

Fort Worth school's behavior program taught overseas



Fifth-grader DeLanie Wood puts the pen on the Honorable Character chart after getting a mark for one of the 14 attributes. STAR-TELEGRAM/DARRELL BYERS

CLASS LESSON

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Twenty years ago, Bethesda Christian School created the Honorable Character program to recognize students for good behavior.

Two years ago, the school began selling the program materials, reaching 61 schools in 10 states.

Now, Honorable Character has gone international.

Representatives from the north Fort Worth school taught the program last month to teachers in Donetsk, Ukraine. The program includes a wall chart that lists 14 characteristics, such as diligence, service and wisdom. Teachers make a note on the chart when a student displays a particular trait. For example, one might receive a mark for "service" for helping to clean tables.

Recording the action helps reinforce the lesson, former Bethesda teacher Lorie Shelley said.

The program was exported when Shelley's sister, Karen Davis, discussed it with her boss, Roger Thompson, president of the humanitarian organization Good News International Foundation in Okemah, Okla.

The administration of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko wants to incorporate Christian ethics into schools and asked Good News for assistance, Thompson said. Good News thought the Honorable Character program would fit well.

Bethesda donated the rights to Good News so it could publish and distribute the program in Ukraine and Russia. Good News translated the program to Ukrainian and Russian. Shelley trained teachers in August in Ukraine. Thompson and Bethesda teacher Nancy Berman will visit there Sept. 18-29 to make a DVD and teach at a conference.

Bethesda will soon print preschool and public school versions of the Honorable Character program. Then it may print versions in Chinese, French and Spanish.

Thompson liked the Honorable Character program because its components are affirmed in daily life. He said that Bethesda's students often greet him when he visits.

"This school is different from many schools you walk through," Thompson said.

Donetsk, which has more than a million residents, is one of the largest cities in Ukraine. When the Berlin Wall came down, Thompson said, pictures of topless women appeared on shopping bags, which were purchased on the street in Ukraine — although the use of those bags has waned. Shelley said she was also surprised to see a large number of billboards advertising cigarettes and alcohol.

"It's really a country that is crying out for morality," Shelley said. "I think that a lot of times that people don't realize they need something because they haven't had it before."



Nancy Berman reads with fifth-grader Bo Day, left, during class Wednesday at Bethesda Christian School in Fort Worth. STAR-TELEGRAM/LAURIE L. WARD



Nancy Berman quizzes her fifth-grade class on Middle East geography Wednesday. Berman will travel to Ukraine to make a DVD and teach at a conference. STAR-TELEGRAM/LAURIE L. WARD



The teachers at one school often use positive reinforcement, such as giving smiley faces to its students, who are orphans ages 6 to 16.

The response from that school's 100 teachers was overwhelmingly positive, Shelley said.

But one teacher asked a question, prompting her colleagues to shake their heads and roll their eyes. The interpreter relayed the question to Shelley: How can you come and teach us about honorable character when American movies don't show anything about honorable character?

Shelley answered that movies often go for sensationalism and

shock value. She said she wished she could take them to the United States.

"What they would see is a different America than they see in the movies," she said.

Despite the differences between the two countries, their teachers share a common goal.

"There are no boundaries in teaching," Shelley said. "We love our children and want the best for them."

www.goodnewsif.org
www.honorablecharacter.com

Characteristics

1. Honor
2. Obedience
3. Diligence
4. Wisdom
5. Kindness
6. Self-control
7. Orderliness
8. Service
9. Attentiveness
10. Cooperation
11. Initiative
12. Honesty
13. Forgiveness
14. Responsibility

SOURCE: Bethesda Christian School

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