

CIRCLE OF COURAGE KNOWLEDGE BASE & LITERATURE REVIEW

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The Circle of Courage began as a collaboration of three professors who were then colleagues at Augustana College, a liberal arts institution located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Dr. Larry Brendtro is a licensed psychologist and special educator who had formerly been president of Starr Commonwealth serving troubled youth in Michigan and Ohio; he continues to serve as Dean of The Starr Commonwealth Research Council. Dr. Martin Brokenleg has graduate degrees in educational psychology and theology and currently is Professor and Director of Native Ministries at the Vancouver School of Theology in British Columbia. Dr. Steve Van Bockern is Professor of Education at Augustana where he heads the Reclaiming Youth Institute. The Circle of Courage was first introduced in the book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* published in 1990. A revised edition with an introduction by Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa was published in 2002. With the Circle of Courage as its philosophical foundation, Reclaiming Youth International was founded and is dedicated to the development and dissemination of proactive policies, training, research, programs, and strategies to better serve children and youth who are in conflict with family, school, and community. (The Reclaiming Youth Network, 2007).

For more than fifteen thousand years of civilization, the First Nations people of North America have embraced a system of child development and rearing based on care, respect, and courage. In many tribal languages a separate word for art, education, and spirit cannot be found (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2001). These words are intertwined because they are an integral part of the rich fabric of one's life (Brokenleg, 2001). The word for children in Lakota Sioux (*wakanyeja*) means "sacred beings" (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003). Native society sees the education of children as the sacred duty of all; each child begins as a student and later becomes a teacher.

In 1988, the Child Welfare League of America asked Dr. Larry Brendtro, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, and Dr. Steven Van Bockern to present their research on Native American principles. It was at this international conference in Washington, D.C. that their synthesis on tribal wisdom on child rearing called the Circle of Courage (COC) was presented. This anthropological comparison of Western and Native culture reveals a highly sophisticated system of child rearing based on clear democratic principles (Brokenleg, 2001). The Circle of Courage model serves as a unifying theme when looking at different research perspectives. The power of the model is in its simplicity. The Circle of Courage is not a program that can be structured, standardized or commercially sold for a specific situation. The Circle of Courage is not just a theory or strategy; it is more a way of thinking. Dr. Martin Brokenleg declares, "Circle of Courage is an intentionally creative activity" (2001).

According to the philosophy of the Circle of Courage, a person without self-worth from any background or culture would be susceptible to social, psychological, and learning problems (Brendtro et al., 2002). Therefore, to avoid such problems in members of a society, certain criteria must be met within each individual (Brendtro et al.). The Circle of Courage consists of the four criteria that promote positive development. These will in turn create a universal environment for all who live in a community (Brendtro & Larson, 2004), which include belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1990) make a direct connection to

three of the four COC quadrants when they list three universal human needs as: autonomy (independence), relatedness (belonging), and competence (mastery) (as cited in Kohn, 2006). Kohn (2006) further explains autonomy as being self-determination, relatedness as "a need for connection to others, belonging, love and affirmation", and competence as the satisfaction we derive from "acquiring skills and putting them to use" (p. 9-10). Three of the four basic human needs that William Glasser (1986) proposes also correspond to the COC framework: freedom (independence), love (belonging) and power (mastery). Carol Ann Tomlinson's (2002) identification of needs that every teacher must address in order to make learning irresistible also coincide with the COC quadrants: affirmation (belonging), contribution (generosity), purpose (independence) power (mastery) and challenge (independence).

Children are keenly aware of where they stand in the school community and of how they are perceived by other students and teachers. As confirmed by Mitchell Beck (1998), the Circle of Courage is a new pedagogical model that promotes a sense of belonging, community and serving by strengthening teacher-student relationships. He also believes that integrating cooperative learning strategies into the everyday curriculum so students have daily opportunities to interact with each other in significant ways is imperative. It is his hope that by integrating the COC concepts, our schools will be more supportive and compassionate places where everyone belongs and succeeds.

The principles of the Circle of Courage are the underpinnings upon which the markers of resilience are placed. From this base, the foundations of self-worth can help to create a well grounded child. Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2003, p.24) use this chart to summarize the correlations between the Circle of Courage, the markers of resilience, and the foundations for self-worth and self esteem.

Circle of Courage	Markers of Resilience	Foundations of Self-Worth
Belonging	Attachment	Significance
Mastery	Achievement	Competence
Independence	Autonomy	Power
Generosity	Altruism	Virtue

The Spirit of Belonging

"The universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust so that a child can say, 'I am loved.'" (Brendtro et al., 2002, p.137).

In Native American and First Nations cultures, significance was nurtured in communities of belonging. Lakota anthropologist Ella Deloria described the core value of belonging in these simple words: "Be related, somehow, to everyone you know." Treating others as kin forges powerful social bonds that draw all into relationships of respect. Theologian Marty observed that throughout history the tribe, not the nuclear family, always ensured the survival of the culture. Even if parents died or were not responsible, the tribe was always there to nourish the next generation. (The Reclaiming Youth Network, 2007).

Can children succeed in a school in which they do not feel they belong? According to Kohn (2006) most children fail not because they lack the necessary cognitive skills, but because they feel isolated, detached or alienated from others or from the educational process. There are many factors that place students at risk, but the seed is planted in school the first time they feel unwelcome.

Humans need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, whether it comes from a large social group or small social connections. By nature, human beings are social creatures. We are biologically intended to live, work, play and succeed together within groups. We are deeply influenced by others and how they treat us. Brokenleg states that belonging, the ability to have a greater closeness and trust of others, is the most crucial of the four principles within the Circle of Courage (November, 2001).

Belonging is the necessary thread that strengthens the daily fabric of our lives. According to Perry (n.d., ¶ 1), our relationships create the glue of a family, community and society. He states that "this capacity to form and maintain relationships is the most important trait of humankind — without it, none of us would survive, learn, work, or procreate". In her groundbreaking research gathered on poverty, Ruby Payne (2005) declares that "for students and adults from poverty, the primary motivation for their success will be in their relationships" (p.112). She defines successful relationships as occurring when "emotional deposits are made to the student, emotional withdrawals are avoided, and students are respected" (p.111). She continues to advocate for the importance of establishing belonging by recommending building relationships that include support systems, caring about students, being role models and insisting upon successful behaviors for school. Payne explains: Relationships always begin as one individual to another. First and foremost in all relationships with students is the relationship between each teacher and student, then between each student and each administrator, and finally, among all of the players, including student-to-student relationships. (p.111)

Alfie Kohn's research on motivation and school success is predicated on a caring environment where children feel like they belong. In his article, Unconditional Teaching, Kohn (2005) states that, "teaching the whole child requires that we accept students for who they are rather than for what they do" (p.23). He also stresses how necessary it is for students to feel unconditionally (no strings attached) accepted by their teachers. One of Kohn's most explicit messages to educators is that "children who know they're valued irrespective of their accomplishments often end up accomplishing quite a lot" (p.22). Everyday in classrooms, children revisit the idea of belonging. In his book, Nobody Left to Hate, Elliot Aronson (2000) proposes that the school's climate "can play a vital role in helping students develop emotional mastery as well as academic mastery" (p.91). Aronson describes how we need to restructure schools to foster cooperation rather than competition. He declares that students won't learn to respect and accept one another by simply being told to. They must have structured opportunities where they interact with one another in respectful ways on a daily basis. Rachel Kessler (1998), the author of The Soul of Education, in an article about how to nourish students' spirituality in the public schools, asserted "Students yearn for deep connections to themselves,

to others, and to nature or a higher power" (pp.11-12). She discussed the importance of forming deep connections in order for students to develop compassion for others.

Kohn (2006) suggests that it is essential that a trusting relationship between the teacher and student must exist in classrooms where the focus is on creating a community of belonging. Kohn encourages us to think out of the box when it comes to really assuring that all kids feel they belong. He asserts that we need to change our traditional way of disciplining students (the use of rewards and punishments), and instead help students construct moral choices. This requires fierce commitment to undertake the time and energy each day in the classroom to help children problem solve for themselves and with each other how they should behave. This will create a community that emanates belonging. Parker Palmer, an educational activist, prolific author, and itinerant teacher trainer, offers insight into the power of student-teacher connections: all students describe their most memorable teachers as having "...some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied" (p.27).

Dennis Littky, founder of the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (The Met) in Providence, Rhode Island passionately describes belonging at The Met. This school is a very diverse high school that includes a majority of students that have been labeled at risk. It has the highest rates of attendance and college acceptance in the state. Littky (2004) attributes this success to the three "Rs": "You have to start with relationships...the learning must be relevant...and the learning must be rigorous" (p. 116). He details the importance of forming strong teacher-student relationships throughout his book. He describes how his school is organized in ways so that every student is known. He states that:

We understand that in order for school to help a kid learn and succeed, the kid must be known. And you cannot know a kid whose voice you don't listen to, whose interests are a mystery, whose family is excluded, and whose feelings are viewed as irrelevant to the educational process. (p.21)

Brendtro, Mitchell, & Ness (2001) discuss how powerful alliances are needed to build belonging for youth. When they are asked if today's kids are different from past decades they respond: Our response is that today there are many more young people who are unclaimed by adults but are virtually chained to their peers. When adults give up on youth, cultural values are no longer passed on by elders but are relegated to peers. (p. 117)

Through their anecdotal stories, they convey how adults who engage students in significant ways cultivate trust and build self-worth. They also present youth the positive role models that are desperately needed in their daily lives.

Littky (2004) declares the importance of shifting the current priority on assessment back to focusing on the whole student. He succinctly asserts "Yes, all schools must help kids gain knowledge, but they must also help them believe in themselves, believe in others, and love learning" (p.38). Brendtro and Larson (2000) tell us that: "... most schools are so narrowly preoccupied with academic achievement and superficial behavior that they fail to meet the most basic emotional and spiritual needs of children" (p. 173).

Children are intensely aware of their place in the school community and how they are perceived by their teachers and other students. Ella Deloria simply tells us "Be related, somehow, to everyone you know" (as cited in Brendtro et. al, 2002, p.46).

The Spirit of Mastery

"The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated; by learning to cope with the world, the child can say, 'I can succeed.'" (Brendtro et al., 2002, p.137).

Competence in traditional cultures is ensured by guaranteed opportunity for mastery. Children were taught to carefully observe and listen to those with more experience. A person with greater ability was seen as a model for learning, not as a rival. Each person strives for mastery for personal growth, but not to be superior to someone else. Humans have an innate drive to become competent and solve problems. With success in surmounting challenges, the desire to achieve is strengthened. (The Reclaiming Youth Network, 2007).

Along with the need to belong, children also find it vital to have mastery over their environments (Brendtro et al., 2002). Children continuously seek to find competence in schools by demonstrating success in what they do, both socially and academically. If they are deprived of opportunities to succeed or are experiencing constant failure, they will release their frustrations through troubled behaviors (Brendtro et al.).

Children want to see themselves as competent and successful human beings. Mastery is defined as the achievement of learning goals which include developing skills, expanding knowledge, and gaining understanding (Calloway and Green, 1995).

In the Native American culture, developing a sense of mastery is achieved through achieving capability in cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual matters of life. This multi-faceted development was passed down from the elders to the youth (Brendtro et al., 2002). The purpose of the indigenous oral tradition was to teach, not to entertain. The oral traditions and stories were passed down to provide the youth an optimal way of understanding and remembering life's lessons. When youth encountered unfamiliar or challenging situations, they would feel competent because they had heard the stories many times from their elders in the tribe (Brendtro et al.). As children remember, tell, and retell these stories over to others, they begin to cognitively understand the messages (Brendtro et al.). "From earliest times, Native American children were taught to listen to and honor elders and other adults and peers who had skills or knowledge in a particular area" (Brokenleg, 1999, p.195). Native youth were never taught to compete against one another, instead they were taught to master a challenge valued by himself or others that were significant (Brokenleg). Little emphasis was put on personal success. Native American culture affirms competing with others, not against others, which engenders a spirit of camaraderie and mutual respect (Brokenleg). This is quite different from our Western educational system, which thrives on competition with daily winners and losers. A great deal of learning takes place everyday in school; not all of it is academic. Much of it is in the hidden curriculum, things that aren't explicitly taught but are nevertheless learned.

Aronson (2000) expresses his concern about the amount of competitiveness our schools regularly promote. The win-lose mentality is deeply engrained in our educational system. Aronson offers us a different perspective by suggesting we reduce competition and foster cooperation. He contends "...the best way to accomplish this is to restructure students' academic experience" (p. 131). He advocates that "competition be placed in the context of cooperation and caring" (p.168). He describes strategies that involve students working in cooperation with each other or in small groups where each person's contribution is essential. Children learn best when they have

close, respectful relationships with adults who are their attachment figures. "Thus, in cultures and communities where adults are securely bonded to children, learning flourishes" (Brokenleg, 1999, p.196).

In his book, *The Passionate Teacher*, Robert Fried (2001) describes this emphasis on a competition mindset as the *Game of School* which undermines the pursuit of excellence. Students do just enough to get the grade, not really caring about mastery; teachers do just enough to get by, not really caring about mastery. Fried offers common sense solutions that focus on having a strong knowledge of your students, therefore building strong, respectful relationships.

Kohn (2006) writes extensively about how well managed classrooms result in higher achievement and increased learner motivation. He defines this as building a classroom environment, rather than being about classroom management. Kohn powerfully states: "It means shifting from eliciting conformity and ending conflict to helping students become active participants in their own social and ethical development" (p.77).

Brendtro, Mitchell, & Ness (2001) discuss how schools positively impact students from difficult family backgrounds:

Although these students enter school with many problems that interfere with school performance, once they are engaged in learning, the results are remarkable. Even if their family problems cannot be solved, schools give every youth a daily opportunity for success, responsibility, and positive attention. (p.124)

Many of their anecdotal stories describe how successful schools provide an environment where all students can thrive. They also share stories about at-risk students who experience success in alternative schools. When they begin to gain more mastery this leads to positive outcomes in their lives.

Littky (2004) discusses mastery as encouraging teachers and students to participate in ways of thinking about subject matter rather than just learning the subject matter. He proposes designing curriculum based on the students' "...interests and learning goals rather than the traditional 'subject'...this helps them develop skills and ways of learning that will promote success and build their desire to learn more" (p.103). He declares that: "if students are learning through their interests, they won't throw any of it away" (p.108). Littky describes mastery in terms of having powerful learning goals that can be applied to any subject.

In an interview with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, (Marge Scherer, 2002) Csikszentmihalyi talks about mastery as being the intrinsic rewards of hard work and he tells us this is essential to successful human development. He advises helping students to seek out challenging and engaging activities that will create productive adults. He describes mastery as "flow". She quotes him as saying, "Flow describes the spontaneous, effortless experience you achieve when you have a close match between a high level of challenge and the skills to meet the challenge" (p.14). He recommends teachers must make learning relevant if they want to achieve more "flow" for students. Students must be supported for mastery to occur. He suggests tutoring and building up students' strengths to decrease their anxiety, rather than focusing on their weaknesses. As Scherer quoted from her interview with Csikszentmihalyi: "Challenge gives children vision and direction, focus and perseverance. Support gives the serenity that allows them freedom from worry and fear" (p.17).

The Spirit of Independence

Free will is cultivated by responsibility so that the child can say, 'I can have power to make decisions.'" (Brendtro et al., 2002, p.138).

Power in Western culture was based on dominance, but in tribal traditions it meant respecting the right for independence. In contrast to obedience models of discipline, Native teaching was designed to build respect and teach inner discipline. From earliest childhood, children were encouraged to make decisions, solve problems, and show personal responsibility. Adults modeled, nurtured, taught values, and gave feedback, but children were given abundant opportunities to make choices without coercion. (The Reclaiming Youth Network, 2007).

Native wisdom and modern theory appear to be congruent with respect to independence. Native American child-rearing supports the concept of guidance without interference (Brendtro et al., 2002). They teach children what is right; but do not interfere with the children's choices after being taught what is right. Instead of taking over for children when they encounter problems, they allow them to fail and learn from their mistakes and experiences. Instruction is taught through communication and demonstration instead of punishment (Brendtro et al.). The Native philosophy of "unacceptable behavior was met with explanations of how others would be hurt or disappointed by such actions or how persons who acted in cruel or cowardly ways would not have friends" (Brendtro et al., p. 54). This is clearly supported in both Glasser's and Hoffman's studies: "Such studies support an alternative management strategy of 'inductive discipline. This involves communicating to children the effect of their behavior on others while fostering empathy and responsibility" (as cited in Brendtro et al., p. 55). When kids understand the values which are supported by certain rules, they are much more likely to choose responsible decisions for themselves—increasing their sense of independence. More specifically, when students see their teachers modeling behaviors, which uphold the value system of the school, the kids will learn, believe and demonstrate independent, responsible behavior. However, developing independence requires more than just modeling by the adults in their lives.

As young people grow towards independence, they do not lose their need for nurturance. The key is to find balance between allowing children to move toward independence while still providing them with the necessary amount of nurturing (Brendtro et al., 2002). Payne (2002) tells us that resilient kids have caring adults in their lives. She gives a clear picture of how relationships and achievement are inextricably linked as she explains that children learn how to live life from their role models. She insists that "educators have tremendous opportunities to influence...students' lives..." and "...it costs nothing to be an appropriate role model" (p. 25). Littky (2004) reiterates this point several times as he portrays how they strive to foster independence at the school he founded: "At The Met, advisors are an integral part of an environment that allows students the freedom to find themselves with the support and motivation of inspiring adults" (p.14).

Littky's (2004) school wide model represents how important it is to balance affirming a student's individuality and yet having them be respectful of what it means to be a member of a community. He describes how at The Met, they strive to teach each student to develop their own self-discipline: "We believe if the student has self-discipline, then, with effort, he or she can do anything well at any time" (p.92). This school strives to create a respectful school atmosphere and

culture by "respecting children's intelligence, interests, and curiosity and allowing the curriculum to be 'kid-led or 'emergent'...Teachers must trust kids enough to allow them to help direct their own learning" (p.106).

Fried (2001) speaks volumes about the concept of students being independent enough in school to be partners in learning along with the adults in their school. He recommended that it is essential to ask students on a regular basis how they think their teaching and learning could be better activated. He emphasized the elemental necessity of mutual respect between students and teachers. If adults respect each student, then this allows them to be interdependent rather than dependent on what they are told to say, think or do. His representation of independence includes helping students be "players, not spectators" (p. 125).

Brendtro and Larson (2000), contend "Problems are a normal part of living and can be used as tremendous occasions for learning and growth" (p.166). They recommend involving students in their own authentic problem solving on a regular basis as a necessity to developing competent kids. They propose "...developing competence in our youth involves teaching them to cultivate their resilience and creatively cope with life's challenges" (p.166). Becoming a responsible adult is an ongoing challenge for all youth. Students need to be able to learn from their mistakes in a supportive setting. (Brendtro, Mitchell, & Ness (2001) contend that when problems occur this give students opportunities: "...to strengthen coping strategies or teach new skills" (p. 135).

John Taylor Gatto (2002), a former New York State Teacher of the Year, shares some radical views on how to promote independence in authentic ways. He proposes a very different structure for our high schools. He believes one day of the school week should be dedicated to independent study. These independent study topics would be a collaborative decision between parents, students and the faculty. His philosophy proposes that "An educated person writes their own script through life...He is self-determined" (p.225). He gives many examples of how "to breed commitment, a sense of adventure and independence in our children" (p.18). He declared that students: "...need to have lots of first hand experiences, mostly on their own in tough situations. It doesn't do much good to get these experiences second hand from books" (p. 32). He advocates for relational learning where both teachers and the students have their own sense of "...aggressive independence" (p. 167).

Kohn (2005) challenged educators to think beyond traditional discipline and commit to building community by empowering students by giving them autonomy. He asserted "A community not only preserves and nourishes the individuals who compose it but also underscores the relationships among these individuals" (p. 108). He continued to emphasize this autonomy: "Real community is forged out of struggle...students won't always agree on issues, and the fights, arguments, tears and anger are the crucible from which a real community grows" (as cited in Kohn, p.108). One of Kohn's hallmark beliefs that he reiterates often in his research is: "Community is not enough; we need autonomy, too. In fact, when both of these features are present, there is another way to describe the arrangement that results: it is called democracy" (p. 119).

The Spirit of Generosity

Character is cultivated by concern for others so that the child can say, 'I have a purpose for my life.'" (Brendtro et al., 2002, p.138).

Virtue was reflected in the preeminent value of generosity. The central goal in Native American child-rearing is to teach the importance of being generous and unselfish. In the words of a Lakota Elder, "You should be able to give away your most cherished possession without your heart beating faster." In helping others, youth create their own proof of worthiness: they make a positive contribution to another human life. (The Reclaiming Youth Network, 2007).

Generosity is a natural act for young children. Toddlers embrace the act of "helping" another child or adult. When young children see someone hurt they rush to help the other child. They are drawn to a baby that is crying and quickly try to make the baby stop crying and laugh. So it is that altruism is present at birth. Most young children are the first to offer what they have to others and share without reservation.

For Native people, generosity (altruism) is regarded as the highest of virtues. Many stories and examples were told by the elders to demonstrate the importance of unselfish behavior and generosity. Adults naturally modeled generosity on a daily basis. Tribal members continue to share their most cherished possessions in give away ceremonies. Brokenleg (1999) reminds us "...real giving entails sacrifice-if it doesn't cost you something, it is not generosity" (p.66). He contends that this significant definition of generosity creates strong social bonds. "the most frequent repeated saying in our Lakota language is *Mitakuye Oyasin*, which means 'we are all related'" (p. 66).

Altruism is inborn, but we as humans need the recurring modeling and the opportunities to be of value to some person or greater cause. When students have these opportunities to give of themselves this elevates their own sense of worth. This type of generosity looks different than the giving of material things. Giving compliments, stopping to assist a stranger, opening doors for elders, offering to pay for someone else's coffee-these simple random acts of kindness are examples of generosity. Being patience, listening, sharing a story and even apologizing are ways of giving to others our time and interest. Brokenleg (1999) tells us "Even more powerful is the generosity of forgiveness extended to those who have hurt us" (p. 68). Students who have previously hurt others have the chance to rebuild relationships and rebuild the bridges they have burned when they are given opportunities to help others.

Three time New York City Teacher of the Year, John Gatto (2001) contends that students of all ages need to be involved in community service to realize they have much to give and to learn. Not only does he propose one day a week be committed to independent study, but he contends that another day of the school week should be dedicated to community service and that the students themselves must seek out opportunities that are spiritually fulfilling. Schools can play a crucial role in encouraging young people to actively contribute to the well-being of others if they structure ongoing community service. He reiterates this importance of reconnecting students with their communities as a way to develop altruism. For example, children of all ages derive great satisfaction from cutting their hair and donating it to Locks of Love, an organization that makes wigs for children who have lost their hair to cancer.

Linda Lantieri (1999) co-founded the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) that develops this sense of altruism by helping young people realize they have the power to make a difference. This program advocates for school curriculum that develops young people's ethical development along with their intellectual development. Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound,

prioritized service in his educational approach as "He concluded that modern youth suffer from the 'misery of unimportance' and long to be needed in some demanding cause" (as cited in Brendtro, Ness, & Mitchell, 2001, p. 137). Brendtro et al. contend that service projects help students realize that they can influence the world in positive ways.

The creation and implementation of community-service projects by groups thus becomes the heart of the RCCP program. Through it, the children have the opportunity to use team building and conflict resolution skills they have learned and their newly acquired social and leadership skills for positive change—for themselves and the community. (Lantieri, p. 84).

The students in Lantieri's program also choose their project, which she contended is a powerful learning tool in itself. She believes when students are an active part of solving problems in their own community, they become "...hooked on altruism" (p. 87) and they are no longer viewed as future citizens, but as active participants in their community. Her program's success demonstrates that students who are responsible for the care of others become more resilient in coping with their own life challenges. When Dennis Littky (2004) wrote *The Met Implementation Plan* for his newly created school, one of the key principles was to give students authentic experiences such as community service projects that would engage and interest their students. "We have made the community a true partner in the education of our students—and have completely knocked down the walls of our classrooms—to bring the world to our kids and get our kids into the world" (p. 122). He believes that community service projects meet kids' needs and interests. The essential aspect of generosity needs to be a necessary part of how learning in school is structured. Brendtro et al., (2002) explain the growing body of wisdom on how to develop such activities in schools. They describe both short-term projects and projects designed for long-term commitments. Brendtro et al. also insist: "It is always important to involve the young people in developing, executing and evaluating the projects" (p.126).

Each of these educators proposed effective ways to assure that students will have authentic generosity opportunities where students feel autonomous and successful, as well as proud of their accomplishments and satisfied that they made important contributions to their community.

SCHOOLS IMPLEMENTING THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Many schools are choosing to use the Circle of Courage as an educational compass. "Research on effective schools has shown that a key characteristic of programs that foster a good discipline is the creation of a total 'school environment' rather than adopting isolated practices to counter behavioral problems" (as cited in Brendtro et al., 2002, p. 41). As Littky (2004) tells us: "to learn about democracy and about how to participate in and contribute to one, students must be a part of a democratic environment (p.51).

Another elementary school in Sioux Falls, All City Elementary School (ACE) adopted the Circle of Courage framework in the late 1990's as a result of a collaboration with Augustana College faculty and students. This school includes the Circle of Courage in much of the philosophy of their practices. The COC graphic is represented on the Mission/Vision Statement for their program. The teachers use it for the core of their Conflict Management and Safety Patrol training. They strongly believe in its importance in their multi-age activities. The school has had parent training and parent classes incorporating the four COC ideals.

As part of their shared vision to provide their children with quality opportunities to learn and grow, St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain, South Dakota also incorporates the Circle of Courage core philosophy by giving out COC awards to their students. Jarred, an eighth-grade student at St. Joseph's, received the first Father Leo John Dehon Circle of Courage Award. He was nominated by Carol, one of his houseparents.

'Jarred demonstrates generosity by helping out with breakfast every weekend,' said Carol. 'He does this without being asked, and always cheerfully shares with the other boys in the home.' In addition to Generosity, Carol noted Jarred's strengths in other components of the Circle of Courage. 'Jarred has a sense of belonging at St. Joseph's Indian School that prompts him to go out of his way to welcome new boys into the home,' said Carol. 'He gently reminds others of St. Joseph's rules. He has demonstrated mastery by going out for Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), student council, drum group, art lessons and cross country. He is not interested in athletics, but joined the cross country team to participate in physical conditioning.' Carol also notes Jarred has demonstrated independence by never getting involved in the negative behaviors of others, and even encourages them in a positive direction. He is able to do his own thing without worrying if others think he's 'cool' or not. (St. Joseph's Indian School, 2007)

All Saints Episcopal Day School, in Hoboken, New Jersey, a small learning community for children of all faiths, subscribes to the tenets of Circle of Courage.

We nurture academic excellence and social responsibility for early childhood and elementary school children through enriched experiences in an urban community. Further, we believe that every individual - no matter how young - benefits from opportunities to give back to the community. Every student at All Saints participates in a series of service learning projects and exercises their responsibility to the larger community. At All Saints we strive to engage students in the "spiritual conversation" that affects all aspects of our lives - intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, artistic and social. This conversation is inspired by our innovative philosophy, curriculum and educational programs. (All Saints Episcopal Day School, 2007)

Orchard School in the city of South Burlington, Vermont adopted the Circle of Courage framework in response to a collaborative relationship with Dr. Larry Brendtro. Orchard is an inner-city neighborhood school where the school is the focal point of this section of the city and can boast of tremendous community involvement.

In 1999, we were asked as a school, "What does Orchard stand for?" As we formulated our response, we found ourselves drawn to the work of Dr. Brendtro, and his work with children at risk. We adapted the concept of the Circle of Courage from the Native American tradition and changed the words to fit our school. Each year, teachers begin the year by asking students what each one of the key concepts would look like and sound like in their classrooms. In all school assemblies we highlight the four qualities in songs and skits. As our staff develops policies and procedures we use the circle as one of our filters. (Orchard School, 2008)

The Poughkeepsie Circle of Courage Learning Community in Poughkeepsie, New York is a K-6 special education program that provides intense service to the students and families of the Poughkeepsie City School District. They have designed their school as a Circle of Courage Learning Community.

We are a small learning community who believes that students learn not only in a classroom but in real life learning experiences. We actively participate in community events. Our school is modeled on the Circle of Courage philosophy, which promotes positive child and youth development. The central premise of this model is that a set of shared values and common language must be present in order to unify a community of learners. Those shared values include belonging independence, mastery and generosity. This philosophy has been adapted to meet the special needs of students at the Circle of Courage Learning Community. The Circle of Courage is a unifying vision and a common language for all staff, students and families. This language engages all members of the learning community fostering self-esteem, a sense of self-worth and inclusiveness. The Circle of Courage philosophy is the driving force of this new school culture guiding the actions of the staff, the education of the students and the involvement of the families. The school mission is: The Circle of Courage Learning Community is dedicated to meeting students at their gifts and supporting their individual needs. We believe that all students, regardless of ability can achieve and find satisfaction in learning. Our mission is to assist each and every student academically, behaviorally and morally so they may rejoin their fellow students in mainstream educational settings. The Circle of Courage Learning Community works with faculty, students, and their families to provide the maximum educational opportunities to achieve and succeed.

(Poughkeepsie City School District Circle of Courage Learning Community, 2007)

Bridges is a regular/alternative education program for secondary students in Kenosha Unified School District No. 1. in Wisconsin. This alternative school has adopted the Circle of Courage philosophy to better meet the needs of their at-risk students. As stated on their website their program is supported by the Circle of Courage. Their mission statement is: The Bridges Program Mission is to provide alternative educational options in schools to actively engage students in learning, positively responding to individual learning styles and promoting each individual's success and growth as a life-long learner. (Kenosha Unified School District No.1, 2008)

Other information provided describes how they integrate the four tenets of the Circle of Courage. The description of how they align and implement belonging, mastery, independence and generosity is similar to other

The staff of École Mayland Heights School in Calgary, Canada, has studied and adopted the Circle of Courage as a relevant and useful philosophical approach to developing students' affective skills and improving student academic achievement. Their Circle of Courage logo is proudly displayed in the front foyer of their school as well as in the gym. They state that the Circle of Courage is a relevant and useful philosophical approach to developing students' affective skills and improving student academic achievement. The staff at the school adapted the Circle of Courage to meet the needs of a multicultural population found in our public school setting. The core of the program is the holistic enhancement of a child's self-esteem through the development of the four "spirits": Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. It is only through the development of all four spirits that one can achieve a sense of "whole-ness" and can approach the world with the courage necessary to meet its demands. The school also aligns the four tenets of the Circle of Courage

The school's beliefs are further emulated through this description: The four spirits can be integrated into virtually every aspect of our school program. Our School Council has endorsed the Circle of Courage and has shown particular interest in the students' development of the spirit of generosity. It is our plan to utilize the various components of the Circle of Courage wherever possible to support the growth of students' affective, cognitive and academic skills. The Circle of Courage provides all of us with a common vocabulary for problem-solving, conflict resolution, the pursuit of character education, and the elimination of violence within our learning community. It provides us an umbrella under which we can explore many of the character-building needs of our learning community. The Circle of Courage is central to our work with children, with staff members, with the parents of our children, and with the world at large. (École Mayland Heights School, 2007)

Another school in the Calgary, Canada school district uses the Circle of Courage as the framework for their school wide programming. Douglasdale School opened in September of 2001 as a mini-school to serve the Douglasdale Estates area. When the school increased its boundaries as of September 2006, the core school opened which now includes a full size gymnasium, a modern media centre and a central piazza for gathering. Currently, the school is comprised of 18 classes from grade 1 to 4 as well as 4 classes of Kindergarten. A Communication & Behavior Program (for children with Autism and those with Autistic-like symptoms) joined the school community in September 2007. Their website states:

We believe that young children have tremendous capacity to learn. We use the Circle of Courage as the framework for all that we do in our school. The four tenets of the Circle of Courage are Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. (Douglasdale School, December, 2007).

According to The John's Folly Learning Institute (JFLI) website, the JFLI is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1997. It is located on the southeastern end of Coral Bay, St. John, Virgin Islands. JFLI provides youth, their families and local residents with a safe environment to develop new skills, learn about native culture, and strengthen community relations. Alvis Christian, Beulah Dalmida-Smith and Aldria Harley-Wade saw the need to educate and empower their community. Building on the history of Horace Mann School, they joined forces with numerous members of the local community and created a dynamic learning institution. Khalil Osiris, executive director of JFLI, recruited and organized a group of highly committed volunteers and implemented the Circle of Courage program. Circle of Courage is an after-school mentorship and tutorial program guided by a four-stage developmental process: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. This multi-faceted program is based on a character education curriculum. Circle of Courage is broadening that experience into the community school focused on environmentalism, marine science, technology, and character education. (John's Folly Learning Institute, 2008)

At the South Dakota Governor's New Teacher Academy in January, 2006, one of the seminars offered was: Circle of Courage in the Classroom. The session included the incorporation of the Circle of Courage philosophy into the classroom to help foster a healthy learning environment. Through this discussion, the participants had the opportunity to:
Learned to decrease attrition by nurturing students and fostering a sense of belonging, develop hands-on tips to generate belonging in the classroom, discuss advantages of students mastering

competencies and skills, discover hands-on tips to recognize mastery, identify methods to encourage 'independent learning', list hands-on tips to foster independence, recognize how the gift of giving strengthens the camaraderie among classmates and spills in to the community and family, and plan lessons that encourage generous behavior among students. (South Dakota Department of Education, 2006)

All of the schools that have chosen to adopt the Circle of Courage philosophy seek to create an environment and experiences for their students that foster the four core values: belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. The Circle of Courage is a unifying vision and a common language for the staff, students and families at each of these schools. The common language unites the members of the learning community and cultivates a unified mission. The Circle of Courage philosophy is the driving force of these school cultures empowering the actions of the staff, the education of the students and the involvement of the families.

Another integration of the Circle of Courage philosophy occurred in Australia in 2005. A magazine article in the Signs of Time Australia described a story about six cyclists that decided to travel from Perth to Sydney, Australia to build a "Circle of Courage ". The six cyclists from the Circle of Courage Cycle Tour embarked on their ride across Australia to address issues of at-risk behavior among young people in small, rural communities. The article describes how the six cyclists planned to introduce the COC principles for building resilience in young people to parents and other interested adults. At the places they visited along the way they handed out a mini version of the Signs of the Time magazine article about their cycle trip that featured research on at-risk students and how to empower them to become resilient. The team members shared ideas of how to surround youth with a social support of a loving and caring environment that could help to build resilience and self-esteem among young people. For example, they suggested that adults in their communities learn their young peoples' names and greet them personally every time they met them out in the community. They encouraged them to keep doing it until they built a relationship with them. They promoted the need for significant adults in the lives of youth in order for them to develop a sense that they are valued. Based on the research in they discussed in the article, they promoted the belief that young people need to have people to whom they can turn to that they have a trusting relationship with; otherwise they won't know they can go to that adult for guidance and assistance. Jonathan Duffy, team leader and director of health for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific was the organizer of the cycling tour. He asserted

The Circle of Courage philosophy will build resilience and self-esteem among young people. And I am very concerned about the increase of risk behaviour in young people. Research shows that the most important protector against risk-taking for young people is to feel valued by significant adults in their community. I want to challenge the adults in rural communities to take the leading role in developing positive community relationships. This will build resilience and self-esteem among the young people. (as cited in Tan, May, 2005, p. 4)

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