

# The ABC's of INTEGRITY

*New learning tool sparks enthusiasm*

**TEACHING** A new educational curriculum illustrated by a Biloxi woman teaches children traits associated with integrity and is used in several Mississippi schools.

By PAM FIRMIN  
THE SUN HERALD

Catchy tunes with easy words that children can sing with gusto are a cornerstone of a values curriculum written in Corinth, illustrated in Biloxi and rapidly gaining attention across the state.

To a folksy guitar accompaniment and the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It . . .", young voices on the CD chant "If your attitude is good, clap your hands. . . every day when I awake, I have a choice that I must make. . ."

It's called "ABC Integrity Time" and incorporates music on a CD, puppets, discussion and lots of alphabetical alliteration, all geared to showing youngsters that "to have integrity means to choose what is true and good and right."

Desirable traits like kindness, generosity

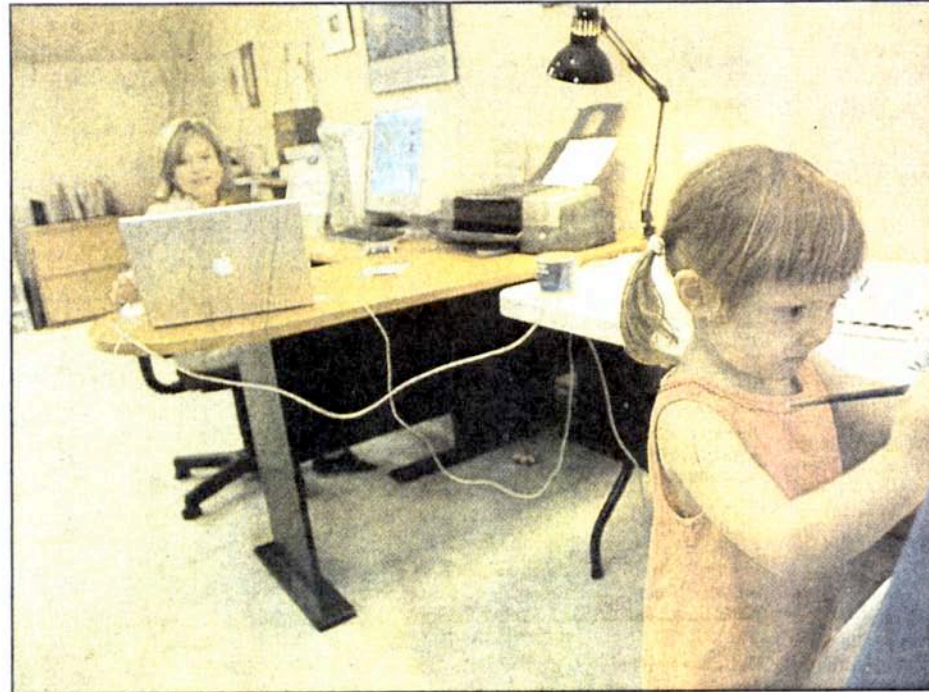
and honesty are personified in puppets with names like Honest Henry and Manerly Maria.

The curriculum for ages 4-8 was written by Sara Berry of Corinth, educator and mother of five, who got it into her city's kindergarten and first grade classrooms as soon as it was completed, which was January.

Its graphics and illustrations are by Tracy Applewhite Broome of Biloxi, whose art studio, Applewhite Design, is in Gulfport. She and Berry are longtime friends, ever since they roomed together at Millsaps College in the late '80s.

Broome would like to see the curriculum taught in Biloxi schools. It has already been accepted for use in the Early Childhood Education Center of Bay Vista Baptist Church in Biloxi.

"Integrity Time" presents lively life lessons that both educators and parents find that children can relate to.



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**Bailey Broome paints with watercolors as her mom, Tracy Applewhite Broome of Applewhite Designs, works in her Gulfport studio.**

Bouncy sing-along music that runs the gamut from marches to swing in mostly familiar tunes both teach and reinforce the traits of integrity. Characteristics like behavior, attitude and determination that involve choices are explained in the curriculum with clear examples of what each means and how to do it.

"I don't imagine we can change the world," said Corinth educator Kate Butler, who's been using the program since it became available in January, "but we are impacting the lives of these children so they can stop and think, 'Is this true and

good and right?'"

"If we can't teach our children to be contributing members of society and how to get along with others," continued Butler, "then it doesn't matter what the test scores are. Teach them how to act right and they'll learn more." Butler is principal of Corinth Public School kindergarten and first grades, which encompass about 360 students in 20 classrooms.

"It is not an expensive program," Butler said, noting it includes "a curriculum guide,

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## Integrity

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a CD and another book for \$80 per classroom. It is cost-effective for what it can do. Over time, we think it's really going to have an impact.

"The children can articulate what integrity is. They know all the ABC's of attitude, behavior, enthusiasm . . . They all bring food snacks to share now because they all are just so generous. Generous George is one of our characteristics."

So is Helpful Henry.

"Our custodian was out this morning," Butler said in a phone interview earlier this week, "and we had so many Helpful Henrys, we didn't have enough tasks for them to do. They swept, emptied garbage cans, put trash bags in . . . these were first graders. Enthusiasm was 'E' and they were very enthusiastic about it."

Next year, Butler said, the school will use it year-round.

Broome's daughter, Bailey, 3,

is too young for the program, Broome said, but colors the pictures "and we talk about it as she colors. I ask, 'what would Positive Polly say or do in this situation?' She has gained a sense of understanding what the qualities are. She really did respond great! She and Joseph (her cousin) would make faces that look like the puppets" in response to Broome asking "what does Positive Polly look like?" They smile. "Negative Narl?" They frown.

Puppet faces with expressions by Broome that depict a specific attitude are scattered throughout the "ABC Integrity Time — Know It!" manual, which is a teacher's guide. The puppet faces are to be copied, cut out, colored and glued to a keepsake paper lunch bag.

Broome focuses her business on family and children, which is "a sort of mission statement of mine," she said. "One of my primary clients is Mississippi Forum on Children and Families, which is an advocate for children. I've narrowed my

clientele to programs I really believe in and am enthusiastic about. It gives me a sense of purpose. I feel good about what I'm doing. I feel about being part of 'Integrity Time' is a way for me to give back."

"I really want (Integrity Time) to get into the schools here because I grew up here. I feel this is an area where we

need this emphasis.

"This is a program I know about and believe in," Broome said, "and children would benefit from it for the rest of their lives."

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### About the program

**What:** The "ABC Integrity Time" curriculum for children ages 4-8 integrates lessons on values into daily routine, from regular classroom time to family dinner-table time.

**How:** The three-piece instruction set includes 1) a curriculum book, 2) a clock chart workbook with the lyrics to the chants and songs on 3) the accompanying sing-along CD titled "ABC Integrity Tunes."

**Who:** Written by Sara Berry of Corinth, educator and mother of five; and illustrated by Tracy Applewhite Broome of Biloxi, graphic artist and mother of two. Both use the program with their own families.

**Where:** The curriculum has been in use since January, when it first became available, in all 20 classrooms of Corinth public school kindergarten and first grades and will be used there throughout the coming year. In Biloxi, the Bay Vista Baptist Church Early Education program will implement it in the fall; and a copy of the curriculum has been presented for review by the Biloxi School District's board of education.

**Cost:** School costs for the set is \$80. The CD alone may be purchased for \$12.99.

**Details:** For information, Call Tracy Applewhite Broome at 313-4058; Sara Berry at (662) 396-4822; or visit the Web site at [www.integritytime.com](http://www.integritytime.com).