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The Effects of Character Education Programs on School Climate and Student  
Discipline in Grades 6-8 Through the Eyes of Substitute Teachers

by

Javier Lozano

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

The Effects of Character Education Programs on School Climate and Student  
Discipline in Grades 6-8 Through the Eyes of Substitute Teachers

by  
Javier Lozano

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
Doctor of Education  
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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## Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Javier Lozano

Signature:  Date: 15 JUN 20

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friends and confidants, Bryan R. and Tara R. Amy, you had no stake in this matter but continued to pour of yourself into this study. Bryan, your family has always been there for mine when we needed you the most.

## **Abstract**

This research study used surveys and one on one interviews conducted with substitute teachers to investigate whether character education programs in a middle school setting can be observed having a noticeable impact on school culture and climate. The study observed findings through the lens and perspectives of substitute teachers to see if guest teachers reported a significant difference in their experience between schools of character versus schools that did not practice character initiatives. The study investigated this Research Question through exploring four topics: 1) how substitute teachers described schools that are actively involved in character education versus those schools that are not; 2) how substitute teachers described students in a school of character versus students in schools that were not schools of character; 3) how substitute teachers described staff members in a school of character versus staff members that were not in schools of character; and 4) how substitute teachers described the administrative team in a school of character versus an administrative team that was not in a school of character. The research used a 22-question survey of substitute teachers (sample of 101) and select interviews (6) to investigate them.

Findings from the research showed differences in buildings' atmosphere, student behavior, staff morale, staff behavior, and administrative support in schools that practiced character education compared to those buildings where character education was not practiced.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides the reader with a description of the topic, a brief overview of character education, and information regarding the impact of substitute teachers in a general classroom. Chapter One discusses the growing substitute teacher shortage and articulates ways in which substitute teachers are immediately labeled as mediocre by faculty and students, as they offer their services as guest teachers in schools across the nation.

### **Description of Topic**

Across America, in virtually every school there is a need for substitute teachers at some point during the school year (Glass, 2001). Substitute teachers work with students, teachers, and administrators during a regular classroom teacher's absence, and inevitably view school from a different vantage point than employees who are present on a daily basis (Glass, 2001). Although substitute teachers tend to have all the accountabilities of a regular classroom educator, unfortunately, they have little of the authority (Glass, 2001).

The responsibilities of most regular teachers can include;

- Teaching the curriculum
- Taking responsibility of student progress
- Organizing classroom lessons
- Planning and implementing lessons with differentiated lessons.
- Motivating students
- Maintaining discipline
- Administering assessments

- Providing feedback to parents and teachers regarding the student's progress and behavior.
- Keeping up to date with changes and developments of curriculum and new technology being used in the classroom.
- Meeting with other professionals in the field to ensure academic success and bodily safety of all students.

According to Glass (2001), substitute teachers face classes of students looking to take advantage of their lack of authority and inexperience. On any given school day, it is estimated that 8% to 13% of students in American schools are taught by substitute teachers (Glass, 2001). Sara Leonard is a high school Language Arts teacher in the state of Oregon who as of this writing, conveyed to have three years' experience as a substitute teacher. In her written article; *Separate But Equal: Substitute Teaching Done Right*, Leonard expressed that "every day, students across the country open the doors to their classrooms and see a stranger standing where their regular teacher should be" (Leonard, 2016, line 1). With this, the substitute teacher "has already received one strike and the hopes of having a good day diminish" (Leonard, 2016, lines 3-4).

Leonard (2016) disclosed information regarding a lack of available substitute teachers in the world of education and shared that "close to 50% of responders to a survey done by the Substitute Teaching Institute reported they had a somewhat- or very – severe shortage of substitutes" (paragraph 2, lines 3-5). Also, according to data collected by the U.S. Department of Education from surveys of 57,000 schools in 2009-2010, Leonard (2016) has deduced that "students spend over six months of their K-12 education with substitute teachers" (paragraph 2, lines 12-13). In addition to the shortage of substitute teachers,

school districts are “struggling to retain the few substitute teachers they have” (Leonard, 2016, paragraph 3, lines 5-6). Teachers are out of the classroom more and more.

Leonard expressed “with teachers missing days for professional development along with their own personal days, students are spending an increasing amount of time with substitute teachers” (Leonard, 2016, paragraph 3, lines 6-8).

Across the nation, numerous school districts have taken notice of the increasing issue of the substitute teacher shortage. Allison Wert, Content Marketing Manager at Frontline Education, echoed the findings by the Substitute Teaching Institute at Utah University (STEDI.org) regarding the reactions of respondents who repeated the stark deficiency of substitute teachers in the classroom. Wert (2014) explained that “while a lower unemployment rate is good news for the nation, this improvement has had some impact on the number of substitutes available for school districts” (lines 45-46). Wert (2014) shared that data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics “shows that as the unemployment rate is steadily decreasing, the substitute-to-teacher ratio is also decreasing—meaning fewer substitutes are available for more teachers” (lines 47-50). A growing economy does not technically portray a positive impact for the low numbers of substitute teachers in school because “As the economy improves, more potential substitutes – including new college graduates- are taking full-time teaching jobs or work in other fields, creating a challenge for [school] districts” (Wert, 2014, lines 57-59).

### **Problems in Our Schools**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) executed a congressional mandate where they collected, analyzed, and reported completed statistics on the condition of education in the United States (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012).

Information from the 2009-2010 School Survey on Crime and Safety reported the rate of violent incidents per 1,000 students was higher in middle schools (40 incidents) than it was in primary schools or high schools (21 incidents each). According to the same report, 46% of schools reported at least one student threat of a physical attack without a weapon, compared to 8% of schools who reported such a threat with a weapon. The NCES also conveyed that in middle schools, there was a higher percentage of bullying reported that occurred daily, or at least once a week (38.6%), than did high schools (19.8%) or primary schools (19.6%) (Robers et al., 2012).

Each day there are substitutes going into schools across the United States, and in some cases, they may not have the slightest idea of what awaits them behind the school's walls with regard to school violence (Glass, 2001). The Indicators of School Crime and Safety from 2011, illustrated that in the 2007-2008 school year, 23% of school teachers had reported being threatened with injury by a student (as cited in Robers et al., 2012). In addition, according to Robers et al. (2012), the percentage of teachers who reported a physical attack by a student from their school during the 2007-2008 school year was 12%. These statistics illustrate the school environments in which substitute teachers continue to work on a regular basis.

Additional reports from the NCES expressed that for students aged 12 to 18, the prevalence of violence in 2013 was higher at school than away from school (Robers, Zhang, Morgan, & Musu-Gillette, 2015). The 2013 violent victimization rates were 37 per 1,000 students at school and 15 per 1,000 students away from school (Robers et al., 2015). This difference was driven primarily by higher rates of simple assault at school. According to Robers, Zhang, Morgan, and Musu-Gillette (2015), in 2013, students aged

12 to 18 experienced about 1,420,900 nonfatal victimizations, such as theft and violent victimization, at school, compared with about 778,500 nonfatal victimizations away from school. These figures represented total crime victimization rates of 55 victimizations per 1,000 students at school and 30 per 1,000 students away from school. Between 1992 and 2013, the total victimization rates for students ages 12 to 18 generally declined both at and away from school. This pattern held for thefts, violent victimizations, and serious violent victimizations between 1992 and 2013 (Robers et al., 2015). The aforementioned statistics show there have been various problems associated with violence in schools for decades, yet school leaders continue to bring in substitute teachers who may or may not be equipped to handle the issues they are exposed to as guests in schools across America. Not only does this threaten the security for substitute teachers, faculty, and students, but it is also a reflection of school culture within schools across America. In light of this information, there needs to be more work done towards minimizing the prevalence of violence in schools. Over the past few decades, many schools have implemented character education programs to address violence in their schools (Creasy, 2006).

### **Character Education**

Character education is the shared responsibility of parents, teachers, and members of the community to support positive character development in students (Brannon, 2008). Character education aims to decrease crime statistics by promoting and instilling positive behavior, moral practices, and positive traits in students. Creasy (2008) stated that we wanted to draw out certain characteristics from our students and teach our students to use those traits in their everyday lives. He asserted that, “We want them to be *good people*” (p. 2). Berkowitz (2011) argued that character education was a, “comprehensive school-



based approach that includes an intentional focus on promoting character through the curriculum, service opportunities, a focus on intrinsic motivation, shared leadership, and community and family involvement” (Berkowitz, 2011, p. 253). Creasy (2006) also explained that in the educational world that seemed focused on conquering exemplary scores on standardized tests, the topic of behavior and problem solving looked as if it was out of context. Creasy argued that character education was the effort to assist people to, “understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values” (Creasy, 2006, p. 2). He also asserted that character education encouraged children to, “become independent thinkers who are committed to moral principles in their lives and who are likely to do the ‘right thing,’ even under challenging circumstances” (Creasy, 2006, p. 2). Character education was a program that originated in order to turn students into respectful, responsible, contributing members of society. Research from Bristol University asserted that being taught character education helped pupils to develop as learners and may have improved their academic achievement (Creasy, 2008). The research claimed that this type of education improved pupils’ communication skills, which made the student more confident and more independent.

### **Impact of Character Education on Schools**

The U.S. Department of Education (2018) suggests that character education, when implemented effectively, can positively impact academics, behavior, and the overall culture of the building. Character education was not a new concept in the field of education, it used to be an important objective for the first United States public schools and character education was encouraged in most states. The practice had been called many names; service learning, social-emotional learning, civic education, morals

training, and whole child education. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), “character education teaches the habits of thought and deed that help people live and work together as families, friends, neighbors, communities, and nations” (p. 1). This statement highlights the importance of character education being implemented in schools to create a safe learning environment for students, faculties, and guests. The U.S. Department of Education further outlined, “throughout time, societies have recognized the need to educate the coming generation of adults to pass knowledge and skills. Recorded history from long before the present era emphasizes that education must also develop character” (p. 1). Clearly, there is a need for character education in educational institutions across the country.

Berkowitz (2011) expressed, “The best way to make a more just and caring world is to make more just and caring people” (p. 3). Berkowitz explained, “If we want a more moral world, then we need more moral people, and the best way to get moral people is to invest in the parenting, education, and general socialization of children” (p. 3). Educational facilities such as schools continue to serve as the primary setting for student learning. Educators had been reminded of their important role in schools as Berkowitz quoted Avis Glaze, an international leader in the field of education and character development, “We [in the field of education] are in the business of enhancing the life chances of our students, in influencing people, communities and organizations” (as cited in Berkowitz, 2011, p. 4). Our society no longer sends children to schools for merely academics, but also child development (Berkowitz, 2011). When schools concentrated on character education, it included the understanding of how children developed

intellectually and socially, they had not only promoted positive leaders for our communities, but also effective individuals for our society.

According to Berkowitz (2011), character education in schools builds cultures that create high expectations for students socially, behaviorally, and intellectually. Character education aims to develop students into moral thinkers and effective members of society regardless of academic standing. He also suggests that when students learn the importance of good character, witness teachers modeling good character, and see around them an expectation of good character throughout the school, then it improves attendance, academics, and behavior. He also concluded that schools that do not prioritize character often find themselves scrambling for substitute teachers to fill positions of the full-time educator.

Character education promoted academic excellence because it laid a foundation for all learning that took place in school, encouraging social and emotional bonding, and promoting positive, interpersonal experiences (Huston-Holm, 2010). Shields, a leading expert in character education, agreed with Dr. Lickona regarding the importance of developing both smart and good students. Throughout history it has been noted that education has had two goals: to help young people become smart and to help them become good (Shields, 2011). Moreover, Shields recognized that in the United States, the concern with moral development has been a strikingly regular feature of public education throughout our history, though it has experienced ebbs and flows in its prominence (Shields, 2011).

Dr. Thomas Lickona, a developmental psychologist and Professor at the State University of New York at Cortland, prompted a reevaluation of the school's role in

teaching values and quoted U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt when he shared “To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society” (Lickona, 1993, line 1). Lickona believed that a large number of people across the ideological spectrum “believe that our society is in deep moral trouble” (paragraph 1, line 1).

Lickona proceeded and wrote,

The disheartening signs are everywhere: the breakdown of the family; the deterioration of civility in everyday life; rampant greed at a time when one in five children is poor. As we become more aware of this societal crisis, the feeling grows that schools cannot be ethical bystanders (lines 1-3 & 7-8).

In conclusion, Lickona believed that “As a result, character education is making a comeback in American schools” (Lickona, 1993, line 9).

Once a comprehensive concept of character could be attained, Lickona believed that schools needed a comprehensive approach to develop it and then “plan how to use all phases of classroom and school life as deliberate tools of character development” (Lickona, 1993, paragraph 30). As per Lickona, comprehensive classroom practice and its comprehensive approach to character education called for the teacher to:

- *Act as caregiver, model, and mentor*, treating students with love and respect, setting a good example, supporting positive social behavior, and correcting hurtful actions through one-on-one guidance and whole-class discussion;
- *Create a moral community*, helping students know one another as persons, respect and care about one another, and feel valued membership in, and responsibility to, the group;

- *Practice moral discipline*, using the creation and enforcement of rules as opportunities to foster moral reasoning, voluntary compliance with rules, and a respect for others;
- *Create a democratic classroom environment*, involving students in decision making and the responsibility for making the classroom a good place to be and learn;
- *Teach values through the curriculum*, using the ethically rich content of academic subjects (such as literature, history, and science), as well as outstanding programs (such as *Facing History and Ourselves*<sup>4</sup> and *The Heartwood Ethics Curriculum for Children*<sup>5</sup>), as vehicles for teaching values and examining moral questions;
- *Use cooperative learning* to develop students' appreciation of others, perspective taking, and ability to work with others toward common goals;
- *Develop the “conscience of craft”* by fostering students' appreciation of learning, capacity for hard work, commitment to excellence, and sense of work as affecting the lives of others;
- *Encourage moral reflection* through reading, research, essay writing, journal keeping, discussion, and debate;
- *Teach conflict resolution*, so that students acquire the essential moral skills of solving conflicts fairly and without force.
- Besides making full use of the moral life of classrooms, a comprehensive approach calls upon the school *as a whole* to:

- *Foster caring beyond the classroom*, using positive role models to inspire altruistic behavior and providing opportunities at every grade level to perform school and community service;
- *Create a positive moral culture in the school*, developing a school wide ethos (through the leadership of the principal, discipline, a school-wide sense of community, meaningful student government, a moral community among adults, and making time for moral concerns) that supports and amplifies the values taught in classrooms;
- *Recruit parents and the community as partners in character education*, letting parents know that the school considers them their child's first and most important moral teacher, giving parents specific ways they can reinforce the values the school is trying to teach, and seeking the help of the community, churches, businesses, local government, and the media in promoting the core ethical values (paragraphs 31-32).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) helped in allowing the public to understand the validity in statements regarding the increase of negative behavior in our nation’s schools. As America evolved, there was a concern from our society that children’s manners would continue to decline. According to Jones (2011), author of *The Decline of Manners in America*, “one day they [manners] would be gone altogether” (Paragraph 1). Manners had lost the importance they once had. Children were not being taught how to behave correctly. Raising children had turned into a joint effort between both parents (Jones, 2011). Adult guidance was an essential ingredient in transforming

children's natural moral inclinations into dependable and effective character traits (Damon, 2010). Jones (2011) also asserted that parenting techniques had undergone a dramatic change as well. Parents had lost their authority over their children, and the children had lost respect for their parents. Jones felt a child must be forced to learn their manners at an early age; otherwise, they will not be respectful of others for the rest of their life.

### **The Role and Challenges of Being a Substitute**

Substitute teachers are hired to educate students when a teacher is absent; but their hard work often goes unnoticed and students continue to take advantage of their roles in the absence of the assigned classroom educator (Duggleby & Badali, 2015). "The primary purpose of a substitute teacher is to ensure that learning continues in the absence of the classroom teacher" (Duggleby & Badali, 2015, pp. 22-23), yet this is a difficult task. The job of a substitute teacher brings with it many concealed trials and extremely diverse groups of learners every day, in any public or private school setting. Moreover, there are mixed sentiments regarding the presence of a substitute in the classroom (Duggleby & Badali, 2015). Bekingalar (2015) contended that full-time employees saw substitute educators as sources of low priority, low expectations, and low respect. Additionally, Bekingalar (2015) noted that substitute teachers received much negative attention, as he purported, they report feelings of alienation and marginalization. Unfortunately, these views represent the impact that substitute teachers have, and ultimately affect the students' learning and academic progress. While full-time teachers and building administrators feel that a substitute teacher's presence creates a teaching moment gone to waste or a missed opportunity for academic advancement, students see

the hidden benefit and pupil advantage in this and view this altered circumstance as a ‘free day’ (Bekingalar, 2015).

Substitute teachers help to continue the fluidity of teaching by being present in the absence of the regular classroom teacher (Star, 2000). They work through the building and classroom challenges that extend from discovering the location of the staff bathroom to deciphering the, sometimes opaque, lesson plans left by the full-time educator. Additionally, the substitute teacher orchestrates disciplined order and classwork completion with little or no time to get to know each students’ individual learning styles or individual needs’ in the classrooms’ academic setting (Bekingalar, 2015). Substitute teachers made strenuous efforts to keep the students busy but, unfortunately, they often accomplished very little academically in the classroom in comparison to the concrete curriculum instruction and learning that ensues in the presence of the more familiar assigned full-time educator.

Starr (2000) stated, “Between high school and graduation, the average student will spend 187 days – more than one full school year – with substitute teachers. Starr (2000) informed readers of a growing statistic that demonstrated the need for more substitute teachers in the schoolroom. We do not know how many classrooms were unstaffed where students were attending an adjoining classroom due to teacher absence, where paraprofessionals had supervised classes, or where full-time employees gave up their contracted, reserved plan-time in order to cover a session that remained unoccupied by a substitute teacher when the regular teacher was out of the classroom. School districts in every state face the augmented necessities of substitute deficiencies. The substitute scarcity, compelled partly by the “actions and attitudes of the teachers and



administrators most in need of their help,” had through combining issues increased this distress (Starr, 2000, p. 1). Some of these matters were: the high rate of teacher absenteeism due to amplified release time for personal and professional development, the prospect to earn more than the average minimum wage, and lastly, the increased absence of the permanent classroom instructors that permitted former substitutes to move into full-time positions (Starr, 2000).

Starr’s (2000) article outlined that districts responded to the substitute deficiency with alluring incentives of increased pay, bonuses for signing on, and guaranteed employment. While the enthralling encouragements abetted, they backfired because they, “*Failed to address the problem*” (Starr, 2000, p. 1). Having referenced Longhurst, education specialist at STI (Substitute Teaching Institute), Starr communicated in the article about Longhurst’s two reasons that substitutes alluded to for separation from the field of education: (1) lack of respect shown by school personnel and (2) a lack of training in classroom management techniques.

Starr listed the following four expressions as the repeatedly voiced grievances from substitute teachers:

- (1) I don’t feel welcome in the teachers’ lounge.
- (2) I’d love to have a place to put my coat and bag.
- (3) Usually I’m simply handed a key and left to my own devices.
- (4) I never see a principal; much less get feedback on the quality of the job I’m doing. (Starr, 2000, p. 1)

Furthermore, Starr (2000) explained that while more than 70% of educators provided lesson plans followed by the substitute teacher, there remained 30% who left no

lesson plan. Within those 70% there were some who failed to provide sufficient information regarding the implementation of those written lesson plans. The example used was the transcribed lesson of “Complete chapter 12.” In this scenario, the query was “Does ‘Complete chapter 12’ require a KWL chart, Venn diagram, or silent reading” (Starr, 2000, p. 1).

Solving the substitute shortage demanded determining the stalk of the concern. Starr borrowed a quote from *Education Week: Teacher*, which pens, “There are a lot of thankless jobs out there. And then there’s substitute teaching. It is an occupation that only Rodney Dangerfield could appreciate” (Starr, 2000, p. 1). Furthermore, substitute teachers agree on the minimal respect received from the students, staff, and building administrators.

### **Problems faced by Substitute Teachers**

Being a substitute teacher has become one of the roughest jobs that amplifies the educational profession’s revolving challenges; low pay, lack of plan time, and the troubles of classroom management. With the circumstances and statistics mentioned from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), substitute teachers correspondingly have an avalanche of classroom issues that radiate out from the classrooms when the regular educator is away. Numerous references cited the concerns that many substitute teachers have to deal with on a typical school day. A major concern revealed was that of being ‘accepted’ into the school culture by adults and students simply because they were not a full-time member of the building and were therefore excluded from much. The role of the substitute teacher continues to be murky in the sense that the staff has many perceptions in regards to what their job truly is. Teachers,

students, staff members, and even community members all have different opinions of the substitute teacher's obligations in the classroom. Substitute teachers have many perceptions in regards to what responsibilities they have when the classroom is in session. Could substitute teachers issue detentions? Could they hold a student after class? To what degree were substitute teachers permitted to move forward with student reprimands and discipline? Teachers, students, and staff members all have different opinions of the substitute teachers' obligation and level of responsibility in the classroom. Some full-time educators view a substitute in the classroom as, "just a glorified babysitter" (Echazarreta, 2011, p. 3). Others in the profession see their presence in the classroom as, "a lost day for most kids, regardless of the qualifications of the sub" (Kronholz, 2013, p. 23); and students viewed a day with the substitute teacher as a, "cake day" (Echazarreta, 2011, p. vii). On top of all this, guest teachers are not deemed as credible professionals in the eyes of classroom teachers, school principals, students, or district administrators (Echazarreta, 2011).

Substitute teachers continue to receive less respect than their full-time counterparts (Star, 2000). Their role in the classroom at times represents failed lessons for children, teaching moments gone badly, and missed educational opportunities (Baker, 2010). Students have negative opinions of guest teachers and thus are disrespectful to them. A strong example of the lack of respect for substitute teachers by students was demonstrated in a video that captured a high school substitute teacher bullied by a student in the classroom. Flicked in the face by the student, the harassment on the teacher continued while the remainder of the class simply roared with laughter and neglected to act in a helpful or moral manner (Kreuz, 2012). Some students have not listened to

substitute teachers, and many times have opted to have their own classroom agenda and set of rules. Because of this, many substitute teachers could not let go of the sentiment of feeling neglected and isolated (Kreuz, 2012). There often continues to be a lack of respect, cooperation, and support (Lewis, 2012; Lofthouse, 2014), and having felt neglected has seriously handicapped their instructional activities (Finley, 2013).

Additionally, substitute teachers also experienced the bonus shared challenges as the full-time teacher had, but their encounters were elevated as a guest teacher and more apt to occur because of the lack of respect students had demonstrated towards the guest teacher. The challenges of aggressive incidents, extended student bathroom trips, classroom cheating, lack of student participation and issuing/turning in homework were not a positive enhancement on the encouraging experience of the substitute teacher.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem investigated in this study was to determine if effective character education altered the climate of a school significantly enough that evidence was seen by guest teachers who substituted in character education schools. Student behavior and staff attitudes of helpfulness and common courtesy are thought to be the markers for schools that prioritized character education. The research aimed to find the validity of character education programs that claimed they had changed student behavior and decision making in a positive manner. This research study collected surveys from the substitute teachers in regards to student behavior, student respect, staff behavior, staff respect, and administrative level support as well as administration assistance in middle schools located in a school district near Saint Louis, Missouri. One of the middle schools in this

study was recognized as both a Missouri School of Character and a National School of Character while the other middle schools had not received such acknowledgments.

It is thought that the manner in which Principals display their character either inspires or inhibits the development of character in their staff members and students (Holloway, 2006). This, it is argued, carries over into the manner in which those same leaders of the school treat, support, and respect the guest teachers of their respective buildings. The job of ensuring positive character development throughout the school community rests with the Principal (Holloway, 2006). Berkowitz's fourth premise went on and identified that, "society needs schools to foster the moral development of students for the very survival of society . . . but in order for this premise to transpire schools must promote both a sense of community and a democratic process" (Berkowitz, 2011, pp. 94-95).

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used in this research and are defined as follows for this context:

*Character education:*

Educational movement that supports the social, emotional, and ethical development of students. More broadly, Character Education is the proactive effort by schools, districts, and states to help students develop important core, ethical, and performance values such as caring, honesty, diligence, fairness, fortitude, responsibility, and respect for self and others (Character Education Partnership [CEP], 2017, p. 1)

*Classroom teacher:*

Classroom teacher (International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED) 0-4) included professional personnel education teachers; and other teachers who work with students as a whole class in a classroom, in small groups in a resource room, or one-on-one inside or outside a regular classroom. It included chairpersons of departments whose duties included some amount of student instruction. The category does not include student teachers, teachers' aides, or paraprofessionals. (Glossary of Statistical Terms, 2017, p. 1)

*Ecclesiastical Focus:* Teachings of or relating to a church, especially as an organized institution. Appropriate to a church or to use in a church but used in a school setting (Defined by the researcher, 2017).

*Indicators of School Crime and Safety (ISCS):* A report with the combined efforts of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics that examined crimes in schools as well as on the way to and from school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011).

*Moral education:* Moral Education comprises a lifelong process, influenced by many agencies in society, which promotes growth in responsibility and freedom (Encyclopedia.com, 2017).

*National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES):* Part of the United States Department of Education's Institute that collects and analyzes statistics on public schools in the United States (Defined by the researcher, 2017).

*School Community:* Various individuals, groups, businesses, and institutions that were invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school and its community; the neighborhoods and municipalities served by the school (edglossary.com, 2014).

*Secular Focus:* A worldly rather than spiritual focus, not specifically relating to religion or to a religious body. A curriculum not bound by spiritual restrictions and especially not belonging to a religious order (Defined by the researcher, 2017).

*Substitute Teacher:* A person who fills in for regular teachers who may need to take time off because of illness, personal leave, teacher workshop, or other reasons (learn.org, 2017).

*United States Department of Education (USDOE):* Federal government agency that establishes policy, administers funds, and coordinates federal assistance to education (Defined by the researcher, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Dissertation**

The purpose of this study was to shed light on one possible outcome of the character education practices of a set of schools as reflected in how substitute teachers in those schools perceived students and staff treated them. The researcher sought to compare the perceptions of substitute teachers regarding schools that adopted character education practices and those schools that did not exercise character education practices.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to guide inquiry during this study.

**Research Question1 (RQ1):** How do substitute teachers describe schools that are actively involved in character education versus those schools that are not?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** How do substitute teachers describe students in a school of character versus students in schools that are not schools of character?

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** How do substitute teachers describe staff members in a school of character versus staff members that are not in schools of character?

**Research Question 4 (RQ4):** How do substitute teachers describe the administration team in a school of character versus administration team that is not in a school of character?

### **Conclusion**

The intention for this chapter was to clarify the issues associated with the job of substitute teaching, and provide the reader with a broad lens for viewing the topic of study. This chapter aimed at informing the reader about the importance of the substitute teacher in the classroom. This chapter also depicted the humiliations that were inappropriately associated with the job of a guest teacher by students, staff, and administration.



## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

There was not a formal invitation for the character initiative to enter the classroom, but the changed schoolroom demanded an emphasis on ethics. The need for a moral compass was ever more evident in the stories substitute teachers told of the ways they were treated. Chapter Two provides a historical perspective on the issues in schools regarding school climate, school culture, the prevalence of undesirable school behavior, and the realities that substitute teachers faced in schools across the United States. In addition, this chapter dissects the character initiative and reviews the documentation of the mistreatment of guest teachers by students and staff.

### **Character Education**

There is ample evidence supporting positive outcomes of character education programs in schools including positive student behavior. A number of articles explained positive interactions among students and credited the practice of character education for positive student behavior and positive academic movements in those schools that successfully implemented a character education practice. Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) referenced the importance of character education, not solely for the purpose of heightened academic success, but for the benefit of having created responsible citizens who participated positively in life and acted decisively for the common good.

Much debate existed as to the definition of what a ‘moral person/student’ was. Berkowitz (2010) referenced Nucci and explained that, “In too many cases, I would argue, the ends of goals of moral education are to have children ‘become good,’ with only vague conceptions held as to what it means to be good” (p. 5). Berkowitz (2010)

proceeded to list “inclusion and exclusion” as two challenges that he believed adequately helped to describe the moral person (p. 5). In this particular explanation, Berkowitz apprised that he believed the first challenge of inclusion pertained to being comprehensive. He explained that:

Many attempts to define the moral person are closer to the parable of the blind men and the elephant where a theorist described a moral person by part of what makes one moral rather than by integrating all that makes one moral (Berkowitz, 2010, p. 5).

The Blind Men and the Elephant was a well-known Indian parable that told the story of six blind sojourners who happened upon a man with an elephant, and the man invited each blind man to touch the elephant. One man touched the elephant’s trunk, another the head, another the ear, another the elephant’s side, another the leg, and the last the tail. Each blind man generated his own description of ‘the elephant’ (a stand-in for reality) from his own partial experience based in his own limited perception. The lesson was that our perceptions and experiences always lead to limited understanding and misperceptions.

Character education is most effective when it influences not only the students, but also the school community, parents, and larger community (Houston, 2012). Houston, author of *The School’s Role in Building Character Among Students*, explained, “The important business of public education is to create citizens who care and who have a core of character that makes them contributors to the greater good” (2012, p. 1). Houston commented on the tragic events of the Columbine High School shootings as an example to raise awareness of the need for positive community involvement. The Columbine

shootings occurred on April 20, 1999. In this event, two teens went on a shooting spree at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, where they killed 13 people and wounded more than 20 others before they turned their guns on themselves and committed suicide. The crime was the worst school shooting in United States history at the time and it quickly prompted a national debate on gun control and school safety (Houston, 2012). The incident also launched a major investigation to find what motivated the gunmen, Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17. Speculation existed that the two committed the killings because they had been bullied, were members of a group of social outcasts that were fascinated by Goth culture, or had been influenced by violent video games and music; however, none of these theories was ever proven. Recently, the report was completed and presented to the President of the United States by the *Federal Commission on School Safety*, and attested in December of 2018 the Columbine shooter to be characterized as depressed and reclusive. The report referenced a journal entry of the Columbine shooter where he expressed “I want to die really bad right now . . . no girls (friends or girlfriends), no other friends except a few, nobody accepting me. . . . I feel so lonely w/o a friend” (School Safety, 2018, p. 17). Furthermore, Houston’s (2010) article recited that, “it wasn’t the characteristics of the child shooters that were as identifiable as it was those of the community where they lived” (p. 2). Drawing an analogy, Houston (2012) then concluded that, “the plant’s growth is determined by the soil in which it grows” (p. 2).

After a *20/20* special hosted by Diane Sawyer with guest Sue Klebold, the mother of Columbine killer Dylan Klebold, *ABC News* journalist, Lauren Pearle, investigated the

impact and lessons from that fateful event and shared the numbers about school violence and children in peril. Pearle (2016) shared these subsequent numbers and facts:

50 – The number of mass murders or attempted mass murders at a school since Columbine.

141 – The number of people killed in a mass murder or attempted mass murder at a school since Columbine.

73 – The percentage of school shooters with no prior criminal record, not even an arrest.

96 – The percentage of school shooters who are male.

17 – The number of students aged 15 or younger who have committed or attempted a mass school shooting since Columbine.

81 – The percentage of school shootings where someone had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the shooting.

68 – The percentage of school shooters who got their guns from relatives or at home.

65 -- The number of school shooters and thwarted school shooters who have referenced Columbine as a motivation.

270 – The number of shootings of any kind at a school since Columbine.

1 – The number of shootings per week, on average, on a school or college campus in 2015 (Pearle, 2016, p. 1).

Additionally, Everytown started to track gunfire in schools and colleges in 2013 and illustrated K-12 data associated with shootings in schools. As per their website ([www.EverytownResearch.org](http://www.EverytownResearch.org)), Everytown was an independent, non-partisan, non-profit

organization dedicated to understanding and reducing gun violence in America. From 2013 to 2015, Everytown acknowledged 160 incidents in 38 U.S. states. In all, 59 incidents resulted in deaths and 124 were non-fatal cases. Of the identified shootings, 53% happened at K-12 schools. The remaining 47% occurred on college or university campuses (Everytown, 2015). These incidents included fatal and nonfatal assaults, suicides, and unintentional shootings. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on the incidents that occurred in K-12 schools.

Everytown concluded that between the years 2013 and 2015 in K-12 schools, there existed an average of two school shootings per month, and minors committed 56% of those occurrences (Everytown, 2015). Everytown (2015) also discussed that in the 24 incidents where the source of the firearm could be determined, 13 of the shooters (54%) used a gun they obtained from home. In addition, Everytown explained that this finding outlined the consistency of an analysis of school-associated violent deaths between 1992 and 1999, conducted by The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study concluded that 56% of students involved directly in a school-associated homicide or suicide used a firearm, and it was determined that 79% of those firearms were obtained from the home of the shooter, from a friend or from a relative (Everytown, 2015). Everytown disclosed six incidents on their website, which involved unsecure firearms from homes that were brought to school.

(1) November 10, 2015: Lecanto High School, Lecanto, Florida:

During his morning English class, a 15-year-old boy walked to the front of the classroom, pulled out his father's 9mm semi-automatic handgun, and shot himself in the head. He was taken to an area hospital in critical condition and survived.

(2) August 25, 2015: Hornsby Elementary School, Augusta, Georgia:

An unidentified male third-grader brought his father's gun to school, and while playing with the gun inside his desk, he unintentionally discharged the weapon and hit a female student sitting next to him, injuring her.

(3) October 24, 2014: Maryville Pilchuck High School, Marysville, Washington:

Fifteen-year-old Jaylen Fryberg walked into the school cafeteria and shot five students, killing four, before fatally shooting himself. The gun used in the incident belonged to Fryberg's father.

(4) January 14, 2014: Berrendo

(5) Middle School, Roswell, New Mexico:

Mason Campbell, age 12, walked into his school gym and pulled out a 20-gauge shotgun that he had taken from home. The boy opened fire on his fellow students, critically wounding an 11-year-old boy, seriously injuring a 13-year-old girl, and slightly wounding an adult staff member. A teacher persuaded the boy to put the gun down.

(6) October 21, 2013: Sparks Middle School, Sparks, Nevada:

Shouting "Why are you laughing at me? Why are you doing this to me?" 12-year-old Jose Reyes fatally shot a teacher and wounded two other 12-year-old students with a 9mm semiautomatic Ruger handgun. His parents told investigators that the gun had been stored in an unlocked case on a shelf above the refrigerator.

(7) January 10, 2013: Taft Union High School, Taft, California:

Sixteen-year-old Bryan Oliver walked into his science classroom with a 12-gauge Winchester shotgun that belonged to his brother, aimed at a 16-year-old classmate

he said had bullied him, and fired a single shot that struck the boy in the chest, injuring him (Everytown, 2015, p. 2).

The timeworn proverb of ‘you need for a village to raise a child’ has been confirmed based on the caliber of students who attended our schools now compared to students from decades ago. Our society saw, “An upsurge in concern for the teaching of civics as voter turnout has dropped off” (Houston, 2012, p. 2); however, “Trying to teach civics without teaching character is like trying to teach reading without teaching the alphabet” (Houston, 2012, p. 2).

Many individuals say our youth, perhaps our entire society, needed a moral focus. The work of instilling character education, values, moral awareness, and self-awareness had been the job of the parents and religious leaders in the past; however, Creasy expresses that over the years the responsibility shifted to community leaders and educators who focused on the importance of the human as a being, not the human as a number (Creasy, 2008). Effective implementation of character education in schools helps to ensure students are treated as individuals and not just test takers. There have been studies conducted, indicating positive student development that resulted from character education (CE) programs or programs that provided a desirable CE environment (Berkowitz, 2005; Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2011). The interest of character education was in the nonacademic side of the student, the “other side of the report card” (Berkowitz, 2005, p. 64). Character education not only improved a student’s school life, but it also led to a more productive work life. According to Huston-Holm (2010), “Employers wanted workers who are honest, who showed up for work on time and who worked

independently as well as on teams. The traits needed to create model citizens must be infused through the school curriculum and culture” (p. 9).

### **School Climate and School Culture**

To arrive at an improved conclusion and understanding of the study, the researcher explored the distinctions between school climate and school culture. School climate and school culture are not the same notion; and thus, the definition of both concepts will assist the reader to understand the differences of both ideas and concepts. School climate referred to teachers’ perceptions of their general work environment. School climate is “influenced by the formal organization, personalities of participants, and the leadership of the school” (Houtte, 2004, p. 151). Alternatively, “School culture refers to the belief systems, values, and cognitive structure” (Houtte, 2004, p. 151). Essentially, school climate was what one sees when they enter into a school building and school culture is the way things are or have been done in a school.

A healthy school climate has been described as one where “the technical, managerial, and institutional levels are in harmony” (Houtte, 2004, p. 154). Principally, a positive school climate was one where “the school is meeting both its instrumental and expressive needs and is successfully coping with disruptive outside forces as it directs its energy toward its mission” (Houtte, 2004, p. 154). Houtte expressed that the structure of schools could be determined by seven specific interaction patterns among students, teachers, and administrators. Houtte also marked that the essentials of behavior meet both the influential and communicative needs of the school and can characterize the three levels of responsibility and control within the school. Moreover, morale and academic emphasis “are expressed to be the important features of the technical level. Morale is the



collective sense of satisfaction, enthusiasm, pride, and friendliness that teachers feel about their job and school” (Houtte, 2004, p. 154). Furthermore, Houtte expressed that academic emphasis, in contrast, was the school's ambition for “setting high achieving, but achievable goals and providing an orderly and serious learning environment” (Houtte, 2004, p. 154).

Four important facets of the management level also included examined-principal influence, consideration, initiating structure, and resource support. *Examined-Principal influence* is the ability of the Principal to have an impact on the decisions of supervisors, to successfully "go to bat" for educators (p. 56). *Consideration* is administrator behavior that is friendly, open, helpful, and collegial. *Initiating structure* is both task and achievement oriented Principal comportment. Finally, resource support is the extent to which most Principals obtain the materials and supplies that are needed and requested by their teachers. The institutional level is studied in terms the school's integrity, or, the school's ability to cope with the community in a way that maintains the educational integrity of its programs. “When institutional integrity is high, teachers are protected from unreasonable community and parental demands” (Houtte, 2005, p. 156).

The idea of culture in a school brought with it some complications. No all-inclusive definition of culture from anthropology or sociology readily described a school house, and so as a result, Wayne K. Hoy provided a variety of definitions from various researchers in his study. For instance, Hoy shared that Ouchi defined organizational culture as "systems, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of the organization to its employees" (Hoy, 1990, p. 151). Conversely, Hoy (1990) also stated that Lorsch described culture to mean "the beliefs top managers in a

company share about how they should manage themselves and other employees" (p. 156). According to Hoy, (1990) Mintzberg also defined culture as simply "a system of beliefs about the organization, shared by its members, that distinguishes it from other organizations" (p. 156). As per Hoy (1990), Wilkins and Patterson argued that "an organization's culture consists largely of what people believe about what works and what does not," (p. 156) and Martin continued that "culture is an expression of people's deepest needs, a means of endowing their experiences with meaning" (Hoy, 1990, p. 156). Hoy (1990) continued to quote Schwartz and David as describing culture as "a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organization's members that produces norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals or groups in organizations" (p. 156). In contrast, the authors noted, Schein argued that culture should be earmarked for "the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (Hoy, 1990, p. 156). While inconsistencies exist in formations, there is common ground for describing culture. Organizational culture is a system of common directions that hold the unit together and give it unique individuality. However, some differences exist about what are shared-norms, values, philosophies, beliefs, expectations, myths, ceremonies, or artifacts. One method to unravel this problem of characterization is to inspect culture at different levels.

MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) co-conducted a study to examine if model schools differed in their school climate from those schools that did not portray a demonstrative climate. The findings were measured as per the dimensions of the Organizational Health Inventory. The findings specified that "students achieve higher

scores on standardized tests in schools with healthy learning environments” (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009, p. 1).

That same study listed three categories of schools grounded on the academic success of the learners. Those categories were ‘Exemplary’ schools, ‘Recognized’ schools and ‘Acceptable’ schools, as measured by the State of Texas Accountability Rating System. Later, those classifications were linked on the ten dimensions of school climate as ranked by the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI). The Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) was developed by the Ohio State University’ School of Educational Policy and Leadership. The survey was designed to help determine the overall climate status of schools and to help their areas of concern. The instrument is a series of short descriptive statements of interaction patterns among teachers, administrators, and students that is administered to the professional staff of a school. The research indicates that “there is substantial evidence in the literature to suggest that a school principal must first understand the school’s culture before implementing change” (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 1). The study informed the researcher that a leader, in this case the school administrator, must be able to identify the present culture of a school building before making the efforts to alter that culture. The study promoted that “school principals serve as change agents to transform the teaching and learning of the school culture” (MacNeil et al., Prater, Busch, 2009, p. 1). The reading showed that verifications from school principals advocated that “focusing on development of the school’s culture as a learning environment is fundamental to improved teacher morale and student achievement” (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 1). Furthermore, it was discovered that tangible and actual change was readily accomplished by “first changing the culture

of the school, rather than by simply changing the structures of the way the school operates and functions” (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 1). The study identified that Principals who grasped success were the administrative leaders that recognized the imperative part that the organizational culture held in establishing and developing effective institutions. The study determined that well inspired teachers derived from school buildings with sturdy school values and principles. The study maintained that “highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance and student outcomes” (MacNeil et al., 2009, p.1).

### **Substitute Teachers**

Each day, substitute teachers fill the role of the full-time educators who are absent from the classroom. The terms used in the United States to describe substitute teachers includes ‘substitutes’ and ‘guest teacher.’ Other parts of the world also utilize substitute teachers but refer to them as ‘supply teachers,’ ‘relief teachers,’ and ‘teachers on call.’ Nonetheless, regardless of the title used for substitute teachers, The National Education Association (NEA) defined all of their positions on the NEA website in the following way:

Substitute educators perform a vital function in the maintenance and continuity of daily education. In our public-school system, substitutes are the educational bridge when regular classroom educators are absent. They are called early in the morning, to take over lessons with short notice and ensure that quality education is maintained in our classrooms. The professional substitute ensures that time is productive and the student is learning (NEA.org, 2017).

Substitute teachers spend a lot of time leading and teaching children but continue to face the scrutiny by students, staff members, and community members. Between kindergarten and 12th grade, the typical student spends an average of one school year with a substitute teacher (Pardini, 2000). Gonzalez revealed from the Staffing Industry Report of 1999 that this had translated to having an average of 10% of a students' school year spent with an educator other than their assigned, full-time teacher (Gonzalez, 2002). On an average day, about 274,000 substitute teachers are teaching in classes around the United States (Elizabeth, 2001). Most people are aware that substitute teachers temporarily take the place of full-time educators in the classroom, but are often unaware of the reasons that educators are out of the classroom. Much like absent employees in other fields and careers, teachers are also out for personal illness, family illness, jury duty, emergencies, and short-term military service (Abdal-Haqq, 1997). Teacher absences have increased for other reasons than those stated; teachers have become more and more involved in curriculum writing, mentoring programs, committee partnerships, working with collaborative teams, and conducting action research for their field of study (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). Teacher absences are on the rise as school districts' demands for educators and on-going teacher training increases. Therefore, the need for substitute teachers also continues to rise.

According to Abdal-Haqq (1997), changes in collective bargaining and federal and state labor laws allow eligibility for more personal and sick days for full-time teachers. With the increased anticipatable excused absences, educators use the services of substitute teachers even more for sanctioned absences (Abdal-Haqq, 1997). Additionally, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), signed in 1993 by President

Clinton, directed and changed the role of substitute teachers who entered the classroom and took sporadic or block leave assignments for the regular classroom teacher. While this law has not increased the amount of days a teacher receives for excused absences, it affects the increments in paid and unpaid sporadic leave and the length of block leave. In Abdal-Haqq's (1997) article the author explained that:

FMLA makes it possible for teachers to take intermittent leave for 1-or-2-hour increments, in contrast to the traditional pattern of granting leave only in half-day units. Consequently, principals may be faced with the challenge of finding substitutes willing to work for 1 or 2 hours. The complex provisions of FMLA may also produce longer teacher absences at the end of semesters, resulting in more use of long-term substitutes (Abdal-Haqq, 1997, p.3).

### **Acknowledgement of Substitute Teachers**

There is a substitute shortage in American public schools and still it often appears that both students and staff do not treat substitute teachers with respect. Strong (2019) shared that “the demand for subs has gone up due to the increased professional development and training requirements (paragraph 1). Following that statement, she shared that “low pay, little recognition and insufficient training don't help the situation either” (Strong, paragraph 2). Leslie Strong shared the following statistics regarding the problem of substitute shortages in our schools:

11: Average number of days per year teachers are out of the classroom, according to a 2014 National Council on Teacher Quality study.

48: Percentage of schools facing a “severe or somewhat severe” shortage of substitutes in 2013.

\$12.90: Median hourly wage for substitutes. This would amount to just \$18,576 in gross pay for a substitute teacher who manages to work 180 days in a school year – a rare feat.

62: Percent drop in Pennsylvania state residents who sought teaching certificates in the past 3 years. A similar decline can be seen across the country, and candidates who might have previously spent a year or two subbing after graduation are now needed to fill full-time positions (paragraph 4).

Aside from the low pay and dropping number of sought teaching degrees, many substitute teachers reported they felt overlooked, poorly paid, snubbed, and treated disrespectfully by students and staff at the time the need for them continued to grow (Sklarz, 2013; Weems, 2003). Too often, students, teachers, and administrators do not hold favorable opinions of the guest teacher (Sklarz, 2013; Weems, 2003). Sklarz (2013) reported that substitute teachers do not have the same authority as the full-time certified teachers. Substitutes often have little knowledge regarding the students, their learning styles, or any individual specific needs the students may have had (Weems, 2003). They have no time to build relationships, which are a prerequisite for respect in the classroom (Flanagan, 2012). According to Flanagan (2012), substitute teachers are poorly paid strangers in a strange land doing a job that is undervalued in a large complicated system. The experience of substitute teachers is comparable in many ways to that of temporary employees in other fields.

Heathfield (2015), human resources expert and member of the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), discussed that contingent workers, also referred to as

temps, contract employees, consultants, and seasonal workers, were hired by businesses for a number of motives. Those details included, but were not limited to: seasonal customer demand, temporary surges in manufacturing orders, employee illness, employee maternity leave, and short-term leave (Heathfield, 2015). Much like the reasons a substitute teacher was in the classroom, a workforce temporary worker was at times, also invited to fill a role for a full-time employee. In her article titled, *Dealing with Workplace Bullies as a Temporary Worker*, Penttila shared her personal experience from a temporary job in which she experienced a form of workplace bullying while on duty at the switchboard for the day. Penttila (2013) shared that one salesperson said to her, “One false move, and tempie go bye-bye” (p. 1). Later, that same salesperson reappeared and recited, “I’m still watching you” (p. 1). Moreover, the entire experience was not a negative one for her. A second salesperson acted in a completely different manner than the first man. The second salesperson arrived thru the main entrance and introduced himself, shook her hand, shared a smile, and hoped for Penttila to enjoy her day. A much more positive exchange compared to the first encounter. According to Penttila (2013), with his positive conduct, “He treated me like...well, he treated me like a fellow co-worker. Like a human being with a brain and a name. He made me feel like I belonged there” (p. 1).

Penttila (2013), critiqued that with the sense of discomfort from a new setting comes the unspoken rule of temporary workers: “Temps don’t talk about the dark side of temping” (p. 2). She justified the silence and relayed that, “if you really need the money to get by, then making waves of the ‘he said, she said’ variety can be a quick ticket to not temping, because the temp agency is going to ask how the temp performed” (Penttila,



2013, p. 2). She concluded that the temps simply carried on, “Temps put his or her head down, nose to the grindstone, and tries to get the work done with as little trouble as possible until it’s possible to move on to a new assignment” (Penttila, 2013, p. 2). The environment for substitute teachers in the classroom could be similar; however, one main difference is that substitute teachers have the option to select the position they want to take for the day.

Research regarding a positive culture suggested that the workplace could perform better and have better success due to positive emotions and well-being. Seppala, Science Director of Stanford University’s Center for Compassion and Altruism Research, and Cameron, the William Russell Kelly Professor of Management and Organizations at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, determined that a, “Positive environment will lead to dramatic benefits for employers, employees, and the bottom line” (Seppala & Cameron, 2015, paragraph 2). Their article titled, *Proof That Positive Work Cultures Are More Productive*, explained that stress and pressure both bring with them hidden costs related to health care, disengagement, and lack of loyalty (Seppala & Cameron, 2015). Seppala and Cameron produced research that suggested that more employees preferred workplace wellbeing to material benefits.

Returning to the school setting, in an online school article titled, *Creating a Climate of Respect*, Cohen, Cardillo, and Pickeral (2011), members of the National School Climate Center, explained that a positive culture was a ground for respect for everyone (Cohen, Cardillo, & Pickeral, 2011). They asserted that creating a climate of respect in the school setting meant, “measuring the level of respect and then using that information to improve the quality of school life” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 1). In their

article, they outlined the term ‘respect’ to denote, “the experience of being taken seriously” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 1). In the school setting and in their published work, Cohen et al. (2011) characterized respect as identified by three individuals referenced in their article:

They actually listen to me here. The teachers care about what I think and feel. They want me to be a part of making this school even better. Like when they realize there’s much more bullying going on here than they knew. Now they’re really trying to do something about it. – A 15-year-old student (p. 1).

Dissimilarly, the absence of respect was stated as: “They don’t care what I think. All they care about are the tests. There aren’t even stalls in the bathroom. They dis’ us.” –A 16-year-old student” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 2). In addition, one teacher stated, “ten percent of kids in my class...are so bad that I’ve just given up on them” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 2).

To make respect a part of the school climate, Cohen et al. (2011) outlined a look at the School Climate Reform. They commented that, “respect doesn’t happen in isolation; it’s based in relationships. As we learn and teach, we are – or are not- respectful in the context of our social, emotional, civic, and intellectual interactions” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 2). Outlined in the article, school climate reform set its attention on four goals that helped nurture respect in school:

*Goal 1: Creating Democratic Communities*

In a respectful school, everyone’s voice is recognized and appreciated.

*Goal 2: Supporting Students and Teachers*

One common reason people act disrespectfully is that they feel disrespected themselves.

*Goal 3: Ensuring Safe Schools*

Feeling unsafe is one of the most important forces that undermine respectful norms and school communities.

*Goal 4: Promoting Student Engagement*

Supporting student engagement, and parent and guardian engagement as well, means that we're attuned to everyone's needs and interests – that we're acting respectfully. (Cohen, 2011, p. 3)

In their conclusion, Cohen et al. (2011) advocated that aside from the four goals reviewed, there was still much more that was to be done. They stated, “a foundation for respectful schools is to measure – and, thus, publicly recognize- how we treat one another and then use this information to create safer and more supportive, engaging, challenging, and joyful schools” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 2).

Reverting to the substitute teacher scene, Damle (2009) attempted to unpack some complications of the system for substitute teachers. Common issues included: a) Inadequate, unclear, or lack of lesson plans left by the classroom teacher, b) not enough time to know the student's learning styles, c) limited training in classroom management, d) little understanding of the culture of the school or classroom, e) particular inclusion of student needs and instructions, f) procedures for emergency situations, and g) knowledge of curriculum (Damle, 2009). The following provides a detailed explanation of these issues.

A: Inadequate, unclear lesson plans left by classroom teacher: Insufficient lesson plans can lead to poor or reduced learning. Along with frustration for the guest teacher and the students, lack of plans also ultimately constitutes a waste of energy, time and a failed opportunity to provide effective curriculum instruction to the students. Substitute teachers alleged that many times, teachers placed last minute requests for substitute jobs. The short notice prompted a limited explanation of the lesson for the day, inadequate supplies required for the activity or lesson, and an unclear objective for the activity to be completed by the students. In scenarios like this, substitute teachers were often left alone to answer the question almost every single student in the classroom asked and the one proclamation that was often left unarticulated in a substitute teacher's lesson plan; 'is this homework if we don't finish?'

B: Not enough time to know the students' learning styles: There exists about 70 different types of learning styles that differentiate students based on how they learn best. To learn such learning styles of students, educators spend much time reading IEPs (Individualized Educational Plan) and 504 plans to gather data and adapt their classroom teaching methods. A substitute teacher does not have that luxury of time; and thus, guest teachers must be cognizant and attentive of auditory, visual, and verbal learners. There was a small amount of time the substitute had to actually prepare individual materials in an effort to effectively reach the different learning styles of all the students in the day, let alone all the students in one single classroom in a single class hour.

C: Limited training in class management: As noted in her study, Stough (2015) expressed that even with extensive preservice training "over 83% of the [special education teachers] reported being underprepared in classroom management and

behavioral interventions” (p. 36). Additionally, Stough (2015) shared that “of those, 74.2% who received classroom management training post-graduation, the majority (64%) reported needing still further training in dealing with student behavior” (p. 36). This information does not provide data for substitute teachers who may not be privy to such training as full-time educators and special education teachers. Newer generations learned, acted, reacted, and behaved differently than prior generations. Students in 2017 mandated more from adults and were more provoking and demanding than students in the past. There existed little to no new classroom management training opportunities for substitute teachers in order for them to practice innovative methods of student/teacher exchanges in the classroom to help de-escalate situations, promote higher order thinking, and encourage positive classroom involvement.

D: Little understanding of school or classroom: Substitute teachers attend buildings where routines and behavior management procedures vary from building to building, and from classroom to classroom! Working every day in the same building could still lend itself to applying different procedures and expectations; and thus, guest teachers are still in the dark in the understanding of their school’s procedures regarding students and what their expectations are with regards to discipline and adopting the role of the full-time teacher. Substitute teachers pointed out the fact that with the different buildings and schoolrooms, there occurred numerous bell schedules, dissimilar start and end times, daily classroom routines, lunch schedules, and individual school procedures for sessions. The differentiated class routine schedules grew at the elementary level as students had certain days in which they correspondingly attended music class, art class, or physical education class.

E: Particular inclusion of students' needs and instructions: Guest teachers maintained that with students on 504 and IEP plans, they, as acting educators, were legally obliged to abide by these instructions; however, the formation of an effective inclusive classroom differs in complication based upon the tasks shaped by the disability at hand. Familiarity with each plan is important and at times specific teaching was essential. The 504 Plan was a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and was attending an elementary or secondary educational institution received accommodations that would ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment. The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) was a plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and was attending an elementary or secondary educational institution received specialized instruction and related services. Knowledgeable approaches to integrate special needs children into the classroom into a general education classroom demand creativity and diversity that require in-depth training and strategies that substitute teachers must have knowledge of to be effective teachers for all students in the classroom.

F: Procedures for emergency situations: When emergency situations occurred in a school, the safety of students and staff is paramount. While the goal is the same at every school building, most all existing buildings prepared themselves for emergencies at their schools in a number of ways. Substitute teachers visited many different school buildings in a year. The blueprint of every building and schoolroom was unlike any other. Guest teachers assisting with emergency drills had detailed instructions that must be observed when evacuating a building and taking students to a safe location. Unfamiliarity with evacuation routes and drill procedures could add anxiety and confusion to a day.

G: Knowledge of curriculum: Guest teachers earned state certifications to be present in the classroom, but unfortunately, many times they did not hold the specific credentials for the subject they are teaching. Curriculum knowledge permits a positive experience and allows for an opportunity to lead the class where students will continue learning with little to small disruption. However, at times, when students ask for directions and help from the guest teachers about issued assignments, the classroom atmosphere changes and substitute teachers are left simply observing a room of students to ensure proper comportment and task alignment.

Added to this list is the increased demand for technology in the classroom. Often the gap between the substitute teachers' knowledge and the amplified use of technology creates guest teachers who cannot follow the lesson plans because they are unaware of how the new technology in the classroom works, thus this results in a loss of academic time. Bouley (2014) discussed that substitute teachers do not have the same rapport that teachers have with students which is critical to a respectful classroom environment. In addition, because substitute teachers are not part of the grading system or reward structure, the advantage is much on the side of the full-time educator (Bouley, 2014).

Additionally, a positive youth-adult relationship remains difficult to create because young people are often mistreated and disrespected for simply being young (Bell, 1995). Bell, Director of Leadership Development with Youth Build USA, explained this behavior towards adolescents as adultism. Adultism refers to the behavior and attitude based on the assumption that adults are better than young people are, and are entitled to act upon young people without their agreement (Bell, 1995). Bell pointed out that our society considers young people less important and inferior to adults. In school

and in the classroom, youth are already under a lot of control by way of hall passes, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Bell, 1995). Disciplined if they yell back and punished unfairly because adults feel frustrated, students have no real power over the decisions that affect their lives in school (Bell, 1995). Combine this behavior with substitute teachers who come into the classroom with ‘guns a-blazin’ and their whole ‘my way or the highway’ intonation and we create a recipe for disaster in the classroom and a missed opportunity to connect positively with students.

The pursuit for substitute teacher appreciation appears to continue when the guest teacher departs the classroom. An online discussion on behavior management for students when a substitute teacher was present was a bit more forward and immediately tackled the issue of penalties for disobedience from students when the substitute teacher was present. While the post was aimed at helping the full-time educator wrestle with the problem of student behavior towards the guest teacher, the premise highlights the existing issue of substitute teachers not being treated fairly, thus emphasizing and recognizing the fact that treatment of guest teachers needed to be improved considerably. This thread generated some practices that various educators had attempted to direct students towards behaving appropriately when a substitute teacher was in the classroom in place of the full-time educator. Furthermore, schools that practiced character initiatives followed the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education and validated the importance of the relationship with substitute teachers via Principle 4. Principle 4 attempted to create a caring community and focused on the relationships fostered in the building. Their respective principles and indicators as per the character.org (2017) website and its printed



document titled '*A Framework for School Success: 11 Principles of Effective Character Education*,' are listed as the following:

4.1 The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments between students and staff.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students perceive staff as caring and report that they could go to an adult in the school with a problem.
- Staff frequently attend school events; students and parents report that they do.
- The school encourages and makes provisions and time for students and teachers to meet in small group settings such as class meetings or advisor-advisee periods.
- Staff provide extra help in academic work and counsel or mentor students when needed.

4.2 The school makes it a high priority to help students form caring attachments to each other.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students perceive the student body as friendly and inclusive.
- The school uses educational strategies (e.g., cooperative learning, cross-age mentoring, class meetings) to encourage mutual respect and a feeling of responsibility for one another.

4.3 The school takes steps to prevent peer cruelty and violence and deals with it effectively when it occurs.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Students report that bullying (including cyber-bullying), teasing, and acts of cruelty or intolerance are infrequent and are not tolerated by staff.
- All students participate in activities, programs, and processes that promote tolerance, understanding, respect, and peace among students (e.g., conflict resolution, anti-bullying programs, peer mediation, class meetings).
- Staff demonstrate ways to identify, constructively address, and discourage peer abuse (e.g., bullying; put-downs; racial slurs; insensitive gender remarks; remarks on appearance, economic, or social status) and increase students’ understanding and respect for personal, economic, and cultural differences.

4.4 The school makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments among adults within the school community.

Key indicators of exemplary implementation:

- Parents, community members, and guests report feeling welcome in the school.
- Staff perceive the work environment as positive and their colleagues as supportive and caring. Artifacts demonstrate ways their relationships are nurtured (e.g., invitations for social gatherings or agendas for helping those in need, working collaboratively, celebrating successes and accomplishments).
- Staff make efforts to form positive relationships with students’ parents and guardians. Parents and teachers both reported feeling respected by one another.
- Staff report that the administration fosters a collegial atmosphere.
- (For districts): Staff at the district level make efforts to develop caring and respectful relationships among themselves, with staff at the school level, and in

the broader community (character.org, 2017. Principle 4, p.1).

Ertll (2014), author of, *Substitute Teachers Deserve More Respect*, outlined that guest teachers possess courage and commitment as they willingly, “deal not just with students who are messing around but also with students who are screaming at us and throwing objects at us” (p. 1). In his online post, Ertll (2014) stated that it took an inordinate length of time for substitute teachers to learn management and teaching skills that could be effectively executed in the classroom. Additionally, the author made mention of the multi-faceted levels of education a substitute teacher must be familiar with because, “you [the substitute teacher] may be assigned a math, science, English, or even physical education class on short notice” (Ertll, 2014, p. 1). Concluding that substitute teachers receive little pay, no union representation, or retirement plans, Ertll (2014) informed the readers that, “every day, they [substitutes] are showing your young people that it takes resilience and fortitude to do a job right” (p. 1).

### **Conclusion**

The general representation of the literature reviewed described evidence of the negative judgment and disrespect toward substitute teachers. Too often, there is a less than favorable, even toxic, relationship between classroom teachers, school staff, and students towards the guest teacher. Research that regarded the role of, need for, and opinions of substitute teachers was clear. The vast majority of substitute teachers were regarded as little more than glorified babysitters who were thrust into the roles of educational leader and mentor without training, time to build respectful relationships, or support from school staff. Having considered how much time substitute teachers spent in front of students; improvements were needed if schools were going to maximize learning

time. An improved overall school environment may be one way to mend the conditions for substitute teachers, and effective character education is one avenue to this improvement.

## **Chapter Three: Methods**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research design of this study including the methodology, data collection, and data analysis. The data collection process presented included methods for distributing surveys, gathering data, and analyzing data. Chapter Three also informs readers of general demographics of the school district, middle school, and participants in the study.

### **Setting**

‘Fast Facts’ about the school district stated the school district encompassed roughly 160 square miles in a county located in the mid-west state of Missouri (School District, 2017, p. 1). As of this writing, it was one of the largest school districts in the state of Missouri and included all, or part of, seven local cities. Total enrollment for the 2016-2017 school year was just over 18,000 students with a district graduation rate higher than 95%. The percentage of students attending college after high school was above 80.0 %. The highest ethnicities represented in the school district were Caucasian (above 80.0%) and African-American (below 10.0%) (School District, 2017).

During the 2016-2017 school year, the middle school reported an enrollment of roughly 850 students and 55 full-time teachers, resulting in a student-to-teacher ratio of 15:1, as per data noted from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2017). The middle school had a racial breakdown of approximately 700 Caucasian students, 60 African American students, and 30 Hispanic students. They reported having 9.0% of their students participating in the Free & Reduced Lunch program (NCES, 2017). Academically, the school ranked above 90.00% of middle schools in Missouri in regards

to statewide performance (NCES, 2017). The average standard test score was 93.32% (NCES, 2017). The school also ranked first among the five middle schools in its respective district and was ranked in the top 20 of the 434 Missouri public middle schools (NCES, 2017). It is clear that this middle school was a high-performing school.

### **Participants**

Participants included 101 men and women working in the state of Missouri as substitute teachers. The selection criteria were based on the following: substitute teachers who applied for certification to work as licensed substitute teachers in the state of Missouri and applied to serve as substitute teachers in the school district where the study was conducted. Seeking participants for this study, the researcher contacted a school district liaison for substitute teachers, requested contact phone numbers, and electronic mailing addresses to communicate with potential participants for this study.

The focus of this study was perceptions of substitute teachers regarding the impact of character education in a suburban school district. The middle school had an intentional character education focus, with school grades six through eight. In addition, this school was recognized as a Missouri School of Character and a National School of Character by Character.org (2017). Previous experiences from other schools where participants substitute taught served as part of the focus, as well.

Six participants agreed to sit with the researcher in one-on-one, face-to-face interviews to discuss the research questions that were the focus of this study. For the sake of anonymity, the substitute teachers will be referenced hereto as Substitute A, Substitute B, Substitute C, etc. Substitute teacher A was a male instructor who previously worked in the district in which he then-currently substitute taught. He was a

former administrator with 12 years in that position; and prior to that, he spent nine years in the regular classroom in a public school. As of this study, Substitute A served as a substitute teacher for four years. Substitute teacher B was a female instructor who served the entirety of her teaching career in a public-school classroom. She was a 25-year classroom veteran who worked the past three years serving as a substitute teacher. Substitute teacher C had not served as a full-time, regular classroom teacher. He was a male teacher who served as a substitute teacher for 16 years, as of this study. Serving as a part-time substitute teacher, he had the opportunity to visit all the schools in the district in which this study took place.

Substitute teacher D was a recent graduate (2016) from a local university. She earned a degree in education and as of this study, pursued full-time employment while she also worked part-time as a substitute teacher. Completing her ‘student-teaching’ practicum hours in the district being studied, she returned to the same district to serve as a substitute teacher. Substitute Teacher E served as a substitute for one year. In addition to being a graduate from a local college, she had not yet obtained a full-time job as an educator, but did serve one long-term substitute teaching position for three months in a neighboring school district. With a teaching degree concentrated in the field of English Language Arts, Substitute E continued to seek full-time employment and serve as a substitute teacher while also attending night classes to earn her Master’s degree.

Substitute teacher F was a 25-year-old male with a teaching degree in music but was seeking to fill a job in Social Studies or English Language Arts (ELA). Substitute F had served as a substitute teacher for two years in neighboring districts and continued to seek

full-time employment. With a more candid attitude and outlook, Substitute F expressed a blunter response to the research questions.

### **Data Collection**

In order to receive authorization for data collection from the superintendent of the studied school district, the researcher contacted the Director of Assessment and Summer Programs. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and explained the purposes of the data to be collected. In this case, the data were to be used to get a better perspective of the perceptions and views of substitute teachers in schools, concerning the research questions for this study.

With approval from the Director of Assessment and Summer Programs, the researcher then contacted the school district's substitute finder specialist to obtain substitute teacher contact information. The information the researcher sought was the substitute teachers' contact information: first and last name, primary contact phone number, and e-mail address on file. The contact information was used to communicate with substitute teachers for their recruitment and participation in the study.

Data collected in this study was derived from two sources: one-on-one interviews and surveys administered to the participants and substitute teachers working in Missouri. Interviews and surveys elicited information from participants by asking them to share their experiences with character education and the ways they were treated in the schools where they worked, that met the selection criteria for this study. Interview and survey questions gave participants the opportunity to share their experiences. These methods were appropriate for this study, because the topic being researched was one that required personal narratives shared by the substitute teachers.



Personal invitations, telephone calls, and e-mail contact were scheduled to reach out to substitute teachers in the school district. The researcher did not need to make phone calls to reach the potential participants, as the mass e-mail sent suited the needs of the study. The e-mail included the purpose of the study and a request for participation in the study from the substitute teachers, along with appropriate adult consent to participate and the survey/questionnaire. For the mass e-mail, the researcher used SurveyMonkey.com, a free online survey software and questionnaire tool.

In addition, the researcher contacted a building secretary who oversaw the placement of substitute teachers in her place of work. The secretary was provided with copies of the surveys, requests for participation in the study, and the adult consent form for participating in the study. The secretary was asked to place one copy of all these forms in every substitute teacher's folder who reported to the building. In a span of four weeks, seven participants completed their questionnaire via paper format.

Each of the institutions observed were public schools in the state of Missouri. The middle schools shared similar demographics and were all in the same school district. The researcher created a specific questionnaire for the use of this study. A total of 101 substitute teachers participated in this study, including the seven substitute teachers who opted to complete the questionnaire via paper format and the six participants who additionally sat for an interview with the researcher to answer the study research questions.

### **Surveys**

The participants in this study were required to complete surveys in which they could skip questions at their discretion. The surveys had the primary purpose of allowing

participants to provide responses to questions pertinent to obtaining their perceptions on their treatment within the schools in which they worked.

The researcher gathered survey data via online surveys through SurveyMonkey. In order to move this work forward, upon obtaining approval of the IRB the researcher contacted the school district's Director of Assessment and Summer Programs with an electronic letter and requested permission to conduct research in the school district. At the request of the district, the director gave the researcher Form 1440. Form 1440 was the agreement for a research study which listed the investigator's contact information, research topic, and research procedure. Then the researcher provided the director with a completed electronic copy of Form 1440.

Next, the investigator received approval from the school district regarding the Form 1440. From there the researcher contacted the school district's Sub finder Specialist and requested the contact numbers and electronic email addresses on file for the substitute teachers registered to work in the school district. While awaiting this information, the investigator set up a 'SurveyMonkey.com' account and created an online survey to be used for this study based on the information submitted in the previously approved IRB. Upon receiving the email addresses from the district, the investigator emailed a Recruitment Letter and Consent Form to all contacts on the substitute list provided by the Subfinder Specialist. This email informed the potential participants of a follow-up link in which they would be able to take part in a survey. The email also explained the study and the importance of their participation as substitute teachers. Upon receiving the informed consent form from all participants, the investigator emailed the link to a generated 'SurveyMonkey.com' account asking for their participation in the

survey. Those that chose to participate completed the survey on ‘SurveyMonkey.com.’ The website helped the investigator track the number of participants who had decided to partake in the survey. The investigator collected the data and reviewed the submitted information on the ‘SurveyMonkey.com’ site.

### **Interviews**

The researcher originally collected survey data from 101 participants. From the 101 participants, the researcher was able to identify six participants that could provide descriptive accounts of their experiences as substitute teachers, and potentially yield useful data to move this qualitative study forward. Next, the researcher conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interviews to capture the narratives from these six participants.

The interviews allowed the participants to further elaborate on the topics of interest to them and this allowed the researcher to capture the voices of the participants. This supported the researcher in gathering rich, thick descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used the four research questions to guide the interview. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

### **Analysis Procedure**

After the substitute teachers were contacted via their listed e-mail addresses provided to the investigator by secretaries and/or administrative assistants who were familiar with substitutes assigned to their buildings, the researcher gathered data from 101 participants over the course of 57 days. The researcher also received seven e-mails from participants who had not participated, due to their personal preference to take substitute jobs at the elementary level and eight e-mails from substitute teachers who

chose not to participate, due to their personal preference to take substitute jobs at the high school level. Six participants elected to take part in personal interviews. The gathered data were collected then coded and categorized into themes for further analysis by the researcher.

During the analysis, the interview and survey responses were specifically examined for common themes in the areas of student behavior, staff behavior, and administrative support, along with other areas in relation to the questions asked in the survey. Because of this, the researcher looked at the responses and how they contributed to the study by finding the frequency of student references, frequency of staff references, and frequency of administration references. All responses discussed one, two, or all of the three groups in their answers based, on the question answered by the participant. Common themes were highlighted in different colors and the researcher then tabulated the common themes.

There were no risks nor deceptions involved in this research study. There were no existing sensitive issues nor profound topics discussed, shared, or asked among the participating substitute teachers or the researcher. The data and records regarding the survey results, the participants' statements, and all interview and survey related materials were kept confidential. Participants and schools referenced were not referred to by their name, but rather by using a special code only familiar to the researcher. All submitted survey results were provided via 'SurveyMonkey.com' and thus were anonymous. The materials were locked in a secure filing cabinet and will be kept for the required amount of time following completion of the study (three years), after which all information will be destroyed.

**Limitations**

In this study, participants represented different age groups, different teaching experience levels, diverse levels of academic degrees, altered understandings of acceptable character and different generational customs of what was accepted and not accepted behavior in a traditional classroom. The limitation thus existed in the generational expectations and generational views of what the participants considered to have been the norm for student and staff behavior in a general school setting. Additionally, participants represented different levels of teaching experience. The experience levels created a wider spectrum of educator knowledge and expectations in the study. In addition, a number of sought substitutes did not participate in this study. The substitute teachers who chose not to participate mentioned they only took jobs at either the high school level or elementary level, because they were retirees from these grade levels and were already familiar with the administration and staff in those buildings. Also, a number of participants skipped some questions, thus not providing data for some queries. Lastly, character education was difficult to assess, as there existed numerous understandings and expectations of what character education in schools looked and felt like.

**Selection Bias**

The selection criteria described previously, was followed for identifying potential participants for this study; however, these criteria in no way guaranteed that the study's sample was not 'biased.' It is possible that the substitute teachers who participated in this study differed in some important ways. There were both male and female participants of varying ages and backgrounds.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher served as the primary instrument for collecting all of the data in this study. Therefore, there is a chance that the tool used to collect the data could produce unreliable results. To reduce the likelihood that flaws with the instrumentation would bias the results, the interview and survey questions were carefully designed, as an attempt to ensure that they did not bias participants' responses. To increase the reliability of the findings, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed before being analyzed.

**Conclusion**

The intention of this chapter was to clarify the procedures with which this study was conducted and provide readers with a clear view of the methodology used. The source of the investigation was the data provided by means of the surveys, interview questions created by the researcher, and any additional information provided from the substitute teachers regarding the topics of this study to the researcher.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of the survey and the interview data, and address the research questions that guided this study. The problem studied was to explore and compare the perceptions of substitute teachers regarding schools they had worked in that adopted character education practices and schools that did not exercise character education practices. Specifically, the study asked substitute teachers to describe schools, students, staff members, and administrative leaders in school settings with implemented character education practices, as well as schools, students, staff members, and administrative leaders from schools that did not practice such character education initiatives. The researcher was investigating if effective character education altered the climate of a school significantly enough that guest teachers who substitute teach there could feel it. This chapter covers the findings of the surveys completed by substitute teachers who participated in the study and interviews with a subset of substitute teachers. To protect the anonymity of all the substitute teachers, the participants completed the survey via an online survey account created by the researcher on SurveyMonkey.com. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees all participants were given pseudonyms.

### **Research Questions**

In order to move this study forward, the researcher used the following questions to guide the inquiry:

**Research Question 1:** How do substitute teachers describe schools that are actively involved in Character Education versus those schools that are not?

**Research Question 2:** How do substitute teachers describe students in a school of character versus students in schools that are not schools of character?

**Research Question 3:** How do substitute teachers describe staff members in a school of character versus staff members that are not in schools of character?

**Research Question 4:** How do substitute teachers describe the administration team in a school of character versus administration team that is not in a school of character?

**Findings**

There were 101 total participants in this study. A 22-question online survey was used to gather data, in addition to one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with participants. Participants could opt out of any questions they desired. In the data reported, the number of participants listed represented those who chose to answer the question asked. The numbers varied from question-to-question.

Question 1 from the survey asked the gender of the participants. All participants answered this question. There were 89 female substitute teachers (88.12%) and 12 male substitute teachers (11.88%).

Table 1

*Age of Participants*

Age Range	Number	Percentage
18-24	3	4.11
25-34	4	5.48
35-44	10	13.70
45-54	12	16.44
55-64	28	38.36
65-74	16	21.92
75 or older	0	0.00
Total	73	



As noted in Table 1, of the 73 participants who shared their age, the largest group of participants were in the age group of 55 to 64 years of age (38.36%) and the smallest group represented were those substitute teachers within the ages of 18 to 24 years old (4.11%). Additionally, the survey revealed that the percentage of participants from age 25 to 34 was 5.48%, the percentage of participants from age 35 to 44 was 13.70%, the percentage of participants from ages 45 to 54 was 16.44%, and the percentage of participants from age 65 to 74 was 21.92%. A total of 28 participants skipped this question and did not provide their age.

The responses provided for question 3 identified the participants to be 97.22% White/Caucasian and 2.78% Hispanic. No other race or ethnicity group was self-identified in this study. Of the 101 participants, 29 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Question 4 from the survey showed that 34 participants (45.58%) affirmed to be retired educators while the remaining 39 participants (53.42%) shared that they were not retired educators. Of the 101 participants, 28 participants skipped this question.

Table 2

*If Retired, How Long Taught*

Range in Years	Number	Percentage
1-5	0	0.00
6-10	2	5.66
11-15	3	8.33
16-20	3	8.33
21 or more	28	77.78
Total	36	

Question 5 from the survey shows that 36 of the retired participants shared their years in the teaching profession. In the majority of the cases, 28 of the retired educators (77.78%) had taught in the classroom for over 21 years. Additionally, the responses

showed that two of the retired teachers (5.56%) taught between 6 and 10 years, three of the retired teachers (8.33%) taught between 11 and 15 years, and three more of the retired educators who participated in this study (8.33%) taught between 15 and 20 years. Of the 101 participants, 65 participants skipped this question.

Table 3

*Years worked as a Substitute Teacher*

Range in Years	Number	Percentage
1-5	47	67.14
6-10	13	18.57
11-15	5	7.14
16-20	3	4.29
21 or more	2	2.86
Total	70	

Question 6 from the survey inquired about the length of time that the substitute teacher had been working as a guest teacher. The information provided showed that the majority of the respondents were in their first to fifth year of substitute teaching. The next group who worked for 6 to 10 years was at 18.75%, followed by the substitutes who worked for 11 to 15 years at 7.14%, 16 to 20 years at 4.29% and lastly, the participants who had served over 21 years of substitute teaching were 2.86%. Of the 101 participants, 31 participants skipped this question.

Table 4

*Reasons for Taking Substitute Position*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Start or end time	39	53.42
Age of students	51	69.86
Distance from home	40	54.79
Subject	43	58.90
Climate in building	40	54.79
Behavior of students	38	52.05
Total	251	

Table 5

*Reasons for Declining Substitute Positions*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Start or end time	29	42.03
Age of students	34	49.28
Distance from home	30	43.48
Subject	34	49.28
Climate in building	30	43.48
Behavior of students	44	63.77
Total	201	

For question 7 and question 8 of the survey, the study requested the participants to select from a series of six different choices, the factors which they considered when taking a particular substitute job (question 7) or when declining a particular substitute job (question 8). Those six choices were:

- 1) Start or end time
- 2) Age of students
- 3) Distance from home
- 4) Subject
- 5) Climate of the building
- 6) Behavior of the Students

Of the 73 participants who responded to question 7: the majority of the contributors considered ‘age of students’ to be the main factor for taking a substitute job (69.86%), while the lowest factor for taking a job was ‘behavior of the students’ (52.05%). Of the 101 participants, 28 participants skipped this question.

Question 8 from the survey asked the participating substitute teachers to list the factors they considered when declining a particular job. In these responses, 44 of the 69 participants who responded selected ‘behavior of students’ to be the factor for declining a

job. From the survey, this was the major factor for declining a job (63.77%), with ‘start or end time’ being the lowest motive (42.03%) for a substitute teacher to decline a job. Of the 101 participants, 32 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Table 6

*Welcoming at School*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Administrative Team	13	
Office Staff	55	
Students	7	
Total	75	

Question 9 asked the substitute teachers to reference ‘What makes you feel welcomed in a school building?’ Of the 70 participants who answered the question, 55 (78.57%) referenced the ‘office staff,’ 13 (18.57%) referenced the ‘administration team,’ and seven of the participants (10.00%) referenced the ‘students’ to be the ones who made them feel welcomed in a school building. Of the 70 participants, five participants listed two different factors as to why they feel welcomed in a school building. Of the 101 total participants in the study, 31 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Question 10 asked the guest teachers if they ‘Have ever felt unwelcomed by students?’ Of the 68 participants who answered the question, 28 (41.17%) responded by saying “yes” and 40 of the substitute teachers (58.82%) responded by saying “no.” Of the 101 total participants, 33 participants skipped this question.

Question 11 asked the substitute teachers if they ‘Have ever felt unwelcomed by staff members?’ Of the 68 participants who answered the question, 31 substitute teachers (45.59%) responded by saying “yes” and 37 of the remaining substitute teachers

(54.41%) responded by saying “no.” Of the 101 total participants in the study, 33 participants opted to not provide their input for this question on this study.

Table 7

*Some Schools Have More Positive Climate*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Yes	51	75.00
No	11	16.18
Welcome in All	6	8.82
<i>Of the Yes Responses</i>		
Staff welcoming	23	57.50
Leadership built climate	12	30.00
Students are welcoming	5	12.50
Total	40	

Question 12 asked the substitute teachers, ‘In your experience, do you believe some schools have a more welcoming, positive climate? If so, please explain.’ After examining the responses, the researcher found that out of the 68 participants who answered the question, 51 (75.00%) answered “yes” and 11 (16.18%) answered “no.” Six of the participants (8.82%) stated that they felt welcomed in every building. Additionally, from the 51 participants who answered positively, 40 went further in their responses. In responding to this question, 23 participants explained that the staff made them feel welcome, while 12 of the participants referenced the leadership of the administrators to the welcoming and positive climate, and five of the substitute teachers acclaimed the students for the welcoming climate in school. Of the 101 total participants in the study, 33 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Table 8

*Most Accepted by Office Staff*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Building A	6	18.75
Building B	7	21.88
Building C	15	46.88
Building D	3	9.38
Building E	1	3.13
Total	32	

Question 13 focused on the climate and friendliness of the office personnel in a school building. This question asked the substitute teachers to answer, “In which building do you feel most accepted by the Office Staff?” Sixty-nine substitute teachers responded to this question, and many of the respondents included names of multiple buildings at which they felt most accepted by the office staff. For building anonymity, the researcher gave generic names to the middle schools and for the focus of the study, the researcher curtailed the attention to the middle schools, the references to elementary schools and high schools have been omitted. There were five middle schools in the school district where the study was conducted. These middle schools are referred to as A, B, C, D, and E; these letters represent the references mentioned on question 13. Six participants (18.75%) referenced building ‘A’ as the building in which they felt most accepted by the office staff and seven participants (21.88%) referenced building ‘B.’ Additionally, 15 participants (46.88%) referenced building ‘C,’ while three participants (9.38%) referenced building ‘D.’ Lastly, one single participant (3.13%) referenced building ‘E’ as the building where they felt most accepted by the office staff. As per the survey results provided to the researcher, middle school ‘C’ received the majority of the 32 votes for this question. Of the 101 total participants, 32 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input for this question.

Table 9

*Most Helpful*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Office/Support Staff	33	46.48
Teachers/Certified Staff	29	40.85
Students	7	9.86
Administrators	2	2.82
Total	71	

Question 14 requested the substitute teachers to select which groups they found to be the most helpful and respectful at the schools where they took substitute jobs. From the 71 participants who completed this question, 33 (46.48%) substitute teachers selected ‘Office/ Support Staff’ to be the most helpful and respectful. Teachers or certified staff was the selection of 29 participants. Only two participants (2.82%) selected ‘Administrators’ to be the most helpful and respectful. Seven participants selected students as the most helpful. Of the 101 total participants, 30 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Table 10

*Why does the building seem positive?*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Feeling Welcomed & Appreciated	43	63.24
Student behavior	40	58.82
Staff willingness to help	31	45.59
Feeling supported by administration	25	36.76
Size of School	12	17.65
Total	151	

Question 15 follows and posed a query in relation to building atmosphere and surveyed substitute teachers about the differences they found in the varied middle school buildings in which they substituted, within the school district. Participants were instructed to choose all that applied. Forty-three of the 68 participants (63.24%) found

the biggest difference to be ‘Feeling welcomed and appreciated,’ with ‘Size of school’ selected as the least difference noticed in buildings where they substituted, at (17.65%). Staff willingness to help was almost as popular of a response, with 40 participants (58.82%) selecting this option. Feeling supported by administration was second to last in this question with, 25 of the 68 participants selecting this option as a difference they found in a middle school building in which they substituted (36.76%). Of the 101 total participants, 33 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Table 11

*Why Enjoy Subbing Here Most?*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Friendly & positive staff	34	49.28
Student respect & behavior	23	33.33
Administrative support	7	10.14
Distance from home	5	7.24
Total	69	

Question 16 asked the participants to “Consider the school you enjoy subbing in the MOST. Explain why.” After coding the answers and looking for common themes, the researcher found that the participants referenced four themes: school staff, school administrators, students, and distance of the job site from home. From the 69 participants who answered the question, 34 (49.28%) mentioned the friendliness and positive staff as reasons they enjoy a job at a particular building. A total of 23 participants (33.33%) stated that student respect and student behavior were factors for repeated substitute jobs in a particular building. A total of seven substitute teachers (10.14%) claimed that the support and acknowledgement from the administrative team was their reason for frequently taking jobs in a particular building, and five substitutes (7.24%) referenced the distance of the building to their home for the reason to frequently substitute in a



particular building. Of the 101 total participants in the study, 32 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Table 12

*Why I Substitute Here Least?*

Answer Choices	Number	Percentage
Negative student behavior	29	46.03
Unhelpful staff	15	23.80
Building proximity	8	12.69
Lack of admin support	6	8.82
School hours	5	7.93
Total	63	

Question 17 asked the participants to “Consider the school you choose NOT to substitute in the most. Explain why.” Again, the researcher coded the answers for common themes. Those themes were school staff, school administrators, students, school hours, and school distance from home. A total of 63 participants responded to this answer. From their responses, we learned that a total of 29 participants (46.03%) listed negative student behavior and 15 of the participants (23.80%) chose not to substitute in a particular building, due to unhelpful staff and negative feelings from teachers.

Additionally, eight substitute teachers (12.69%) explained that the building proximity from their home was a factor as to why they did not substitute in a particular building, six participants (8.82%) claimed lack of support from the administration; and lastly, five participants (7.93%) cited school hours. Of the 101 total participants, 38 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Question 18 asked, “What do you feel is the correlation between student behavior and school climate?” From the 65 replies, the researcher noted the majority of the respondents believed that the kindness and attitudes of school staff was reflected in student behavior and school climate. After coding the responses on question 18, the

researcher found that respondents believed a positive administration and clearly set expectations helped create positive student behavior and school climate. Of the 101 total participants, 36 participants skipped this question and did not provide their input.

Question 19 asked the participants, “Are you aware of any Character Education initiatives at any of the buildings in which you sub?” A total of 64 guest teachers responded to this question. A total of 42 substitute teachers (65.63%) said they were aware of character initiatives, while 13 substitutes (20.13%) claimed they were not aware of such initiatives occurring at the buildings at which they worked. Nine participants (14.06%) simply referenced character programs and positive banners, but did not positively list if they were aware of Character Education initiatives in the building. Of the 101 total participants, 37 participants skipped this question and did not provide input.

Question 20 asked the participants, “Do you feel there is a correlation between effective Character Education and student behavior?” A total of 64 responded – 42 participants (65.63%) referenced that a correlation existed between effective character education and student behavior. Conversely, nine participants (14.06%) believed that there did not exist such correlation. The remaining 13 participants (20.31%) felt unsure of whether or not there existed such a correlation between character education and student behavior. Of the 101 total participants, 37 participants skipped this question.

Question 21 asked the participants, “Do you feel there is a correlation between effective Character Education and Staff attitudes?” The majority, or 39 participants (61.90%) of the total 63 who responded, said there was a correlation between effective character education and staff attitudes. Conversely, eight participants (12.70%) believed that there was not such a correlation. The remaining 16 participants (25.40%) felt unsure

of whether or not there existed such a correlation to character education and staff attitudes. Of the 101 total participants, 38 participants skipped this question.

Question 22 of the survey asked the participants, “Do you feel there is a correlation between effective Character Education and school climate?” From the 61 participants who replied, 42 substitute teachers (68.86%) explained that there did exist a correlation between effective character education and school climate. Conversely, four participants (6.56%) believed that there was not such a correlation, while the remaining 15 participants (24.60%) stated no opinion on this question. Of the 101 total participants, 40 participants skipped this question.

### **Addressing the Research Questions**

The following are data from the interviews that pertain to the research questions referenced next in the study.

#### **Research Question1: How do substitute teachers describe schools that are actively involved in character education versus those schools that are not?**

Substitute A: Substitute teacher A explained that schools with character education programs “have students that tend to care more about others even if they are not friends.” He also stated that, in the school setting, “there is a sense of protection towards each other” (Substitute Teacher A). Substitute teacher A stressed that, “schools without character education programs have more apparent bullying, unruly attitudes and disrespect.”

Substitute B: Substitute teacher B maintained her statement that schools actively involved in character education “are schools that care about students and their interaction with others” in contrast to schools that are not involved in character education,

Substitute C: Substitute teacher C conveyed, “Schools of character seem to have a positive ‘buzz’ in the air.” Substitute C proceeded to explain the schools of character setting by asserting that schools of character have “an unexplained welcoming existence that one can feel and see starting with the office staff and ending with the brush of students in the hallway.” He discussed with the Researcher that “other schools did not seem to have that positive vibe,” explaining that “they [other schools] were not bad, they were simply easy to feel ‘lost’ in and I had a higher sense of stress or helplessness” (Substitute teacher C),

Substitute D: Substitute teacher D explained that personally recognizing schools that are actively involved in character education versus schools that are not, “is evident when one walks into a school. Whether one visually sees the efforts gone into character education or the presence of everyone inside the building.” Substitute D assessed that “some may see hallway signs with character quotes outside the classrooms that connect to the lessons students are learning.” She continued to point out that “walking into a school filled with inspiration for students warms the environment people may feel when walking into the school because it feels inviting” (Substitute teacher D). Substitute D summarized her belief by declaring:

I think the environment of a school influences students whether a student solely just reads hallway signs, bulletin boards, or it causes a student to ponder how it relates to their life, that may provoke a student to ask their teachers further questions, which allows student character to grow and makes a school of character stronger.

Substitute D reasoned her opinion by stating, “Schools that aren’t a school of character aren’t setting a character standard. Without these standards, it’s very easy to lose focus and not focus on what is important” (Substitute teacher D). She asserted, “Yes, subjects are important, but learning empathy, humility, and other character traits help paints a bigger picture of the school” (Substitute teacher D).

Substitute E: Substitute teacher E expressed, “I think that, teaching character produces better citizens of the world.” She integrated her thoughts on character education in schools in our interview by revealing, “If you’re not developing character, you’re also just teaching to the test and trying to get your funding and that is as high as your school is willing to reach” (Substitute teacher E). Substitute E contended, “Non-character schools are just trying to reach a benchmark and not trying to excel.”

Substitute F: Substitute teacher F expressed, “From what I’ve seen, the schools that promote the character movement have more signs and posters that promote whatever the word of the month, or word of the week is.” She added, “I notice that the schools that do not blatantly promote character seem to focus more on school pride or school spirit, which I believe, can be just as effective because they both want students to act in a manner that represents their school” (Substitute teacher F).

**Research Question 2: How do substitute teachers describe students in a school of character versus students in schools that are not schools of character?**

Substitute A: Substitute teacher A asserted that “schools with no character education programs have kids that are louder, hallways that are chaotic, and often have disrespectful language towards each other.” Substitute A then discussed student discipline and claimed “students know they don’t face circumstances that affect them”

(Substitute teacher A). Substitute A observed that “schools with character education programs show students and staff that are more reserved, students tend to listen and show a better sense of respect, have more organized hallways and classrooms, etc.”

Substitute B: Substitute teacher B generalized students in a school of character by claiming, “Students in a school of character are concerned about the feelings of other students and other people in general.”

Substitute C: Substitute teacher C voiced her observations by sharing, “While every location will have its ‘sour apples,’ the majority of the students I met in the hallway and classroom had a general sense of respect in a school that practiced character education.” He added to his point by stating, “I have experienced other buildings where character was not a practice and have encountered kind students but the majority of those students caused more distraction than good” (Substitute teacher C).

Substitute D: Substitute teacher D sensed that students in a school of character are more “aware of the surroundings, including their presence in their school.” She further explained, “students know the kind of character expected from them” (Substitute teacher D). Composing her thoughts, Substitute D communicated;

I know that students are students no matter where they go to school, but what sets them apart is the work and effort these students put into something like lessons in their character that other students are not receiving in other schools. A small part of these students is growing intentionally together in unity. Where other students have to use sources outside school to strive for what students in a school of character are already doing.

Substitute E: Substitute teacher E discussed her thoughts and stated, “I think the students in a school of character have more of a chance to have some of their morals and their values shaped despite the diversity of the people that they meet.” Adding to her claim, she outlined, “A kid who is not in a school with such character programs only has a real opportunity from their family and maybe their church. So, I think it’s just nice that they [schools] offer the opportunity to develop children’s character in that way” (Substitute teacher E).

Substitute F: Substitute teacher F asserted, “I have seen that the schools that practice a character program do seem to have calmer hallways.” Touching on the topic of their behavior and demeanor in the classroom, she shared, “Those kids are a bit more aware of what it means to have character versus what it means to simply be kind because I may be watching them in class” (Substitute teacher F). However, Substitute F generalized:

I’m really not sure if I can connect their kindness to a character program but from what I’ve seen in the schools I’ve subbed at, there really is a different vibe. I don’t have the word for it but I can feel the difference when I’m in one building versus another.

**Research Question 3: How do substitute teachers describe staff members in a school of character versus staff members that are not in schools of character?**

Substitute A: Regarding staff members in a school of character, substitute teacher A sensed that schools with character education programs “have staff that talk to each other more.” He further expressed to the Researcher that the teachers in these settings [schools of character], “are willing to listen to problems and help ‘troubleshoot’ through a

situation” (Substitute teacher A). Conversely, Substitute A distinguished that “teachers in schools without character education programs are quick to judge [teachers/ co-workers], quick to discipline [students], and are angry many times.”

Substitute B: Substitute teacher B shared a similar sentiment from Substitute A on this question as she asserted, “Staff members in a school of character are not only helpful to other staff members but they are also helpful to students who are in and students who are *not* in their classes.”

Substitute C: Substitute teacher C supported positive behavior of teachers in a character school by telling the researcher of her personal experience where she found “a character school to have more understanding teachers who were simply inviting and offering to help, versus other buildings that did not have such a high number of teachers.” To support her statement, Substitute C outlined her example by claiming, “In a character building, I was invited into a conversation during my lunch break where the [full-time] teachers were talking.” She compared her experience to that of a different building and concluded “at a different building I did not feel so welcomed” (Substitute teacher C).

Substitute D: Substitute teacher D outlined her sentiment by asserting, “Staff members in a school of character are set to a higher standard from being just a good teacher to a great teacher.” In sharing with the researcher, Substitute D pointed out that “what sets these teachers apart is their drive and passion to not only have a mindset to get students to pass their class but these teachers slow down to see each student as a person with a story that they carry along with them.” Substitute teacher D favored character programs in schools as she interpreted the actions of teachers in such programs within their schools and shared that “teachers think about things they normally don’t think about



when it comes to their students.” Reciting a more positive emotion for the full-time employees in character schools that Substitute D encountered, she shared that “teaching is no longer just a job for teachers to just teach their subject, but now they are held to a character standard to be role models.”

Substitute E: In regards to teachers in a school of character versus educators in buildings that do not practice character, Substitute teacher E explained, “In a school of character, I think it’s just more metrics along with ‘self-checks’ to be good.” Substitute E maintained, “I’m sure that does create maybe a little bit more pressure; but also, I think it helps foster better relationships; like we care about these kids as ‘people’ and the type of person they’re becoming.” Substitute E discussed, “I believe this character practice makes a very well-rounded approach to education and the sponsoring of students to be productive citizens in our school, and hopefully, into whatever their [the students’] next level is once they leave our classrooms.” Substitute teacher E added, “From the staff, I see the teachers are friendlier and accept me for who I am by including me in lunch conversations in schools of character.” Contrasting her experience from schools of character, Substitute E concluded, “in other schools, I’ve experienced staff who are a little ‘snobbier’ and aren’t as interested that I’m there.”

Substitute F: Evaluating her experience with educators in both ranges (easy-going and difficult), Substitute F contended, “The truth is that so far I’ve been very lucky with help and support from the teachers and staff that I meet in every building I’ve subbed at.” Substitute F affirmed, “I’m sure we’re all gonna have a bad day here and there, but so far I have not had a less than favorable interaction with a staff member.”

**Research Question 4: How do substitute teachers describe the administration team in a school of character versus administration team that is not in a school of character?**

Substitute A: When asked about the administrative team, Substitute teacher A shared, “Schools with character education programs have administration that gets more involved with school functions.” Substitute A additionally claimed, “They [administrators] tend to get to know the students more on a positive basis. On the other hand, Substitute A compared those schools that do and do not practice character programs and alleged, “Schools without character education programs tend to have an administration that seems to be invisible; they are not seen during passing periods or before school.” He added, “From my perspective, administration teams in these schools show less support for staff and more action towards what the kids and families want, not need” (Substitute teacher A).

Substitute B: Substitute teacher B outlined the administration team in a school of character by sharing in one statement, “The administration team in a school of character looks at the needs of teachers to reach students both at academic and at social levels.”

Substitute C: Substitute teacher C shared his opinion regarding the principals in schools and deduced, “In a character school, I found the principals to be more visible. I felt that I could stick my head out into the hallway and find some help.” In contrast, he reported, “In a school that did not have a character practice, I do not recall seeing the Principals often. I knew their names but would not really be able to place a face to them. This was a bit uneasy but luckily I have not yet had the need to call a Principal into my room while I taught for the day” (Substitute teacher C).

Substitute D: Substitute teacher D conveyed to the researcher, “The administration team is impacted by working in a school of character because they deal with the students and staff daily.” She added, “What the school stands for rubs off on them (the students) because of the environment they create. With that, I think that the administration works to influence a school environment because they are the ‘face’ of the school” (Substitute teacher D). Substitute D pointed out to the researcher, in regards to the character initiative in the building, “I also think that everything that is done, but unseen by many, structures a school of character.”

Substitute E: When asked about what an administrative team (admin team) looks like in a school, Substitute teacher E explained, “In theory, a school of character would have an admin team that is more invested in the whole being of their students and their teachers rather than just focusing on test scores and funding.” Substitute E stressed:

Such an admin team would preferably work to create a more positive and friendly environment for the people in the building and would maybe be less worried about accolades and more focused on the day to day small things that make someone feel respected and accepted.

Substitute F: Substitute teacher F concluded by sharing, “Sadly, I do not see much of the administration team when I sub in many schools.” She asserted, “It would be nice to know their faces and to have them support us substitutes by at least having them coming by our classrooms to ensure that the students are not taking advantage of the substitute teacher” (Substitute teacher F). Substitute F pointed out, “I simply like to think that a school that practices character would have a principal who is more visible but truly, any school should have a supportive admin team. It’s simply the right thing to do.”

**Summary**

Chapter Four presented data collected from surveys completed and interviews conducted with the substitute teachers who willingly took part in this study. The chapter contains a discussion of the researcher's data collection and analysis of the completed surveys and quoted information from substitute teachers regarding their answers to the research questions. The researcher grouped the substitute teachers' responses into common themes after coding the responses and answers that demanded more examination. The survey responses and data from the interviews were collected and analyzed to determine if there were differences in the school buildings and to evaluate the effectiveness of character education programs in the classroom when the substitute teacher was present. In Chapter Five, the researcher discusses his interpretation of the data and data analysis. The researcher will also discuss implications, based on the results, and offer suggestions for future studies.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection**

### **Introduction**

Chapter Five discusses the study results with regard to the Research Questions and reflects upon the implications for educational leaders. Recommendations are made for school systems and educational leaders at all levels, regarding better integrating substitute teachers into their schools. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research on the topic.

### **Overview of the study**

This study used an online survey to collect data about the substitute teachers' experiences in the classroom setting. The researcher gathered the data from all the participants' online answers and coded the data to look for common themes in their responses. The answers from the survey were coded into the different categories of: Staff, Students, and Administration based on the data provided in the responses from the participating substitute teachers. The researcher interviewed six substitute teachers exploring the four research questions. Chapter Four documented data for each question in the survey, as well as the results of each response from the interviews. Of the five schools regarded in the study, at the time of this research, only one of the middle schools was consistently practicing and implementing a character education program. The findings of this study established that the school about which the highest number of substitutes spoke highly was the same school that had a character education program set in motion with the buy-in and support of the buildings' staff and administration.

### **Research Questions**

In this research study, the following research questions were investigated:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** How do substitute teachers describe schools that are actively involved in character education versus schools that are not?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** How do substitute teachers describe students in a school of character versus students in schools that are not schools of character?

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** How do substitute teachers describe staff members in a school of character versus staff members that are not in schools of character?

**Research Question 4 (RQ4):** How do substitute teachers describe the administration team in a school of character versus administration team that is not in a school of character?

### **Summary of Findings**

Four research questions guided this study. These questions were the basis for all the data to be collected, analyzed, and coded for the study. The researcher observed similar patterns that appeared throughout the study when comparing the data from the Substitute Survey with 22 question queries and the interview responses. The following discussion explores the themes that emerged during the data analysis phase of the research. The four research questions were created to assess the effectiveness of character education programs in the stated middle schools. Each of the research questions are discussed in further detail in this chapter along with their likenesses to questions prompted on the Substitute Survey.

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** How do substitute teachers describe schools that are actively involved in character education versus those schools that are not?

Question 22 of the Substitute Survey asked guest teachers if they felt there existed a connection between character education and school climate. The data showed that

68.86% of the answers to this survey item made mention of a correlation between effective character education and school climate. One substitute teacher shared that “when schools focus on character development, the climate reflects this with improved attitudes, behavior, attendance, and academics.” Substitute teacher interviews shared the same sentiment as the survey, and this repeatedly provided data that replicated sentiments of better character being apparently noticeable in students and staff and their behaviors to one another and with guest teachers, as well. The expression of ‘buy in’ of the character program is another repeated observation noted in the data. As per the subjects who participated in the 22-question survey, the data provided by the substitute teachers supported the existence of the connection between schools of character and positive repercussions from students, staff, and administrative teams.

Answering Research Question 1 and comparing the similarities found in Substitute Survey question number 22 represents the emphasis of the study. Through data collection and analysis, the researcher discovered that there was a noticeable difference between the schools of character and those schools that did not practice character education. The major findings from the data provided from the participating substitute teachers was that schools with character programs have students that tend to care more about each other, versus students who show more bullying and unruly behavior. Also, the data informed the researcher that schools of character had a positive ‘buzz’ and ‘welcoming’ vibe, versus other buildings that elicited a sense of stress and helplessness towards the guest teachers. Lastly, schools with character programs seemed to focus on promoting the character of the student, as opposed to other schools, which seemed to focus on reaching testing and funding goals. Resulting from this data, the

survey supported the finding that schools with character education practices were the schools about which substitute teachers spoke most positively.

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** How do substitute teachers describe students in a school of character versus students in schools that are not schools of character?

Question 20 of the Substitute Survey asked guest teachers if they felt there was a connection between character education and student behavior. The research showed that 65.63% of the answers on this survey made mention of the connection that substitute teachers suggest exists among positive student behavior and character education.

Expressed in the survey, substitute teachers associated the better behavior of students with the existence of character education in the building. The positive atmosphere and greater respect towards guest teachers was highly palpable from students in schools that had a character initiative. In the survey, substitute teachers confessed to have seen the positive connection in action and to attribute the common goal of students and staff to be the reason for such a focus on positive behaviors, manners, and respect.

As per the findings on the interview question 2, substitute teachers found students in schools of character to show a better sense of respect and follow organized hallway traffic patterns. In alternate buildings that did not practice character education, substitute teachers found that students were louder, chaotic, and often had disrespectful language towards each other. Substitute teachers generalized that students in a School of Character were more concerned about other people, and they seemed to know the kind of character and behaviors expected from their peers. A substitute teacher shared that students in a School of Character seemed to be growing and working in unity in trying to be ethically good. The substitute teacher felt that other schools that did not practice character



initiatives had students who were using sources outside of school in an attempt to attain what students in a School of Character were already accomplishing in regards to behavior, attitude, and unity. Substitute teachers believed that students in a School of Character had a better opportunity to have some of their morals and values shaped, regardless of the diverse population in which they were surrounded. A heightened sense of what it means to be good because it is the right thing to do, versus being good because one may be observed by an adult, was the character practice that a substitute teacher sensed was occurring within students in both sets of schools.

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** How do substitute teachers describe staff members in a School of Character versus staff members that are not in schools of character?

There was a consistency with the research question and the Substitute Survey questions number 11 and 21. Question 11 of the Substitute Survey asked guest teachers if they ever felt unwelcomed by staff members. The research showed that 45.59% of the substitutes responded ‘yes’ on this survey, affirming that they felt uncomfortable, minuscule, and ignored in certain buildings and at times not even greeted upon arriving. Contrary-wise, 54.41% replied, ‘no,’ conveying that they did not feel unwelcomed by staff members. In the Substitute Survey, the substitute teachers conveyed that they did not feel ‘unwelcomed,’ but added that some buildings have a warmer feel than others did and that the teachers set the character expectations. Question number 21 of the Substitute Survey asked substitute teachers if they believed there to be a correlation between Schools of Character and the attitudes of those staff members. In this query, 61.90% of the responses felt there was a positive attribute the character education programs brought to the staff members’ expected behaviors. Substitute teachers expressed that students and

teachers in schools of character worked together and practiced accountability with one another in regards to their words, actions, and attitudes.

The data from the interviews supported the findings of the survey where guest teachers described staff members in a School of Character to be friendlier among one another. The 22-question survey supported what the personally interviewed substitute teachers indicated; that staff members were more willing to discuss problems, issues, and share ideas to help each other troubleshoot a situation, in Schools of Character. In contrast, it was interesting to find that substitute teachers described teachers in schools that did not practice character education to be quick to judge, quick to discipline students and to display more moments of anger towards pupils, rather than moments of calm, and friendlier demeanor towards staff and students alike. The researcher also discovered that teachers in a School of Character were more open and inviting to guest teachers, so much so that substitutes were invited to partake in conversations with full-time staff members during their lunchtime in the lunchroom. In comparison, different buildings where character education was not practiced did not share the same habits, and this caused guest teachers to feel unwelcomed and out of place. Additionally, substitute teachers shared about the different mentalities they observed from the full-time educators in the two different types of buildings.

In Schools of Character, substitute teachers personally observed the understanding of teachers to see beyond the students' appearances and into the students' personal character. In this setting, substitutes claimed to see staff members understand that all students had a story to share that set each student apart and helped to understand a student's behavior, with a hint of where the students needed guidance, support, and

reinforcement. A participating substitute teacher asserted that teachers in schools of character were encouraged to be better educators. The substitute teachers expressed that the practices of teachers in Schools of Character inspired educators to be more than teachers and passionately take upon the responsibility of also being role models for their students. Schools that did not practice character were described as having less relationship-building strategies and practices and less attention or care for the character of the student.

**Research Question 4 (RQ4):** How do substitute teachers describe the administration team in a School of Character versus administration team that is not in a School of Character?

Question 16 of the Substitute Survey asked guest teachers to explain why they enjoyed teaching in a particular building. The research shows that 10.14% of the answers on this survey made mention of the administrative team and their positive influence on the substitute teacher's day and why the substitute teacher would gladly take or accept repeated positions in a certain building. The most noted reason why substitute teachers enjoyed teaching in a particular building was due to the positive behavior and rapport of staff, calculated at just over 49%, as per the findings from the Substitute Survey. In opposition, question number 17 of the Substitute Survey asked substitute teachers to explain why they did not enjoy teaching in a particular building. In this query, 8.82% of the responses marked a negative feeling towards the lack of support of the administrative team towards a substitute teacher, while the guest teacher was filling in for a full-time educator. However, the most noted reason why substitute teachers did not enjoy teaching

in a particular building was due to the negative behavior and lack of respect received from students, calculated at just over 46%, as per the findings from the Substitute Survey.

In answer to research question 4, substitute teachers described the administrative teams in Schools of Character to be more involved. Substitute teachers expressed that the administrative team knew students on a more personal basis, as opposed to schools that did not practice character where administrators seemed invisible, hidden during passing periods, and showed less support for staff but more action towards what students and parents wanted, not needed. When covering jobs in a school of character, substitute teachers felt they could stick their head out into the hallway for help as opposed to a different building where the visibility of building Principals was rare. One substitute teacher claimed that they knew the names of the administrative team, but they would not be able to place a name to the face if they had to.

Another substitute teacher expressed that the administrative team in a School of Character perhaps act in such a helpful and respectful manner because the attributes of positive character ‘rubbed off’ on the leaders and on the environment that they create. A participant of the study added to the data on this topic by conveying that they believed the reason for positive attributes in a school of character derived from having a Principal and administrative team that is more equally invested in the entire being of the school. That includes everything under the school’s roof, such as the people and not just the test scores.

Substitute teachers take jobs in different schools, and with that comes different experiences in their day. There was consistency however, in the research questions and in the survey responses from the substitute teachers. The substitute teachers had different

experiences in the schools they subbed in, and it was interesting to find that the schools of character prompted more positive experiences in comparison to those schools that did not practice character education. On the other hand, schools using character education programs still were not 100% better schools; and furthermore, even those schools of character displayed room for improvement in their character practices with students, staff, and administrative teams. The researcher did observe the marginally higher positive traits reported from schools of character than those schools that did not practice character. This pattern appeared several times throughout the study, showing more positive student, staff, and administrative behavior.

### **Recommendations to the Program**

Many factors can contribute to a substitute teacher's response on the matter of students, staff, and administrative practices. I believe that school districts need to provide some form of professional development for substitute teachers as they have for their full-time teachers, to help the substitute teachers prepare for the classroom. The amount of training that exists at the time of this writing for substitute teachers is not adequate for them to effectively complete preparation or discussions about the constant changes in the district in regards to discipline, code of conduct and especially classroom technology. Apportioned training would also present an opportunity for substitute teachers to share ideas about best teaching strategies that work for substitute teachers, versus teaching strategies that work for the full-time educators, since the full-time teacher and the substitute teachers work in the same classroom, but under different circumstances and with different relationships with the students.

The researcher recommends a minimum of two half-day sessions per school year for substitute teachers to meet and collaborate. One of those training days is proposed to take place before the beginning of the school year so substitute teachers can be educated on any new changes to the school year's behavioral code of conduct, dress codes, and any disciplinary consequences. The district can offer alternate dates, so that not all substitute teachers will be absent from work on those two chosen dates in the school district. The school district could additionally offer the substitute training days on a scheduled teacher professional development day to avoid a scarcity in available guest teachers needed in the classrooms.

The provided training would allow time for substitute teachers to discuss with each other the ideas that work and the practices suggested by the school district. Full-time veteran staff members could be welcomed and invited as guest speakers so that substitutes can hear from the district educators what the expectations and cautions of the classroom are within their district, as there are different challenges in their respective districts. Full-time educators can be a very helpful source of information for the guest teachers who rarely have time to actually sit and converse with the full-time educators who are in the brunt of the workday. The training agenda could also provide knowledge to substitute teachers, so that they may be kept up-to-date of any changing acts or regulations in the district regarding by-laws and expectations regarding differentiated instruction. The increased training time for substitute teachers would allow full-time teachers to feel more comfortable to schedule a qualified substitute and less perturbed about being away from the classroom, in the hopes that the substitute teacher is not simply 'babysitting,' but is instead actually able to move effortlessly with the progression

of the lesson in place. Additionally, substitute teachers can practice and review the same safety and health drills that teachers review yearly. Moreover, parents may be more comfortable knowing that substitute teachers will be trained on the pertinent safety drills mandated to be in the public schools, as well as other safety measures, such as the use and procedures of an epi-pen and the use and procedures and locations of portable AED defibrillators, along with basic CPR knowledge with the opportunity to have more professionals receive CPR certifications in their respective buildings and classrooms.

Another strategy the researcher suggests for the school district is the identification of a representative to act as a liaison for substitute teachers and facilitate the communication and/or support between teachers, administrators, and students. The researcher believes that by giving the substitute teachers a voice, the substitute teachers may feel more connected and more invested in the school district, and thus do a better job for the teacher, the students, and themselves. Also, the researcher believes a school district needs to consider the finances of such a training program in terms of what it will produce for their district. To get the best options of good qualified substitute teachers available, it would be appropriate for school districts to consider the production of better qualified and knowledgeable substitute teachers for our teachers and students.

Data analysis would assist the substitute teachers and school administrators in determining if the training program is effective in increasing the positivity of guest teacher experiences, classroom interaction, and curriculum instruction presented by the substitute teachers. Guest teachers could simply be required to complete online exit surveys in which they may have the opportunity to provide comments regarding their training curriculum, so that accurate and relatable data could be effectively used to drive

future implementation of the programs designed to help the staff, guest teachers, district and students.

To decrease unfilled substitute positions, the researcher also recommends that school districts make changes and adjustments on substitute pay based on the competitive rates from their individual neighboring school districts. If the wage was improved, chances are that more substitute teachers would fill those open positions and schools would have less trouble finding substitute teachers for the full-time educators who have to be out. The school leaders will have to factor in the cost of the budget increase that can ultimately benefit the students' opportunity of a continued education.

The researcher also recommends that building Principals recruit building substitutes that will allocate themselves to filling teacher absences at their particular buildings. With this recommendation, the researcher suggests that a calendar be maintained that will track planned educator absences and will also be able to plan ahead for future absences by permitting teachers to manage their calendars with substitute teachers. This will permit teachers to plan ahead and be able to communicate effectively with the administration and staff to ensure that there will be coverage for those educators whenever they will be out for the day. Additionally, the researcher recommends that school districts use the services of temporary staffing agencies associated with the jobs and roles of substitute teachers. This practice will help cover classes when the demands and needs for substitute teachers hits a high demand, such as those moments when educators have to be out for professional development events and mandated meetings that the district and building administrators require for their educators to fulfill and comply.



The researcher also believes that access to ongoing virtual substitute training programs that concentrate on current practices and strategies in the classroom, may be of beneficial significance to all those who have everyday encounters with substitute teachers. Job-focused on-line training programs can provide additional tips and educational recommendations related to common classroom challenges for substitute teachers to use in the classroom, so that they may be effective in dealing with mutual encounters for substitute teachers encounter in the classroom. These on-line programs can be available for review once the initial training is complete and can be a great instrument for substitute teachers to access in their own time as often as they need. By issuing and making preliminary mandated assignments from the virtual training, the school districts can keep track of the programs and their effective implementation of the programs used by the guest teachers in their respective buildings and district.

Lastly, the researcher proposes the district reach out to the community to express the reasons why the school district needs to have a supported and passed tax levy. Too often parents view the funding for school districts as the sole responsibility of the state. A community-supported levy can help the district provide the programs that can help all stakeholders in the community. Additionally, the researcher recommends that educators communicate their needs and ideas to parents, community, and students regarding the importance of qualified substitute teachers and the essential role the substitute teachers take in the classrooms when the teacher has to be away from the building. Educating stakeholders of the benefits and needs to support and respect substitute teachers may increase the interest and support for such programs.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

A 22-question survey for substitute teachers and a one-year study are not sufficient to evaluate the effects of character education in a school. Additionally, character education can be demonstrated in numerous methods and it can be interpreted in a different way by adolescents and adults who view actions contrarily due to their generational point of view. Home life and socioeconomic factors can also have an effect on a student's behavior and confuse the students as they regularly tread into a new environment where they are demanded to guide themselves by a set of rules that may be different from their norm. Based on these considerations, there are several recommendations for future research and studies.

The researcher recommends that future studies seek to investigate the relationship between acceptable behaviors and language used by school staff that reinforces the acceptable behaviors. Interestingly, practices of character education vary by age brackets and social status. This, coupled with the changes in norms and expectations of our society, reveals a need to further investigate ways to mitigate the impact of these societal changes. Furthermore, what was once accepted and expected is no longer suitable or practiced and thus it creates an uncertainty as to whether one's act of kindness is deemed to be out of the good nature of an individual or whether that same gesture can be construed to be offensive and/or intrusive. Additionally, the researcher recommends an independent assessment as to how schools implement Character Education programs. One cannot expect a poor implementation of the program to produce the same results as a well-executed character program. The researcher believes that if character education really changes school climate, a faithfully implemented character program should have

more demonstrable results than a more superficial program. Documentation of a relationship between Character Education implementation and climate results would benefit a future study.

The researcher recommends for future studies to examine the current anticipated behaviors in the classroom along with existing generational norms outside of the schoolhouse. The character traits that dubbed a person to be ‘moral’ ten years ago are not the same behaviors that we may see in the classroom today. While the classroom setting may elicit and request similar behavior as 20 or 30 years ago, it is not to say that all students will imitate those practices. Students’ natural response will revert to what they constitute to be their custom and thus, the opportunity for an adult to witness actions of positive character education may be lost or confused with what may appear as unpleasant behavior.

In some cases, what is taught in the home is not what is communicated in the classroom. The researcher recommends that an anonymous student survey be administered in efforts to better understand a student’s perspective on what is normal and accepted behavior in the classroom versus normal and accepted behavior in their homes. Individual households live by different family expectations and they do not all conform to what is justified in their respective local schools. Du Bois, an African-American writer, teacher, sociologist, and activist, is quoted to have said, “Education must not simply teach work- it must teach life” (Goodreads, 2017, p. 1). Unfortunately, this mantra does not automatically exist in all schools. Teachers do not customarily instill considerable life lessons in the classroom but instead must adhere to a state approved academic curriculum. Conversely, households do not all impart the teacher’s educational

expectations but instead talk about the rules expected to be followed under their own individual household roofs. Due to this, schools often have students who get off the bus and enter the school building with many different interpretations of what is acceptable charisma and what the acceptable practices of their school looks like. Moreover, educators are at times confusing young teens with the educator's personal campaign of what is considered normal behavior per individual classrooms and distinct teacher beliefs. This sometimes creates confusion of the rules, discrimination of behavior, and anguish from students' actions because it is not the same standard that the students are taught in the homestead. Add to this condition a new student who simply transfers to a new school and immediately there exists the pupil who must now conform to new regulations and expectations and misses an opportunity to act in accordance with good character traits.

Furthermore, this study did not look to specifically tackle the human functions associated with socioeconomic factors, low educational achievement, poor health, and low academic skills. Therefore, the researcher recommends that an anonymous survey be generated to get a better pulse of the economic status of the general population in a school to help understand the quality of life and stressors that may be associated with behaviors from students towards adults, their family, their peers, and society in general. Many young adolescents also lack a positive relationship with adults in general, and thus their trust with adults is scarcely a positive one. This rapport will limit the level of involvement a teenager will give to any program proposed by a school. The limited experience adults have in comparison to the actual reality of a teen's environment is a major reason why teens do not completely trust adults. Questions about life that students bring to adults seldom compare to life experiences that the adult has experienced.

According to [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov) (2010), all 50 states in the U.S. have anti-bullying laws for schools. Unfortunately, there has not been any federal mandates for implementing character education programs in schools in the United States. Although the presence of these anti-bullying laws in every state is a positive step in the right direction, how can we continue to ignore the positive impact that character education has on school climate. As the data in this study indicated, character education had noticeable impacts on the ways students and staff behaved towards each other and with guest teachers. Therefore, creating a mandate for the implementation of character education in all schools should positively shape the interactions between students and staff, which may reduce the presence of bullying within schools.

In addition, the data from this study revealed that substitute teachers described teachers in schools that did not practice character education as being quick to judge, quick to discipline students and to displaying more moments of anger toward pupils. Based on this finding, the researcher recommends that Universities and Colleges reevaluate their teacher preparation programs. It should be a requirement of teacher preparation programs to take a course on building a safe and positive climate within the classroom. According to Duncan (2018), teacher preparation programs lack in coursework that prepares teachers for classroom management. School districts should also provide ongoing professional development on classroom management due to the diverse needs that are present in classrooms on any given day. This ongoing professional development should have some form of a continuum so teachers can identify where they are with their management and notice their growth.

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher suggest that schools focus on hiring building level substitutes versus hiring a different substitute teacher each day. Hiring building level substitutes will help the substitute teacher establish and maintain a positive rapport with students, families, and colleagues, because they would always be in the school. Conversely, regularly hiring different substitutes creates inconsistency with the adults that students interact with daily. A major benefit of schools hiring a building substitute is they will have a substitute already on staff and this will greatly reduce the likelihood of the office staff scrambling at the last minute trying to locate a potential substitute on short notice.

Lastly, this study focused on capturing the narratives of substitute teachers regarding school climate and culture and character education. The researcher recommends that further studies be conducted that capture narratives from school teachers to identify if they share the same perspectives as substitute teachers regarding the impact of character education on a school's climate. Teachers are in the building for at least 180 days per year and they may have a different perspective on what really positively impacts school climate. It is possible that there are other existing variables that were not observed by the participating substitute teachers, that may have really impacted the overall culture and the inclusive climate of the schools where this study was conducted.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, Chapter Five explored each of the research questions with regard to the results presented in Chapter Four. This study researched the climate of schools from the point of view of the substitute teacher. This was a study initiated by the researcher to

get a pulse of the effects of character education programs in middle schools in a Midwest school district located in the state of Missouri. The substitute teachers involved in the research volunteered to participate in the study. The results of the study showed noticeable differences in schools that practice character education against those schools that do not practice the same character education initiatives. This study promotes the merit of the use of character education in schools and the benefits that students, staff, and administrators can implement within themselves and their schools.

This study utilized qualitative research methods to allow substitute teachers to “tell their stories” about their experiences with character education programs and school culture and climate in a middle school setting. To collect data that would yield the most information, the researcher used four questions to guide the inquiry during this study. These question provided the lens for viewing the problem of study and yielded an ample set of data for analysis. Analyzing the data revealed key themes that supported a discussion around the findings of this study.

All across the United States, year after year there is a need for substitute teachers in virtually every school district. Although these substitutes are given the same accountabilities of the classroom teachers, they lack the authority and proper training to effectively handle all of a classroom teacher’s responsibilities. The substitute teachers observe inappropriate behaviors, physical aggression and on the flip-side they observe acceptable behavior and positive school climate and cultures. To address some of the undesirable behaviors that are present in schools, some districts have adopted character education programs and have formally become known as *Schools of Character*.

Character education has been around for many years, and is well documented in regards to positively improving the climate and culture of schools.

The overall climate and culture of all schools can be addressed by creating nationwide legislation that mandates implementing character education programs in schools across the United States. Teacher preparation programs can also be revamped to support teachers in developing a depth of understanding classroom management strategies and developing the efficacy to effectively use the strategies they learn. Ultimately, as a nation we need more policies that support the implementation of character education programs that are designed and aimed at improving school culture and climate at every school.



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