

"Character Education in America's Blue Ribbon Schools: Best Practices for Meeting the Challenge"

A recently published book by Dr. Madonna Murphy's highlights *Kelso's Choice* as a means for developing good decision-making skills and fostering positive classroom discipline.

The book is based upon descriptive, documentary, and qualitative research conducted on the award-winning school applications in the U.S. Department of Education's "Elementary School Recognition Program." These prestigious Blue Ribbon Schools were selected upon clear evidence that the students are developing a solid foundation of skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as fostering the development of sound character, self-worth, democratic values, ethical judgment, and self-discipline.

Henry T. Brauchley Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas was one of the schools chosen for this honor. Murphy writes: "Kelso's Choice is a program that teaches students the difference between big problems, those that need adult intervention, and small problems, those they need to learn to handle independently." She goes to explain that students are taught nine specific conflict management techniques, such as talking it out or moving away to prevent small problems from escalating.

Additionally, the staff at Brauchley wrote: "Kelso's Choices serve as a foundation from which our discipline folders are built. Each student has a Kelso's wheel imprinted on his/her discipline folder. When a good choice or a poor choice is made, their folder is marked as such. This allows communication from teacher to teacher, and teacher to parent. Classroom, cafeteria, and hallway rules are also built on Kelso's Choices." Also, it is noted that Kelso's Choice posters are strategically positioned in nearly every hallway and classroom wall, and that this the program provides "a blueprint for peer mediation and sets a solid foundation in which school wide and classroom positive reinforcements are built."