Child Development Project (CDP)

Child Development Project (CDP). A Comprehensive elementary school program designed to enhance children's social and ethical development through systematic changes in the classroom and school environments. **Audience** Elementary schools/districts. Approved by PEP for students in grades K-6.

Description The major goal of the Child Development Project (CDP) is to enhance prosocial characteristics in children as reflected in attitudes, motives, and behaviors, including consideration of and concern for others' needs, feelings, and welfare, and a willingness to balance one's own legitimate needs and desires with those of others in situations where they conflict. Another goal is to foster children's higher order learning and intrinsic motivation to learn.

The CDP program attempts to create a caring community in the classroom and school based on a shared commitment to prosocial, democratic values. It combines elements of traditional approaches to values education with those of more recent approaches derived from cognitive developmental theory--it helps children both to learn values through adult guidance, and simultaneously to develop values, through participating as a member of a mutually concerned, caring community.

CDP develops prosocial inclinations and behaviors through a variety of experiences, including opportunities to collaborate with others in the pursuit of common goals; to provide meaningful help to others and receive help when it is needed; to discuss the experiences of others and come to understand their feelings, needs, and perspectives; to develop and practice important social skills and competencies; and to assume responsible roles in the school community. These activities are incorporated into three components: Cooperative Learning, Developmental Discipline, and a Literature-Based Approach to Reading and Language Arts.

In the classroom, teachers give children active roles in creating a caring community; involve them in cooperative learning activities that focus on both academic and social goals; and use a reading/language arts program organized around whole works of children's literature that portray prosocial values and the ways they play out in daily life. The school-wide program consists of activities such as cross-age "buddies" and tutoring programs, community service and charity drives, and family film nights. Parents are also involved in a "family homework" program. Teachers' guides and other

support materials are provided to link these activities into an overall, comprehensive program.

Evidence of Effectiveness Results of evaluations of CDP indicate that the program enhances students' interpersonal classroom behavior, social problem-solving skills, and commitment to certain democratic values. Program students have consistently demonstrated a better understanding of common interpersonal problems and a more thoughtful and sophisticated approach to solving them. Findings indicate achievement of a "self-other" balance. Positive effects were found two years after students left their elementary schools on conflict resolution skills, self-esteem, and involvement in extracurricular activities.

Requirements To effectively implement CDP, a school must make it a priority. On-going professional development is needed for teachers and administrators, to effect sustained improvement. This includes workshops along with regular opportunities for teachers to reflect on issues of philosophy and practice.

Costs Costs are individually negotiated with schools and/or districts depending on the program elements being introduced and the type of support, services, and/or materials required.

Services Staff development consultancy and planning assistance is available to schools and/or districts that have a sustained interest in and commitment to the program.