engage in relationships, they are better able to

understand who they are, what they believe, and produce empathy within their lives,

helping them change the way they view and process their own lives.

Education is not a selfish act, but rather a construction of how the world could

develop due to the unique gifts and talents of each individual working together.

Therefore, the skills of empathy and listening are crucial in helping individuals

understand how their lives are to be shared, not only personally fulfilled. For students to

gain a personal and relational connection with education they must participate in

engagement. Maxine Greene shares how she is in support of creating a community for

citizens, rather than focusing education on world-class technical achievements within her

book *Releasing the Imagination* (qtd. in Shaw 2). Students must involve themselves in

active engagement to develop a purpose for their learning and see how they practically

connect with the knowledge provided. When students are engaged in a project, they encounter themselves and others while making meaning out of the knowledge they are learning. Thus, learning must involve activities and projects, not only tasks and handouts. Ultimately, education is about creating, "the ultimate purpose of education is to help students and their teachers create meaning in their lives" (Shaw 1). If education is rooted in the art of creating meaning, changes must be made so that students do not leave school without purpose, but rather leave education with a clear purpose and understanding of the functions of the world and their potential in the world. Connections are made through personal reflection and intentional engagement with the world. Is this not the cry of all individuals, what is my purpose and how do we solve the issues of the world? These answers are found only through reflection and investment in the development of students. Therefore, educators must truly ask themselves why they are in the field of teaching. True teaching is not to teach a subject, but rather to help students develop fully as they engage with new information.

Relationships within the classroom are key to creating a stable and safe environment for students. Establishing a caring culture proves vital in enabling students to feel comfortable in learning and encouraged to share. Relationships begin with strong modeling from the teacher. Parker Palmer, in his book *The Courage to Teach*, reflects on how good teachers "join self, subject, and students in the fabric of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self; they manifest in their own lives, and evoke in their students, a 'capacity for connectedness' . . . to reduce our vulnerability, we disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves" (3, 9) Once students have established trust with the teacher, the next endeavor within the classroom will be building

trust with the other students. For effective and healthy relationships to be formed, it is

imperative that teachers model vulnerability with the students: showing how they are

processing information, highlighting moments when they fail, and practicing care for

students in the classroom. As the teacher models for the students, the students begin to

understand the influence of care on their learning and the need to care for others that they

interact with. The classroom is a place for stories, thus, the teacher must share their own

personal stories for impactful education to occur. When students witness a teachers

emotions, they feel confidence to show empathy and reveal their own emotions. Professor

of English at Brooklyn College City University of New York, Kenneth A. Bruffee, gives

insights into collaborative learning within the classroom in his writing *Collaborative

Learning.* Bruffee notes that "collaborative learning gives students practice in working

together when the stakes are relatively low, so that they can work effectively together

later when the stakes are high" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 175). Since education is the

process of developing citizens, school should not have been seen as a place where

students only come to pass tests and gain achievement, but rather school should be

designed and described as a laboratory of discovery because what students learn during

school will guide them into their future. Providing opportunities for students to practice

what they have been learning encourages them to take risks and engage in discussion

with others. The process will not be perfect but will help students as they develop into

adults and active citizens.

Collaboration requires students to verbalize their beliefs and perspectives, which

provides another form of student reflection. Within a space of shared learning, Bruffee

shares how "collaborative learning assumes knowledge is a consensus among the

members of a community of knowledgeable peers-something people construct by talking

together and reaching agreement" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 176). Bruffee encourages

collaboration because it allows individuals to voice their thoughts, but then work as a

team to come to a resolution on a topic, question, or problem. Through this work, Bruffee

gives an example of a class split into small groups discussing an issue and then sharing

out their results. During the class reflection, "constructing knowledge and increasing its

authority occurs when the class compares its consensus, coming to an even more refined

answer or solution" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 176). Within this process, three levels of

learning were taking place: individual, small group, and then large group. As students

hold beliefs and values it is imperative that they voice them to others so that they can

receive insight from a different perspective, enabling them to either change their view or

work towards developing a stronger argument for their desired belief. The process of

collaboration among students in a classroom puts learning into the student's hands and

encourages students to think critically and learn to be vulnerable with their emotions.

Drawing from the work of Noddings, she shares that when students work in spaces of

community, it presents an opportunity for students to care for others. Within "every

caring occasion, the parties involved must decide how they will respond to each other"

("An Ethic of Caring" 222). While every class period offers an opportunity to care,

Noddings also notes how there are also opportunities to disengage and avoid care, when

avoidance occurs, and teachers introduce "modes of discipline [or discussion] that

respond only to the behavior but refuse to encounter the person all risk losing

opportunities for moral education and mutual growth" ("An Ethic of Caring" 222). Thus,

engaging in care is the means in which moral education will flourish. Care deals with

student emotions, student knowledge, and modeling care for others. For students, it is important to discuss how in each situation we have the opportunity to either engage or disengage in care. Therefore, these discussions must happen in class, so students can reflect on their internal motivations and beliefs. Similarly, when working in collaboration with others it is important to highlight why this interaction is beneficial and encourage students to engage, focusing on their strengths that they can bring to the group. Ultimately, once knowledge has been taught, teachers are then encouraged to provide space for students to explore their topic personally and then as a community of learners.

For students to become academically capable, they must become internally connected. Therefore, helping students address needs and share emotions will assist them in deepening their understanding, but also being aware of the needs of others. When working with students and helping them build connections with peers it is vital to help students express their needs through defined feelings. Within *Life-Enriching Education,* Marshall B. Rosenberg presents an idea called nonviolent communication that empowers students. He writes how "a basic function of nonviolent communication is to focus attention on what we are feeling at any given moment. To do this requires a literacy in the expression of feelings" (Rosenberg 23). The literacy that Rosenberg describes is rooted in guiding students to share their emotions, but then locate a reason to why they are feeling a certain way so to encourage students to take ownership of their emotions and works towards resolving how they are feeling through reflection and conversation. As students share with each other and express their emotions, the classroom becomes a safe place to work through not only new academic knowledge, but the transformation of the heart. To establish nonviolent communication within a classroom, it is necessary that the teacher

models for the students and allows students to reflect on their emotions, helping them better understand how to respond to future situations and express what they need. In addition to working towards verbalizing emotions, as students work in collaboration groups they learn to appreciate other perspectives and understand ways to care for individuals with their needs.

Chapter 6

Experiences

Examination is central to life and the work of teaching. Examination does not

come naturally but takes time and intention. Within the process of teaching, for students

to understand content they must have time to process the information, in the same way,

for students to be internally impacted they must be given space to reflect and make

personal connections to their lives. Therefore, it is important to understand the power of

making space and time in the classroom for connection, relationships, and impactful

experiences. To ground the idea of experiential practices within teaching, Colin Beard

and John Wilson, in their work "Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for

Educators and Trainers," define experiential learning as:

> The sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the
>
> person and the outer world of the environment. Experiential learning is, in
>
> essence, the underpinning process to all forms of learning since it represents the
>
> transformation of most new and significant experiences and incorporates them
>
> within a broader conceptual framework (19).

The role of teaching is helping students unpack their prior knowledge and experiences to

guide them into new understanding and deeper knowledge. Each of our lives is an

ongoing story that reflects our past, present, and future. Each decision that we make and

every circumstance that we find ourselves in, build layers to our identity and character.

Within education, the idea that school is something that we have to get through so that we

can do things we want to is a consistent idea. For school to develop meaning, classrooms

must transform learning into an experience, an experience where students see their work

and discussion in the classroom as moments that contribute to their future decisions and role of care that they will play in the world around them. Ultimately, the classroom must become a space where real world examples and experiences are presented so that learning can become meaning, purposeful, and specific for each student. With this in mind, Robert Smith, professor at Northern Illinois University at DeKalb writes about how we must learn from everyday experiences, in his work "Learning from Everyday Experience." Within Smith's work he references Saul Alinsky, author of *Rules for Radicals,* saying that "happenings become experiences when they are digested, when they are reflected on, related to general patterns, and synthesized" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 134). Experiences are created through action, the processing of the material that makes the content personal and relational. Smith suggests that "learning to make relevant connections between experience and principles or concepts might be approached through a process of guided analysis of a local environment" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 135). Teachers are the guides that assist students in making large concepts relevant to the world of students, but then make the relevance that they discover practical for students to apply outside of the classroom. Smith guides teachers in how they can help students create experiences, for example, "reminiscing is an almost universal technique for extracting meaning from experience," in addition, "exploring one's past and the events in which it is imbedded can lead to understanding through the discovery of somethings that are timeless" (qtd. in Steltenpohl et al. 136). Once content is presented, students must reminisce on the levels learned and topics covered. Within this reflection, students then need to make connections to their own lives connecting the content to their own experiences and then

noting how the new information will enhance their understanding or help assist in shaping a new perspective.

Drawing from John Dewey, Nel Noddings highlights how "the more a teacher is aware of the past experiences of students, of their hopes, desires, chief interests, the better will be understood the forces at work that need to be directed and utilized for the formation of reflective habits" (*Philosophy of Education* 49). The past experiences that students have had will guide the experiences and activities that teachers will introduce to students throughout the process of learning. Ultimately, the new knowledge they gain will take the students from a place of comfort and move them to new ideas where they must implement new knowledge in new experiences. Affirming this idea, Saul Alinsky, in his book *Rules for Radicals,* shares how "men don't like to step abruptly out of the security of familiar experience; they need a bridge to cross from their own experience to a new way" (xxi-xxii). In connection with Parker Palmer and Brene Brown's idea of fear with learning, Alinsky reveals how students will remain in spaces of comfort, until they are guided into new knowledge. Teachers act as the bridge that connects students with past experiences to new ideas and activities. In this bridging of the old and new together, students gain a new understanding of how the world and ideas vary depending on the perspective in which you take. To further this idea, Rosalie Shaw reflects on the work of Maxine Greene and highlights how "human beings define themselves through the projects with which they become involved. By means of engagement with a project, the attitude of wide-awakeness develops and contributes to the choice of actions that lead to self-formation. A project means the intentionalist visions or purpose of making or constructing the self and the world" (Shaw). Therefore, for students to construct meaning

in their lives and world, they must be engaged in action-based experiences that allow them to incorporate content material with reflection.

In light of experiential teaching, it must be noted that all experiences of students are not all enriching, but many times students have situations in their lives in which serious pain has been experienced. Therefore, teachers must be equipped with tools that help students process, heal, and engage out of the pain that they have encountered. Within the book, *Experiential Learning: A Best Practice Handbook for Educators and Trainers,* Beard and Wilson share how "it is the case that many painful experiences remain with us for the rest of our lives and become reference points that we take into account before acting again in a similar manner. Indeed, these painful experiences may act as blocks to learning through preventing us from acting in a particular way" (25). Within learning, some students might find themselves disengaged because it requires them to go back to the place of pain, therefore, teachers must work with students to understand their past and facilitate in helping them engage in healing processes. Beard and Wilson introduce the work of Robin Snell in his article, "Experiential Learning at Work: Why Can't it be Painless?" and present the model that he created in helping teachers understand how to help students learn from distress. The model below encourages teachers to engage with reluctant learners, specifically when engaging in controversial issue discussed by Nel Noddings, so that they can help locate the area of hindrance and work towards overcoming that barrier with care and understanding.

Source of distress	Suggested method of coping	Means of learning
(In general this is a psychological blow, shock or jolt.)	(In general this is to resist responding impulsively, and to find breathing space or seek counselling, if possible.)	(In general this is drawing lessons.)
A big mistake	Discharge anger or hurt in a private place.	Admit the mistake and look for causes.
Being overloaded/ feeling incompetent	Reduce the load and avoid dwelling on one's inadequacy.	Focus on specific improvement.
Being pressurized to violate one's principles	Come to terms with there being no easy resolution.	Identify what one *really* wants and values.
Impasse	Discharge frustration in a private place.	Listen to the arguments from opponents.
Injustice	Avoid self-blame and resist taking impulsive revenge.	Identify the values offended and adopt them.
Losing out	Discharge one's disappointment in a private place.	Admit that the defeat was fair and study the victor's approach.
Being attacked	Respond assertively.	Study the mentality of one's opponents.

Figure 2: A guide for helping students locate pain and work towards finding meaning in learning through their experience (Bear and Wilson 26).

Within the classroom, experiences need to be created in which students can process the information they have been given through forms of reflection, collaboration, or practical expressions of care for others. When students are given opportunities to apply the information that they have gained, learning will become meaningful because it will result in a product that students have created. Creating meaningful experiences for students requires the teacher to understand past experiences of students and then connect

content with new experiences that help students process the information. Naturally, within the experiential learning process, students will deal with their heart, the areas of both hope and pain, but must be given the tools to learn from both. Students who reflect on the past will have the confidence and understanding as they move forward in future decisions. Students of character are not perfect but are actively involved in learning from their past as they approach new content.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

An individual's life is built around their knowledge, heart, relationships, and experiences working in conjunction with one another as they make decisions and interact with others. Meaning in life is found when a person has a strong sense of purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth" (Baumeister 32). These basic needs required to live a life of meaning are ultimately found within a person's identity. An individual's story is crafted around the satisfaction of their core needs. Finding meaningful connections, experiences, and ideas will have little importance unless the heart is engaged. Teachers have the opportunity to not only teach a student, but to help students foster meaning in their lives as they invest in each students' understanding of their purpose, value, capabilities, and identity in the classroom, but also in the world around them. The instructional model presented to teachers throughout this research is transformational because it not only strives to equip content capable students, but students who are holistically developed and have found meaning in their learning. When students find meaning in learning, they will begin to find meaning in life around them. The model is focused on developing students of character, therefore, meaning will be found in teaching and learning because the new aim of learning is not on results, but rather on personal changes introduced by the content and reflective practice. What this model presents that is unique is the high focus on student voice, story, and reflection. The students are at the center of the educational process, therefore should be the main focus of teachers in the classroom. Represented in Figure 1.2, the model is a process, continually moving towards character development of all students. Each strand does not work alone, but rather each strand is connected with

that of the other. The model outlines the needs teachers must focus on in the classroom to develop capable students.
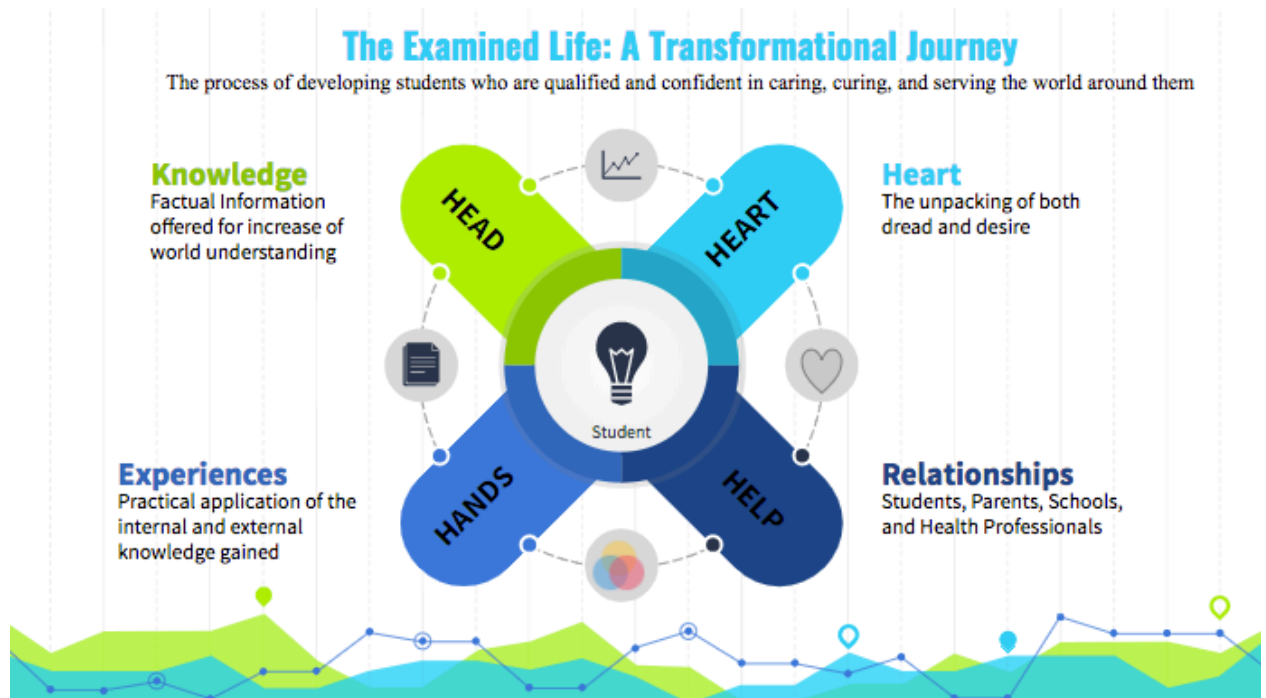
Implementation of the Model:

Figure 1.2: The proposed instructional model encourages teachers to focus not solely on the content required but focus on the process of learning that sparks student interests and engagement.

When a teacher is first introduced to her students at the beginning of the year, it is vital for the teacher to create a culture of care. Before learning can begin, trust must be built through the sharing of stories and experiences. As the teacher engages with her students, she shares what she is passionate about (content, hobbies, why she chose teaching, family, education background). This information helps students gain insight into the teacher's life, making her real and human. In addition, the teacher must be vulnerable with students, sharing places of weakness, but also areas in which they desire

to grow. The teacher will give insight into her relationships and experiences that have shaped her story. As students begin to understand the teacher, they begin to allow the teacher into their lives. In addition to having the teacher share her story, it is necessary for the teacher to gather this same information on the students so that all lessons, discussions, and intentional conferences can be focused on students' needs, identities, and experiences. On a very basic level, teachers could pass out various forms that help students process their lives and stories. This would enable teachers to have a broad understanding of their classroom culture and the various directions that the classroom could go based on the student data. Teachers must ask their students what interests them in the subject, what they enjoy or find more difficult, helping guide the knowledge strand. In a similar way, teachers must understand the motivations, goals, fears, values, and beliefs that students hold, which supports the heart strand. Thirdly, teachers need to understand how students relate to others: their family, friends, or world. It is imperative that students reflect on this aspect, so the teacher can understand how to best assist her students who might be struggling with home issues or actions of care. Lastly, teachers must have an overview of the students' life: their experiences and perspectives on the world. As teachers learn from their students and about what makes them unique, teachers are offered continual opportunities to look for ways to care for each student uniquely. The strategy can be used to receive information about each student so that the teacher can begin to understand the specific needs and personalities of all students, ultimately teaching to the heart of all students. When teachers can draw upon information they know about students in their conversations and personally point to content that was inspired by a student's story, students are going to feel intentional invested in. Ultimately, taking

time to invest and listen to the stories of students creates a feeling of empowerment within the students. Once the teacher has gathered information about her students, it is imperative that the teacher draw on the needs for a meaningful life and be focused on addressing the needs with each student, reminding them that they have value and purpose in the class because of the unique story and perspective that they offer the class. Within this process, throughout the year, students must have time to reflect on their life and periodically set goals for themselves so that they can be engaged in the process of change and personal development. As students log and reflect throughout the year, it will be powerful for the students to witness how they have grown in all strands.

The beauty in this transformational strategy is that it has various methods in which it can be used within every content classroom. Every day, teachers can use this model to create lesson plans. For each lesson, teachers must ensure that they include each strand. For example, the teacher must have a target content focus that the class will develop an understanding of through strategies. Once the students understand the relevance that the information has on their lives and have grappled with the content, teachers can provide space for students to work with partners as they experience an activity that further develops the content material. This process can be repeated daily for effective reflection, collaboration, and learning to occur. In addition, when teachers plan out units, they can plan with this strategy in mind. The teacher must address what are the content needs that her students must master. Once the specific standards have been chosen, the teacher will create the classroom curriculum based on student interests and themes of care. Once a theme has been chosen, the teacher will plan lessons that enable students to reflect on prior knowledge of theme, while sharing their specific experience

with the topic. As students engage in the content and have reflected on their own lives, true learning emerges when they are given the opportunity to learn from others in their class, which provides a perfect opportunity to practice caring relationships through listening and understanding. Within the caring relationships, students will work towards engaging in a practical experience that connects the content with their own lives, making learning engaging because they understand how their knowledge will not only affect their grades, but their lives outside of school.

The instructional model is a pathway towards character education because it is rooted in caring for the soul of a child. Now that an overview of how the model can be used in the classroom, I will address specific strategies that teachers can use that will enhance each strand and engage student interest. To guide students in the process of internalizing knowledge, I draw from the strategy designed by Donna Ogle called the KWL chart within her article, "K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text." The three-step process helps students assess what they already know about a topic, what they want to know, and when the concept is covered, what the student learned (Ogle 564). The chart helps students visualize the process of learning and practically shows them how they have knowledge, they just have to deepen their understanding to make connections, solve equations, or understand theories. Drawing back on the idea of allowing students to understand why they are learning a specific topic addressed by Steven Farr is supported through the work of Donna Ogle, "teachers are instructed to begin by telling children the gist of what they are going to read about and why they should read this particular information" (564). Guiding the students

through content and visually representing what the students gain through the process is powerful in building understanding that is rooted on prior knowledge.

Engaging the heart has various levels. Because students have fears, teachers must engage with their students in their fear through strategies, encouragement, and care. A model that is beneficial for helping students engage their hearts is helping student process their emotions. Marshall Rosenberg, in his book *Life-Enriching Education*, shares how "in expressing our feelings, it helps to use words referring to specific emotions in contrast to words that make vague, general statements" (23). This process of reshaping the students' language will be tedious and require continual reminders, but when students learn to express their true emotion, the teacher can better engage their need. In addition, if a student does not understand an idea, the words that Rosenberg provides will assist in helping students process what they are not understanding. In addition to placing a specific emotion word with their feeling, the students will have to articulate why they are feeling this way. This process develops critical thinking, while also helping students' self-assess their need and find answers to their questions, concerns, or needs. In addition to emotional language, within teaching a concept, teachers can engage students by having them reflect and process what they are thinking, showing how they are interpreting the information from their perspective. Lastly, connecting to learning styles that are presented by Chickering and Schlossberg, teachers can engage the hearts of students by connecting with their specific style of learning. As teachers connect concepts to the lives of students, teachers can implement learning style stations that emphasize reflection through application of knowledge gained. Furthermore, relationships are built through conversation. Teachers are a huge component of modeling how effective communication

looks. For students to work in relationship with other students, they must understand the concept of how their learning is not for themselves, but for the benefit of others. With this in mind, students would begin to understand that when they share they are helping others gain new knowledge from their perspective and experiences. A strategy to track student growth through relationships is called, I Know, They Know, We Know Together. It is a simple process, but helps students connect the knowledge they have with that of others to help assist in answering a question, solving a problem, or presenting new information. Within the book, *Difficult Conversations,* various authors collaborated together to outline the strategies of individuals who work well with groups, even under pressure. The resounding idea that guiding their findings was that "productive relationships are best developed when we each build awareness of the limits of our perspective" (qtd. in Farr 214). They share a chart that lists: what I am aware of within myself, my own intentions, what I am up against, how others come across to me, other people's impact on me, and how others are contributing to problems. Rarely to we assess others' intentions, what others are up against, how I come across to others, my impact on others, and how I may be contributing to problems. When we look from the perspective of others, our whole view of their lives would shift, creating empathy and understanding. Students of character understand their perspective yet are willing to view from the vantage point of their friends from class and change their actions based on the information gained from their reflection. Lastly, creating a classroom that is focused on the experience of learning is pivotal in the character process. The themes that guide the care curriculum should guide each unit. Once a unit is complete, the students should have the opportunity to practice the theme within the classroom or around the school. When the themes not only become

ideas discussed, but practical actions, learning will become meaningful and a part of

student's lives, not just their thoughts.

Barriers in Implementation

The holistic model that is presented is rooted in the needs of each student, thus,

each classroom is created based on what the specific population of students need. As a

teacher, it must be remembered that complete development of a student may not be seen

at the end of a year, but rather is built upon consistent investment throughout a students'

whole academic career. With that being said, some students may not desire to directly

open up to the care content that is taught. Each student outcome will not be the same, but

the material that they learn and interact with will be consistent. The instructional model

has various ways in which it can be used. For example, teachers can gauge a student's

interests, passions, and academic needs during the first week of school and use the results

throughout each lesson and activity, so teachers can ensure that each student's needs and

interests are taken into consideration. On the other hand, the model can become a

counseling tool, helping students locate places of pain and helping the students process

their emotions in light of the curriculum and content. Teachers can use the model to best

suit their students, their content, and the academic needs of their students.

Assessments are foundational within education because they help guide student

need and development. Within an assessment-based education, it can be perceived that

education's focus is on information and not transformation. Assessment will always be a

part of education, but what the presented instructional model offers is that of a

transformational model that is rooted in student need. Therefore, the assessments will be

met, but be taught through activities and experiences that engage the students' hearts. The

model does not eliminate information for the sake of transformation, but rather merges the two together to create students of holistic development. Knowledge remains rigorous, but is guided by student interest, themes of care, and personal reflection. Teachers are not only encouraged to teach their students, but rather integrate practical life application through experiences and interactions with others to make the content real. While the instructional model might lend itself to the English and history content area, the model can be implemented within any content. The heart of the model is to implement student needs and stories within the chosen curriculum that is grounded on themes of care that are practiced through relationships and practical real-life experiences. Within each classroom, the way in which the model will be used may vary, but the basic structure will be used within all content areas. The hope is that teachers will use the model as a guide as they are preparing their lessons and units that ultimately engage their students with activities that are relevant and personal.

Future Implications

Students are at the center of the instructional model, yet it is the teachers who are the driving force behind the implementation of each strand. Therefore, teachers must become the focus of investment and training so that they can be most effective in the process of developing students. Before students can engage in the model, teachers must also be transformed. Pulling from the research of Parker Palmer, teachers must live out vulnerability alongside of students. If the teacher uses the model to develop the heart of their students, then the teacher must actively be engaged in the same reflective process.

When care becomes the main aim of public education, there must be a shift within public understand that caring for the teacher is just as important. Teacher training

programs, such as colleges or online programs must emphasize and model to teachers the ongoing benefits of reflection, learning, and communication with other colleagues. The main aim of teacher training should focus on producing teachers of character whose primary goal is to instill in students a love for content and an enthusiasm for the meanings of life. When teachers experience transformation, their classrooms have a direct effect. Connecting back with the goals that are addressed in the United States Department of Education character education plan, the plan outlines how to successfully implement character education, schools are encouraged to "provide training for staff on how to integrate character education into the life and culture of the school" ("Character Education"). Training for teachers means providing professional development opportunities within the school that teachers can participate in that encourage self-reflection and student-centered teaching. If professional development is the essential piece that schools need to focus on to create classrooms of character, the value of training must be understood by each school administration and all school parents. Hayes Mizell has published an article, "Why Professional Development Matters," and sheds light on the value and importance of incorporate professional development within schools and the benefits that are produced. When teachers and staff are engaged in conversations and training "their ongoing development creates a culture of learning throughout the school and supports educators' efforts to engage students in learning" (Mizell 18). Furthermore, "all effective teaching is the result of study, reflection, practice, and hard work. A teacher can never know enough about how a student learns, what impedes the student's learning, and how the teacher's instruction can increase the student's learning" (Mizell 18). In response, "school system administrators [in addition to parents and citizens] must

encourage and support each school in taking responsibility for professional development and must provide the time and facilitation for educators to learn what they need to know to address students' learning problems" (Mizell 19). Creating space for development of teacher's practices, skills, and character are essential in meeting state standards on both the content and character level. Each school's professional development plan will look different based on student need, but all schools will be unified in that they all are teaching students about how to care for one another as a society using their specific gifts and stories.

With character education being the primary goal of both the United States and teachers, this model must be introduced to teachers as they are in their teacher training programs. Future teachers must address the areas of knowledge, heart, relationships, and experiences within their own learning so that they are fully equipped to developed skills of character within their students. Teacher training programs must dramatically shift to help prepare teachers with care curriculum and guidance in how to implement themes of care within their lessons for each content area. When schools are working from a place of care, the excitement for the material will change because the focus is moved away from results, but to enquiry and engagement with finding meaning the process of life. Thus, colleges must be the target focus in preparing teachers with the tools for character education, but then the responsibility of the school administration to provide continual training for teachers so that they are engaged in holistic processes as they develop alongside their students.

To emphasize the power in meaningful learning, I would like to draw from the metaphor presented from the classic novel, Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury. Within this

text, a whole community is devoid of knowledge, living without access to books. Therefore, the protagonist must work towards fighting against the created culture towards a life of critical thinking and reflection. The character who assists the protagonist in the novel shares "I sometimes think drivers don't know what grass is, or flowers, because they never see them slowly . . . If you sowed a driver a green blue, Oh yes! He'd say, that's grass! A pink blur! That's a rose garden! White blurs are house. Brown blurs are cows. My uncle drove slowly on a highway once. He drove forty miles an hour and they jailed him for two days. Isn't that funny, and sad, too?" (Bradbury 9). The character, Clarisse observes culture and realizes how fast people are moving, and completely missing out on the beauty of life and reprimanded when moving to slow. In a similar way, one could draw a similar connection to education. Learning sometimes is like a fast-moving car, giving little space for students to observe, enjoy, and witness the connections learning has to their own lives. Therefore, the call for all educators is the idea of slowing down, noticing the small details of students and appreciate the beauty that comes from learning, engaging, and experiences. The value that educators put on education is the value that students will have on their experience within school. School must be enjoyed by the teachers for the students to find enjoyment, school must be a place of safety for teachers so that students feel safe, and school must be a place where teachers of character thrive so that students of character can develop.

Education is a holistic endeavor because it seeks not only to develop students, but teachers, administrators, and communities. When schools are devoted to building a sense of care within their classrooms, the results will lead to caring families and caring communities. To summarize, building caring communities begins with the modeling of

teachers and parents in the lives of students, dialogue about care within the classroom, practical application of care, and confirmation in the lives of students when they live out the values and lessons of care (*Philosophy of Education* 230). Therefore, to establish schools that are grounded in character reform, teachers must be equipped with the resources and knowledge of how to develop students who care for themselves and the world around them. Giving meaning and purpose to student's lives is invited through the instructional model of teaching that has been presented. To understand the work ahead, schools and teachers, must go back to the goals outlined in the U.S. Department of Education document which outline how one of their main goals is to "promote strong character and citizenship among our nation's youth" (qtd. in "Character Education"). Therefore, universities and school administrations must begin the effort to transform teaching through a holistic model focusing on student's hearts and needs and developing curriculum based on the information given. Between K-12, each student will spend around 2,340 days within school. With the support of the instructional model focused on holistic development of students, the 2,340 days students spend in school would be working towards transformation as they develop into intellectual citizens who have a heart and desire to care for the world. Education is a process of transformation.

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