Moral and Character Education

Three major issues in the education of young people today

Vision

Identification of what is possible for both self and society; includes the discovery and/or defining of one's life mission and desired lifestyle

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Competence

Development of the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills necessary for success in a given society or culture

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Character

The moral quality and direction of one's decisions and behavior

Definitions of Character

The following two definitions provide examples of a normative view of character:

"engaging in morally relevant conduct or words, or refraining from certain conduct or words"

Wynne, E., & Walberg, H. (Eds.). (1984). <u>Developing character: Transmitting knowledge</u>. Posen, IL: ARL.

Definitions of Character

The following two definitions provide examples of a normative view of character:

"a complex set of relatively persistent qualities of the individual person, and generally has a positive connotation when used in discussions of moral education"

Pritchard, I. (1988). Character education: Research prospects and problems. <u>American Journal of Education, 96</u>(4), 469-495.

Importance of Character

Scholarly debate on moral development and character formation extends to ancient times

- **Aristotle's <u>Nichomacean Ethics</u>**

- **Socrates' <u>Meno</u>**

Importance of Character

Major thinkers in Western Civilization have been concerned with moral and character development

- **John Locke, 17th century English philosopher**

- **John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, 19th century English philosophers**

- **John Dewey, 20th century American philosopher and educator**

Impacting Moral & Character Development

Four major questions need to be addressed when focusing on character development:

1. **What is good character?**

2. **What causes or prevents good character?**

3. **How can good character be measured ?**

4. **How can good character best be developed?**

Components of Character
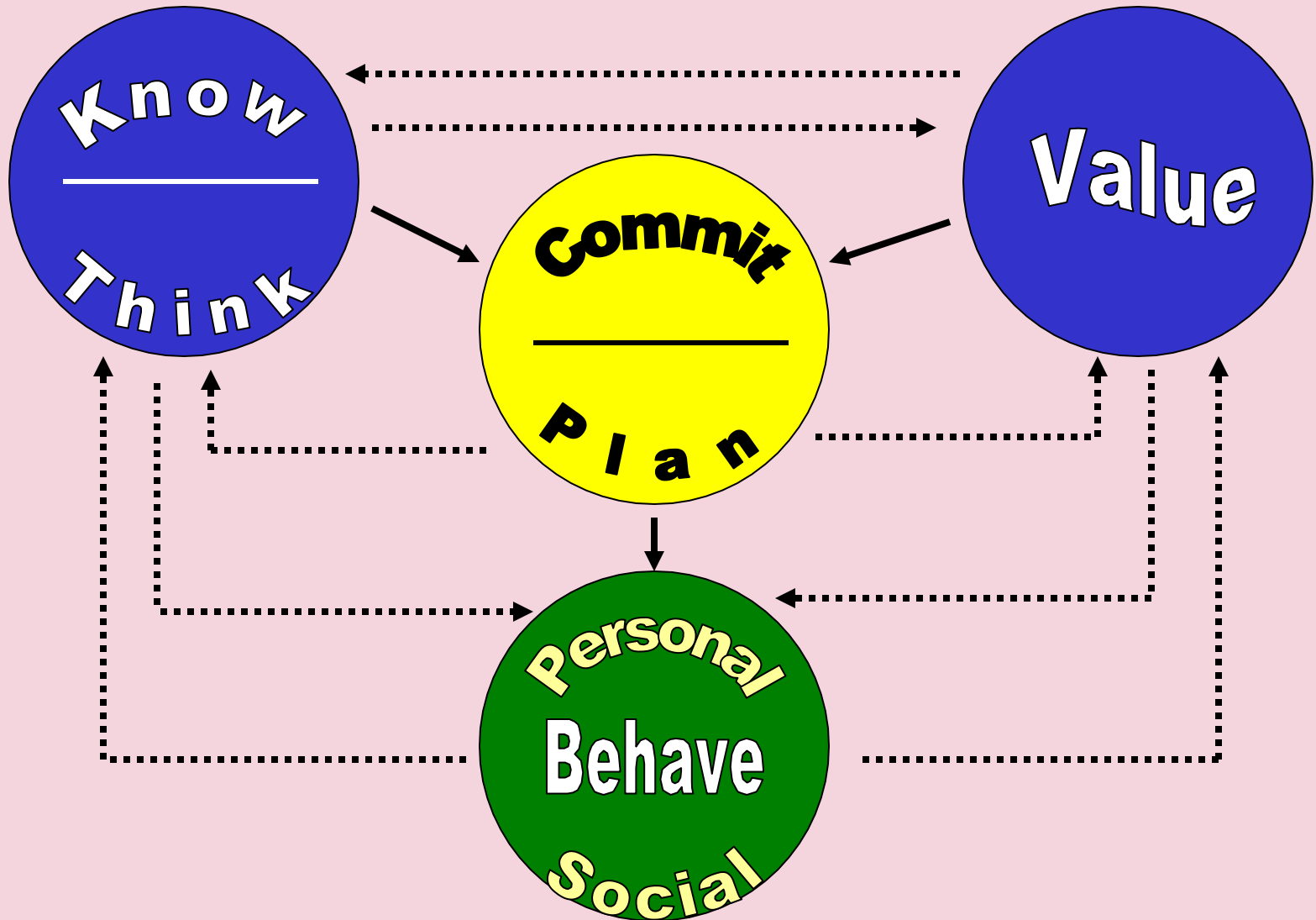
Impacting Moral & Character Development

1. What is good character?

Personal

- **honest and truthful**

- **autonomous**

- **responsible**

- **self-management and self-discipline**

- **courageous**

- **integrity**

Impacting Moral & Character Development

1. What is good character?

Social

- **sociable**
- **benevolent**
- **compassionate**
- **courteous**
- **trustworthy**

Impacting Moral & Character Development

2. What causes or prevents good character?

1. heredity

2. early childhood experience
3. modeling by important adults & older youth
4. peer influence
5. general physical and social environment
6. communications media
7. content taught in the schools, churches, etc.
8. specific situations and roles

Campbell, V., & Bond, R. (1982). Evaluation of a character education curriculum. In D. McClelland (ed.), <u>Education for values</u>. New York: Irvington Publishers.

Impacting Moral & Character Development

3. How can good character be measured ?

- Cognitive knowledge
- Age appropriate cognitive and moral development
- Values expressed
- Commitments expressed
- Written plans
- Personal and social overt behavior

  student discipline; student suicide rates; crimes; pregnancy rates of teenage girls; academic effort; prosocial activities

Impacting Moral & Character Development

4. How can good character best be developed?

Effective communication and shared values among families, schools, religious organizations, and communities

Impacting Moral & Character Development

4. How can good character best be developed?

Schools effectively impacting morals and character are:

1. directed by adults who exercise their authority toward faculty and students in a firm, sensitive, and imaginative manner, and who are committed to both academics and pupil character development;

Wynne, E. (1989). Transmitting traditional values in contemporary schools. In L. Nucci, <u>Moral development and character education: A dialogue</u> (pp. 19-36). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.