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The Relationship Between Caring School Community Program Implementation
and Elementary Student Achievement

by

Michelle R. Wilkerson

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Education

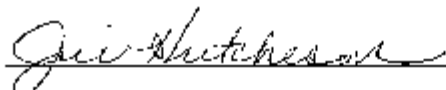
School of Education

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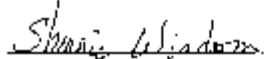
This dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education



Dr. Jill Hutcherson, Dissertation Chair

1-14-2011


Date



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1-14-2011

Date

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:

Signature: Michaela R. Williams Date: 1-14-2011

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Though only my name appears on the cover of this dissertation, a great many people have contributed and sacrificed for this final dissertation.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Lawrence Kolar, who motivated me to stand tall and to persevere. His presence was felt along this journey as I continued to try and make him proud of his little girl.

Abstract

This program evaluation of Caring School Community was conducted by two educators who studied the implementation of this character education program in an elementary school. In an effort to foster a culture of respect and kindness, where students, staff, and parents are treated as valued, contributing members of the school community, an elementary school implemented a character education program called Caring School Community. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the success of the implementation of Caring School Community and its possible impact on student achievement. The evaluation of this program involved observing classroom instruction to track student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate and lesson plan completion using a computerized walk through tool and the results of student, parent, and staff surveys. All third through fifth grade students took the computerized surveys to determine the success of implementation based on their sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

This study examined the results of implementing Caring School Community and its possible effect on student achievement. The companion dissertation examined the results of implementing Caring School Community and its possible effect on student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals. Caring School Community is a research-based K-6 program, which has four components: class meetings, cross-aged buddy activities, homeside activities, and schoolwide community-building activities.

The fidelity of implementation of Caring School Community was measured using a computerized walk through tool to track classroom observations and student,

parent, and staff surveys. Those results were compared with student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals, and student achievement data prior to and after two years of implementation of Caring School Community. The findings of this study indicated that implementation of Caring School Community had no statistical impact on student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals, or student achievement after the first and second year of implementation. Future studies should consider allowing a longer period of time for the study and studying several cohort groups or several schools with the same demographics.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Ideally, staff and students in schools eagerly anticipate the day which lies ahead of them each morning; this being the effect of trusting and positive relationships in the school environment. Contrary to the views that much of the general public hold, in reality there are districts where educators and the student body would rather be at school than anywhere else, where students are excited about learning, where showing respect and caring for fellow students and staff is the rule and not the expectation, and where students readily take ownership and responsibility for their learning. These schools exist; these are the districts of character.

This dissertation was a collaborative study to evaluate the implementation of Caring School Community, a Character Plus Education Program. The academic investigator, the school district of study's district math coordinator, evaluated the state's mandated, standardized exam called the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) data to determine if Caring School Community contributed to an improvement in students' academic performance as measured by the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The school culture investigator, an elementary school principal, evaluated student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referral data to determine if Caring School Community contributed to improvement in each area. Both investigators also examined the fidelity of implementation through classroom observations and examined stakeholder perceptions through surveys given to third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff.

Two school counselors were offered a grant to implement this program at the study elementary school with the help of training provided by a Character Plus

Workshop during the spring of 2007. Needs assessment surveys given by counselors to third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff in May 2007 determined the focus to the Caring School Community Program. A team of teachers, parents, and administrators was formed, called the Caring School Community Leadership Team, and attended implementation training during June 2007. The classroom teachers implemented the Caring School Community Program during the fall of 2007, following training from the Caring School Community Leadership Team during teacher orientation. The academic and school culture investigators collected data from 2007 through 2009 to provide an evaluation of the success of implementation.

Background of the Problem

As a global society, Americans are straying from the ethics of the past. Working passionately and with compassion for a greater good is not the highest priority.

Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41%; the gross domestic product has nearly tripled; and total social spending by all levels of government (measured in constant 1990 dollars) has risen from \$143.73 billion to \$787 billion-- more than a fivefold increase. Inflation-adjusted spending on welfare has increased by 630%, spending on education by 225%. But during the same 30-year period there has been a 560% increase in violent crime, a 419% increase in illegitimate births; a quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than a 200% increase in the teenage suicide rate; and a drop of almost 80 points in SAT scores. (Bennett, 1993, para. 5-6)

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As schools continue to deal with issues involving bullying, substance abuse, school violence, and lack of work ethics, the students in this environment risk becoming a part of society's problems. Schools cannot ignore the emotional and psychological needs of students.

Whitman and Dewey pictured a United States which did more than just focus students to learn rote facts about their government. Communication is the backbone of democracy and has various modes of presentation (Noddings, 2008). Teachers who follow the recommendations of Dewey allow students to find, discuss, and present issues using the learning style of the student rather than only one means of presenting their arguments, thoughts and ideas (Noddings, 2008). Noddings stated, "Adolescents also need to consider important personal and social issues. We can hardly expect them to become critical thinkers if they are not invited to discuss controversial issues" (p. 36).

According to the summative assessments that the United States relies upon to meet requirements in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the nation's schools are failing academically. Many countries are soaring above the United States in both math and science. Students, teachers, and schools need to be held accountable for the lack of achievement. When schools make the decision to create more rigorous curricula, academically challenged students often continue to struggle. Instead, educators are driving academically struggling students further into trouble. In order to produce a society of lifelong learners, educators need to focus on a child's character and work ethic (Bradshaw, 2006).

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At this time, the nation is in an economic crisis. One tactic to remedy the current situation may be to ensure that every student graduates from high school. Graduates from high school either move on to a trade school or higher education, which will result in higher paying positions in the work force. Although Missouri has a 77% graduation rate, as compared to the national graduation rate of 71%, not enough students are graduating from high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). The groundwork for success is building work ethic and creating pride in achievements.

Many of these issues stem from a decline in the social, emotional, and academic development of the children who are now becoming adults. In today's fast-paced society, some perceive that people lack the communication skills, patience, persistence, and tolerance for others. Many lack face-to-face communication skills due to the increased use of web-based social sites and text messaging, which require different types of skills. This may increase the divide between teachers, parents, and students who may prefer different ways of communicating.

Most school curricula support the assumption that educators and policymakers know what children need, but school leaders do not always evaluate if the needs of students are being met, beyond academics. When the expressed needs of students are ignored, educators sacrifice opportunities to develop individual talents, intrinsic motivation, and the joys of learning (Noddings, 2005). Many children come to school today with overwhelming needs. Their basic needs of love and safety are not being met. The student's energy is spent on worrying, enduring, and trying to cover up the physical ones (Noddings, 2005). Homelessness, poverty, toothaches, faulty vision,

violence, fear, sick or missing parents and feelings of worthlessness all interfere with learning.

Children who are in pain, afraid, sick, or lost in worry cannot be expected to be interested in arithmetic or grammar (Noddings, 2005). Academic and social problems are interconnected and one cannot be solved without the other. Instead of preparing teachers to educate the homeless, society should insist that no family be homeless. Instead of ridiculing the parenting skills of many adults, society should provide opportunities for parents to learn skills needed to raise a child (Noddings, 2005). Even if achievement scores are not improved, a caring society should still ensure that everyone has decent housing, adequate childcare, medical insurance, and a living wage. These things should be provided not so that achievement scores will go up but because people need these things, and caring people should respond to the needs of others (Noddings, 2005).

Students need to know how schooling is related to real life, how their learning objectives fit into their own interests and even whether there is any meaning to life itself. Students will work for teachers they like and trust because the teachers send the students a message that they will not allow them to fail. Instructional time must include time for fostering the development of care and trust, searching for connections among interests, indentifying individual learning objectives, and freeing instructional materials for students to use to satisfy their own needs (Noddings, 2005).

School districts across the country face the issue of truancy and excessive absenteeism, yet the focus of research is on students who drop out. Joyce Epstein and Steven Sheldon noted that, “reducing the rates of student truancy and chronic

absenteeism has been and continues to be a goal of many schools and school systems” (2002, p. 308). Researchers who focus on student drop-out rates also need to analyze the causes and events that led up to the student dropping out of school. Students succeed in school when they are present to learn the material, so when students are absent they are not receiving all the information that will help them to succeed in their educational career. Attendance not only affects individual students but also affects the learning environment of the entire school since school funding is dependent on the number of students who attend school regularly. Funding is not the only loss of resources; lost instructional time while the teacher has to review the lesson missed for the absent student is an additional concern. “Developing productive school-family-community connections has become one of the most commonly embraced initiatives in schools and school districts” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p. 309). High school dropout rates can be predicted by the students’ attendance rate, so schools must have policies and procedures in place for absent students and train teachers to teach the students the importance of attending classes on a regular basis (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Schools are beginning to take on the challenge of content beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. “Children today face an extremely challenging social environment. They experience growing economic disparity, the increasing acceptance of violence and abuse, a sense of disenchantment with government, and society’s emphasis on self-interest and material goods” (Berreth & Berman, 1997, p. 24). Adults must hold themselves accountable in order to be an example for children (Berreth & Berman, 1997).

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically...intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education,” said Martin Luther King, Jr. (Exstrom, 2000, p. 30). Advocates of character education believe that there is a core set of values that a person of good character possesses, including honesty, morality, respect for self and others, self-control, fairness, responsibility, obedience, generosity, patience, and kindness (Exstrom, 2000). These values have been traditionally taught at home or in church; however, schools are starting to reinforce these values since children spend much of their day at school.

Although no recipe exists for a successful character education program, most of the national organizations suggest guidelines for evaluating programs such as the following: determining core values, instruction in moral behavior and making ethical decisions, opportunities for students to demonstrate character, commitment from both staff and students, involvement of parents and community members, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program (Exstrom, 2000). Each year the Character Education Partnership identifies specific schools as National Schools of Character.

The winning schools demonstrate that school transformation is possible through low-cost, high-quality character education initiatives. They have closed the achievement gap and raised academic expectations for all students, built strong relationships and partnerships between parents, teachers, and students, and given their students opportunities to serve their communities.

(Character Education Partnership [CEP], 2010b, para. 2)

Character education is being encouraged at both the state and federal levels. The federal government provides funding to states for character education programs,

but states may not emphasize it, which means districts often do not make the commitment (Exstrom, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Education can no longer be just about reading, writing, and mathematics. Educators need to integrate lessons about life, citizenship, and the value of being a good person. Students need physically secure and psychologically safe schools, staffed with teachers who model professionalism and who ask students to demonstrate caring for others. When school personnel teach and model these behaviors, a child's world, and perhaps the world around us, will begin to change.

The problem centers on what curriculum is available for teaching students about character and how to fit this curriculum into an already full daily schedule. Teachers understand the guidelines for teaching content areas in schools, but the parameters for character education are vast. Local educational agencies are under the microscope to increase test scores, so the emphasis has been placed on those content areas. Reading specialists in the district provide teachers with professional development on instructional strategies that will increase student comprehension in these core content areas. Administrators and teachers frequently review data to determine if methods are working in these tested areas. Teachers and administrators have more pressures today to succeed on local, state and national testing due to NCLB. Schools are measured for NCLB through their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) does not take into account students' character and values. School districts focus on increasing test scores to meet their AYP targets. In order to meet the AYP

targets, schools focus all their efforts on assessed content areas and attendance. The focus does not lie in character education, since this is not a targeted area.

Character education has taken a back seat to teaching content and making AYP. The United States Congress, recognizing the importance of this concept, authorized the Partnerships in Character Education Program in 1994 (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2009b). While Congress has helped to fund programs that enable schools to implement character education programs, there is no standard means for assessing, implementing or evaluating these programs. Congress argues that character education is an overarching concept, the subject of disciplines from philosophy to theology, from psychology to sociology, with many competing and conflicting theories. While NCLB can create standards for schools to develop their AYP, there are no set guidelines for implementing character education in school districts.

Purpose of the Study

This collaborative study was designed to investigate what a Midwestern elementary school discovered about the impact of character education during the first two years of implementation. The school leaders decided to implement a character education program after examining data from various surveys, student achievement tests, and attendance rates. Surveys were given to students in third through fifth grades, parents, and teachers to determine the need for character education implementation. The building formed a Caring School Community Leadership Team consisting of teachers, parents, and administrators. The team attended training during June of 2007 with Character Plus coaches to assist with implementation of Caring

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School Community, a character education program, during the fall of 2007 to meet the elementary school's improvement goals. The building's goals included improving student achievement, improving school culture, and improving student attendance. This study will examine if these goals were met.

The collaborative team developed this study together to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of Caring School Community. The academic investigator and the school culture investigator will be referred to as the investigative team. This study focused on the academic achievement, while the collaborative study authored by Debra Kyle focused on school culture elements, including student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals.

The purpose of Caring School Community was to implement a character education program that fosters a culture of respect and kindness, where students, staff, and parents are treated as valued, contributing members of the school community. The purpose of this collaborative study was two-fold. Michelle Wilkerson, the district math coordinator, investigated the success of implementation of Caring School Community and its possible impact on student achievement. Debbie Kyle, the principal of the elementary school being studied, investigated the success of Caring School Community in terms of student discipline, positive behavior referrals, and student attendance. The evaluation of the program involved observing classroom instruction and lesson plan completion using Ewalk, a computerized walk through tool, and completion of student, parent, and staff surveys. All third through fifth grade students took computerized surveys to determine their perceptions of the

success of implementation based on their sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

The Caring Schools Community Project is a research-based K-6 program, which has four components: class meetings, mixed-aged buddy activities, home-side activities, and school wide community-building activities. The results of this study may help the school community better understand the importance of character education and its effect on student academic performance, discipline referrals, positive referrals and student attendance.

Research Questions

The academic investigator addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by MAP in Communication Arts?
2. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Mathematics?

The school culture investigator addressed research questions pertaining to student attendance, student discipline referrals, and student positive behavior referrals.

Independent Variables

Caring School Community, a character education program, was implemented in an elementary school in conjunction with teacher professional development with the help of Character Plus coaches, staff, students, and parents.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were student achievement and school culture. The number of observations recorded on the fourth cycle walk through forms; student,

parent, and staff surveys; and student academic achievement on MAP in Communication Arts and Mathematics measured the dependent variables investigated by the academic investigator. The number of observations recorded on the fourth cycle administrator walk through observation forms; student, parent, and staff surveys; discipline and positive behavior referrals; and student attendance measured the dependent variables investigated by the school culture investigator.

Elementary Communication Arts MAP scores. Communication Arts MAP scores collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Elementary Mathematics MAP scores. Elementary Mathematics MAP scores collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Classroom observations. Classroom Observation Data collected for 2006-2007 prior to implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

Surveys. Parent, student, and teacher survey data collected for 2006-2007 prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

Hypotheses

The academic investigator addressed the following hypotheses:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #1. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #2. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #3. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #4. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

The school culture investigator's hypotheses addressed student attendance, student discipline referrals, and student positive behavior referrals.

Rationale for Study

The implementation of Caring School Community in 2007 was a character education program designed by Character Plus to provide students, parents and staff with a framework for learning and teaching character education. The investigative team assessed the fidelity of implementation of Caring School Community through observations of classrooms and recording the data onto the fourth cycle computerized walk through template. Dane and Schneider (1998) referred to the four primary components when considering program fidelity: adherence, exposure, quality of

program delivery, and participant responsiveness. This relates to the extent to which teachers may alter the program for their own circumstances, which may result in different outcomes.

It is essential that the academic needs of a student coexist with his or her social development. Therefore, the investigative team believed that there would be a direct relationship between academic achievement and implementation of a character education program. Character education should provide a safe learning environment for students by promoting a caring community and positive social relationships. In addition, it should ensure fairness, equity, caring, and respect for people and property.

Limitations of the Study

Subject threat. There were many variations among the students in the study elementary school, which included gender, age, academic disabilities, diversity, socioeconomic status, behavior disorders, and attendance record. However, the researchers attempted to eliminate this threat by comparing the same group of students over three years rather than comparing last year's third graders with this year's third graders.

Loss of subject. The district had a transient population, which meant some of the subjects of the study may not be available for the final part of the study.

Location. The enrollment in the 2006-2007 third grade level was not ideal due to lack of space in the elementary building. Student to teacher ratio enrollment for the 2006-2007 third grade classrooms was consistent with the state maximum guideline of 27 students but was above the desirable standard of 22 students.

Maturation. Children naturally develop a sense of self over time and may improve their abilities to communicate, which affected the character education implementation. This may also affect their achievement test scores as students mature.

Implementation. Teachers may have chosen a unique approach to implementing the Caring School Community Program because of the variety of skill level, motivation, and teaching styles which lead to the possibility of an adverse effect on the results of this study. The observation data was an attempt to control for this limitation; however, the researchers could not be in every classroom every minute the program was being implemented.

Definition of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress. NCLB requires all schools, districts and states to show that students are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). NCLB requires states to establish targets in the following ways: Annual Proficiency Target: The law requires a set target for all students and student subgroups to meet in a progressive nature that would result in all students scoring at or above the proficient level on the state's assessment by 2014. Attendance /Graduation Rates: The law requires schools, districts and states to meet an additional indicator based on improvement or established targets in attendance and/or graduation rates. Participation Rates: The law requires all students and student subgroups to meet a 95% participation rate. Missouri's AYP targets were established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) based on a formula from the NCLB Act and an analysis of Missouri

Assessment Program (MAP) data, attendance rate data and graduation rate data from prior years. When all targets are met, the requirements of AYP are met. (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MO DESE], 2009c, p. 1)

Cross-Age Buddies. “These activities will be scheduled one to two times every month and are designed to build caring relationships in the school by pairing older and younger students for joint activities” (Gibbons, 1999, p. 113).

Caring School Community. The Caring School Community is a multi-phased, school wide character education program, where the central aim is to help the school become a “caring community of learners.” The program will effectively promote teachers’ continuous improvement of practices as well as students’ intellectual, social, and ethical development. (Character Plus Local Education Agency, 2009, para. 1)

Character Education Partnership (CEP). “The CEP is a national advocate and leader for the character education movement. It is a Washington, D.C. coalition of more than 1,200 organizations and individuals committed to fostering effective character education in our nation’s K-12 schools” (Character Education Partnership [CEP], 2008, para. 1).

Class Meetings. These meetings are held in classrooms three to four times every week, and they include a total of 30 to 35 character building lessons (Gibbons, 1999).

Curriculum Frameworks. “The frameworks for curriculum development in Communication Arts, fine arts, health and physical education, Mathematics, science, social studies, and curriculum integration are intended to provide assistance to districts in aligning local curriculum with the Show-Me Standards” (MO DESE, 2009a, para. 8).

Highly Qualified. A highly qualified teacher means that the teacher: has obtained full State certification as a teacher or passed the State teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the State, and does not have certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; holds a minimum of a bachelor’s degree; and has demonstrated subject-matter competency in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches, in a manner determined by the State and in compliance with Section 9101(23) of ESEA. (MO DESE, 2010a, p. 1)

Home-side Activities. To encourage parental involvement, these activities are sent home to engage students and their family members in conversations to strengthen the relationship between home and school. They consist of 18 activities, approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length, and are available in both English and Spanish (Gibbons, 1999).

Individual Education Program (IEP). “A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting” (MO DESE, 2007, p. 40).

Limited English Proficient (LEP). This term refers to an individual, who is aged 3 through 21; who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary

school or secondary school; who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual: the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments, the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or the opportunity to participate fully in society. (MO DESE, 2010b, para. 1)

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). During the spring of 1997, Missouri began implementing a performance-based assessment system for use by all public schools in the state, as required by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. This system of evaluation determines the effectiveness of schools and districts. It is designed to measure student progress in meeting the Show-Me Standards. (MO DESE, 2004, para. 1)

Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). “MSIP provides additional support by requiring districts to have a long-range plan for ongoing curriculum development and revision, to develop written curriculum guides for all

curricular areas, and to implement the stated curriculum” (MO DESE, 2009b, para. 15).

National Schools of Character Awards. The purpose of both the National and State Schools of Character awards is to identify, honor, and showcase exemplars in character education and facilitate their leadership in mentoring others. The goal of the national program is to provide a variety of models of comprehensive, quality character education, representing America’s diverse educational system. (CEP, 2010b, para. 1)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB is a government act to close the achievement gap between high and low-performing students. According to NCLB by the 2005-2006 school year, states must measure every child's progress in reading/language arts and Mathematics every year in grades 3-8 and at least once during grades 10-12. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education used the Communication Arts and Mathematics assessments in their original form in 2004 and 2005 before modifying them to version 2.0 in 2006. By the 2007-2008 school year, states must also have in place science assessments to be administered at least once during grades 3-5, grades 6-9 and grades 10-12 (USDOE, 2009a).

The Outstanding Schools Act. The passage of the Outstanding Schools Act in 1993 signaled Missouri's commitment to a public school system that purposefully prepares young people for the 21st century and assures our state's continued economic vitality. The Outstanding Schools Act calls for increased accountability in improving student academic performance for all of

Missouri's public school districts and school buildings. (MO DESE, 2009a, para. 6)

School-wide Activities. These activities are a collection of non-competitive opportunities to build relationships that emphasize participation, cooperation, helping others, taking responsibility, and appreciating differences (Gibbons, 1999).

Show-Me Standards. “...a set of 73 rigorous standards intended to define what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from Missouri's public high schools” (MO DESE, 2009b, para. 7).

Summary

This Collaborative study assessed the impact of implementing Caring School Community at a Midwestern elementary school. The investigators used data collected from students, parents, and teachers as well as academic achievement data to evaluate the effectiveness of the school-wide implementation. Michelle Wilkerson, the district math coordinator, investigated the success of implementation of Caring School Community and its possible impact on student achievement. Debbie Kyle, the principal of the elementary school being studied, investigated the success of Caring School Community in terms of student discipline, positive behavior referrals, and student attendance. Effective implementation was possible if the building leaders created a plan to provide professional development for staff, involved staff in decision making, monitored progress, and held all stakeholders accountable. Craig D. Jerald noted that:

According to Deal and Peterson research suggests that a strong, positive culture serves several beneficial functions, including the

following: fostering efforts and productivity, improving collegial and collaborative activities that in turn promote better communication and problem solving, supporting successful change and improvement efforts, building commitment and helping students and teachers identify with the school, amplifying energy and motivation of staff members and students, and focusing attention and daily behavior on what is important and valued. (2006, p. 2)

After analyzing the study elementary building data, the investigative team discovered a significant number of students not performing proficiently in Communication Arts and Mathematics on the MAP, high discipline referrals, zero positive behavior referrals, and student attendance concerns.

In an effort to increase academic achievement, decrease discipline referrals, improve student attendance, and improve the school culture, the investigative team evaluated the implementation of Caring School Community for possible recommendation to the superintendent for district implementation. The review of literature in the next chapter includes the historical background of character education in the world and within the United States. The rationale of character education will be explained along with the different types of character education programs available. The pros and cons of character education will be discussed to compare and contrast the results documented from a variety of school districts that have implemented character education. The theories regarding the implementation of character instruction and the effects it has on student social and achievement success was researched along with a summary of the literature reviewed within the chapter.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The review of literature includes the historical background of character education in the world and within the United States. The increase in violence and crime in the United States and especially in schools has caused many school officials to begin researching programs and resources to assist schools with addressing student social and achievement concerns. The rationale for character education will be explained along with the different types of character education programs available. The pros and cons of character education will be discussed to compare and contrast the results documented from a variety of school districts that have implemented character education. A frequent theme occurring in the literature review are concerns voiced by educators regarding the time needed to teach character education and where to infuse it with the rest of the curriculum. The theories regarding the implementation of character education and the impact it has on student social and achievement success was researched along with a summary of the literature reviewed within this chapter.

Historical Background

Historically, education has had the same underlying focus across the world for all students. Education is and was meant to give students necessary or useful knowledge and to help them become decent members of society.

The American founders believed that democracy has a special need for character education, because democracy is government by the people themselves. The people must therefore be good, must develop democratic virtues: respect for the rights of individuals, regard for law, voluntary

participation in public life, and concern for the common good. (Ohio Resource Network for Safe & Drug Free Schools and Communities, 2007, para. 14)

Throughout the 20th century, character education continued to be a focus of public school education. The Center of the 4th & 5th R's (Respect and Responsibility), noted in the 1960s and 70s, that character education was no longer an emphasis in schools due to the new philosophy of values education that focused on decision-making, process and thinking skills.

As societal moral problems have worsened, character education has made a comeback. Adults realize that the young need moral direction. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to provide it. The school has a responsibility to stand for good values and help students form their character around such values. (Center of the 4th & 5th R's, 1994, para. 6)

From its beginnings, character education has included processes of helping young people develop good character. Character education has been an initiative in schools to help students understand their core values. Schools started providing time for character education when moral instruction seemed to decrease for students from parents and religious institutions. Children are exposed to mixed messages from the media about sex, drugs, and violence at an earlier age which requires clarification of core values (Florida Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1998).

Interest in developing policies for character education has increased among government officials, educators, and parents. However, many schools believe that increasing academic performance remains the focus of schools, and character education may impede students' success. Secretary of Education Rod Paige stated,

Sadly, we live in a culture without role models, where millions of students are taught the wrong values or no values at all. This culture of callousness has led to a staggering achievement gap, poor health status, overweight students, crime, violence, teenage pregnancy, and tobacco and alcohol abuse. Good character is the product of good judgments made every day. (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006, p. 448)

Interest is developing in some states on creating policies for incorporating character education into the curriculum. Some states have made it a part of the required standards. Improving academic performance with the implementation of high-quality character education is gaining a large amount of national support.

Developing good character has been an underlying focus for increasing academic performance. “In the mid-fifties, the effort dwindled due to recognition of the complexity of moral education. By the 1980s, reports indicated that the moral climate in many U.S. schools reflected growing social uncertainties” (Florida Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1998, p. 3). Communities began to develop character education to tackle society’s problems of poverty, peer pressure, family breakdown, and the negative impact of sex and violence in the media (Florida Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1998).

A diverse society, such as the United States, requires schools to uphold the democratic principles that founded the country. “A commitment to democratic principles, a willingness to engage in the democratic process, and the affirmation of core values are key elements of the bond that joins us as We the People” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997, para. 8). Instilling moral values requires that

educators and parents provide students with the opportunities to practice good character and citizenship. “Civic virtue must be lived and not just studied” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997. para.13).

Education that provides students with a rich knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities as citizens in a democracy must be accompanied by opportunities for students to develop the disposition to act virtuously in their private and public lives. Many young people today have adequate knowledge of their civic responsibilities, but fail to live out these ideals. It is essential that young people be exposed to attractive models of civic virtue and have the opportunity to practice civic virtue in a meaningful and rewarding manner. (National Council for Social Studies, 1997 para. 17)

A well maintained school culture is imperative for schools to promote a sense of civic duty. Imbedding the moral curriculum of responsibility, caring and respect in the academics of the school day helps to teach students how to be a contributing factor in their society. “Students should be encouraged and given the opportunity to make positive contributions to the well-being of fellow students and to the school” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997, para. 20). Schools have many policies and procedures in place that address student conduct. School boards must address the school policies in the handbook each year to determine changes and revisions that will address the modifications that are needed for student discipline each year .

Teachers following a character education curriculum must display the values they want to see in their students. “A school curriculum that attempts to teach values such as responsibility or respect is unlikely to be effective in the hands of teachers

who are irresponsible in the performance of their professional duties and disrespectful in their dealings with students” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997, para. 21).

When students perceive policies and procedures as unfair and the teachers as hypocritical, then character education will not be effective in the school. A sense of community requires that educators and parents form an alliance to develop moral character and civic virtues within the students (National Council for Social Studies, 1997). Committees should be formed with all stakeholders in the community and the students to discuss the development of values in the school, home and community.

The stakeholders in the community should develop recognition programs for the community to honor adults and students who display good character. Recognition of good character may be as simple as recognition in the classroom or more formalized as being recognized in front of the district.

The development of character education in the school requires the community to set aside cultural differences to develop an approach that will work for all educators in the local school system “This is a critical time in the history of our democracy when the social fabric that binds us as a people appears to be weakening. The schools, and especially social studies educators, have a critical role to play in the reaffirmation of the fundamental principles of our constitutional compact” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997, para. 29). Teachers must set examples of character and embed the character education in their academic lessons. “The fate of the American experiment in self-government depends in no small part on the presence of character traits that reside in the American people” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997, para. 31).

“Social scientists, criminologists, and many other observers at long last are coming to recognize the connection between the breakdown of families and various social problems that have plagued American society” (Fagan, 1995, p. 1). While society understands the connection of single parent families being more likely to be dependent on welfare, “Compared to households that don't work, single parent households that work face significantly higher hardship levels than would be expected from the pattern observed among two-parent and non-parent households” (Bauman, 2000, para. 65). Hardships that unique family dynamics face may vary, but the connection of criminal behavior and how it relates back to the family is still unsolved. Patrick Fagan (1995) and William H.G. Fitzgerald, Fellow for Family and Cultural Studies at the Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C., reported “We [society] desperately needs to uncover the real root cause of criminal behavior and learn how criminals are formed if society is going to fight this growing threat” (1995, p. 1).

The problem is not just in large urban cities, it afflicts even small, rural communities. The pattern of the five stages is becoming predominant in communities.

In a 2009 nationally representative sample of youth in grades 9-12: 5.6% reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife or club) on school property on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey and 7.7% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times in the 12 months preceding the survey. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2010, para. 19-20)

Since the evidence of school violence is clear, educators and communities spend countless hours developing policies and plans of action in case there is a violent crime within the school.

Most major American cities deal with violent crimes daily, and students see this either firsthand or on the news the results of the violence. Educators need to focus on students' academics; however, if a student is dealing with violence in their home then academics is not a major factor, but rather safety and survival take precedence. Schools may be a place for students to feel safe from the violence in their home or community.

Educators and many caring adults in the community perceive that a stable family environment, a sense of belonging, and a strong moral foundation within the family and community help prevent the spread of violence. A well balanced child begins in a well balanced home with love and support from the family supporting their child's moral development (Fagan, 1995).

We [society] must begin by affirming four simple principles: First, marriage is vital. Second, parents must love and nurture their children in spiritual as well as physical ways. Third, children must be taught how to relate to and empathize with others. And, finally, the backbone of strong neighborhoods and communities is friendship and cooperation among families. These principles constitute the real root solution to the real root problem of violent crime. (Fagan, 1995, p. 5)

Sommers and Fellow (1998) stated that the media portrays students not being able to read or write but also about children's difficulty with distinguishing right from

wrong. “Along with illiteracy and innumeracy, educators must add deep moral confusion to the list of educational problems” (Sommers & Fellow, 1998, p.1). Educators listen to students and hear not only their hopes for the future but the troubles that they face in their everyday lives. Schools have programs that help students to volunteer. Children are involved in their community and church programs for helping the elderly, donating blood, or using their summer to volunteer. “This is a generation of kids that, despite relatively little moral guidance or religious training, is putting compassion into practice. Conceptually and culturally, however, today’s young people live in a moral haze” (Sommers & Fellow, 1998, p. 2).

There probably isn't a company in America that isn't struggling with the problem of managing different generations. Baby boomers, Gen X, Millennials: they all seem to want something different. Boomers are good team players, love the social interaction at work, will work all hours and are willing to invest time in working their way up the corporate hierarchy. Gen Xers are so much more sceptical [*sic*], think the boomers are crazy to work so hard, and are determined to do a good job -- but also to go home at night and have a life. And the latest crop -- Millennials -- have no patience at all; if they're not happy, they won't work through it: they just leave. Boomers like handwritten notes and phone calls, Gen X mostly do email and Millennials do text or instant messaging. (Heffernan, 2006, para. 3)

Philosophers and theologians have written about ethics, and have stressed a basic moral foundation. Sommers and Fellow went on to report that society needs to, “teach our young people to understand, respect, and protect the institutions that protect the citizens and preserve a free and democratic society. The lives of morally

enlightened children will be saner, safer, more dignified and more humane”

(Sommers & Fellow, 1998, p.5). Educators work to teach students to be productive members of society, but society is beginning to dictate the methods of educating students for the workforce.

Character Education in the United States

“Character education is a national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on values United State citizens all share” (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 155). Character education and the development of the whole child through practice and examples of honesty, integrity, responsibility, and fairness have been embedded in the school curriculum. The safety of our students in school requires a long term solution that addresses moral and ethical issues that will help them to grow in their academics.

A number of factors, such as a weakening in guidance by some families and communities, brought on widespread reflection toward the end of the 20th century. The tragedy at Columbine and fatal shootings at a number of other schools punctuated these concerns across the country. Now, character education is becoming a priority in our nation’s education reform as we are increasingly realizing that character development must be an intentional part of education rather than just a process that happens naturally. (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 155)

Davidson and Lickona (2007) noted that schools need to help students develop performance character to help students academically and develop their moral

character. Performance and moral character are interdependent and need each other. Performance character without moral character can be damaging to society without moral character. A person with performance character and no moral character may have goals, but only to benefit themselves or they may achieve those goals in an unethical manner. Moral character is what motivates us to pursue a goal in an ethical manner that may not only will benefit ourselves, but benefit society (Davidson & Lickona, 2007). “Moral character without performance character means having the willingness to help others through a service, learning project but lacking the organization and perseverance to carry it out effectively” (Davidson & Lickona, 2007 p. 27).

A teacher who gets to know every student individually but does not simultaneously demonstrate teaching the content well is a common problem in teaching. Other teachers have the opposite problem: they have excellent pedagogy in their content area, but demonstrate poor moral character by insulting and embarrassing students and validating such behavior as a means of motivating the students (Davidson & Lickona, 2007). When asking students how they know if their teachers care about them, they describe a teacher who teaches well and is respectful, honest, and fair.

Haynes and Thomas (2007) determined that Americans are examining the quality of education their children are receiving and are looking to schools to assist not only in academic development, but moral and ethical development. Parents are looking to the schools for answers on how to raise their children in a society that glamorizes sex and drugs in the media and on the internet.

According to Haynes and Thomas (2007), government officials should support character education in schools, but similar to the philosophy of teaching academics, the approach or program for a district should not be mandated. The school district and the community must decide what core values should be taught to the students in their district and how they are presented. A comprehensive approach embeds character education into academics, school culture and community.

Since very few educators and administrators receive training on how to incorporate character education into their classrooms and schools during their initial preparation at teacher colleges and universities, providing funding for staff development is a critical role for states and districts education. (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 158)

Forty states support character education through federal education grants or through legislation. Eighteen states mandate character education through legislation (CEP, 2009). Schools that piloted character education programs are wanting to continue the effort with support from legislators (Delisio, 2000). “New Jersey state legislators recently approved \$4.75 million to continue character education programs for all grades. The state’s pilot program was funded through a federal grant for the past three years and involved several schools in Newark” (Delisio, 2000, para 7). The pilot program in Newark gained attention of education officials. Reports of the character education pilot were showing positive results which encouraged state officials to approve state funding for continuing the character education program (Delisio, 2000). Character education, ethical and moral lessons are infused into the core curriculum in the state of Utah. “In Utah, four years of federal funding for

character education since 1995 has paid for staff and professional development and helped educators develop a model for character education” (Delisio, 2000, para. 9).

For example, educators in a small elementary school in Lebanon, Pennsylvania took on a new approach for the disadvantaged students of the small coal town, about half of whom were Caucasian and the other half were Latino. A new principal believed the students were a discipline issue because they were not engaged and were bored with their education. Harding Elementary School began to develop a character education program, and students began reading books from a variety of cultural backgrounds with moral and ethical dilemmas. “Students who had never left their hometowns raised money for victims of Hurricane Katrina and wrote letters to soldiers overseas” (Adams, 2007, p. 28). The school’s reading and writing scores improved, and the school excelled to an above average rating in their state. Discipline referrals also dropped drastically (Adams, 2007).

Caralee Adams (2007) listed some of the lessons Harding teachers learned: The reading curriculum put a special emphasis on the acceptance of everyone’s differences and taught the students about what made them different and therefore special. When teachers open up, students do too. The teachers at Harding began sharing experiences from their own lives, which caused the students to feel safe, open up and the dialogue became richer. Assessment isn’t just for test day. The teachers began meeting the individual needs of students through small, flexible groups. The lunchroom makes a great place to read. The students at Harding were encouraged to bring books and quiet activities to engage in with friends after they ate. All kids can

succeed. Teachers were motivated to help all students achieve because they realized the challenges they faced. (p. 28-30).

However, not all states have funded character education. “Although Georgia state legislature mandates character education and the state department of education received a \$1 million, four-year federal grant in 1999, only three school districts will receive funding to develop character education programs” (Delisio, 2000, para. 15). State legislators believe that character education is a natural part of the school day and does not require funding support for a program.

As for the rest of the state, individual school districts are subsidizing programs, but there is no requirement for them to report back to the state on what they are doing. Teachers were asked to assess where character lessons occur naturally in the curriculum, and if possible, to capitalize on opportunities to build in character messages. (Delisio, 2000, para. 16)

State legislatures encourage character education, but the accountability of districts and funding are not supported by legislatures (Delisio, 2000).

Rationale of Character Education

Studies suggest that students who develop a strong sense of character will perform better academically and the discipline issues will decrease in schools. “When students feel safe to speak in class and take on academic challenges and when they have peers and a caring teacher they can turn to for support, they are more likely to adopt school norms, follow rules, and apply effort in their classes” (Beland, 2007, p. 70). Many character education programs are tried throughout districts with little success. However, when character education programs are highly regarded by

educators and are implemented effectively, then results should be observed in the culture of the schools and academic achievement in students.

In Washington D.C., the Character Education Partnership (CEP), a national advocacy group, aims to help educators and policymakers make informed decisions about character education by identifying and describing strategies that work. Each year the CEP interviews and records reviews of schools that demonstrated character education had a positive effect on discipline, student and faculty morale, and student performance. “Kennedy Middle School in Eugene, OR, showed a 15% improvement in meeting or exceeding the state’s academic benchmarks and a 65% decrease in discipline referrals” (Beatty, Dachnowicz, & Schwartz, 2006, p. 26). This school was one of approximately ten elementary and secondary schools recognized as National Schools of Character because of their exemplary accomplishments in character education. Character education is not just for the urban communities where crime rates seem to be abundant, but programs may help in all areas.

The phrase character education does not refer to a single approach or even a single list of the values that are taught in character education programs.

Character education is often the umbrella term that describes coordinated efforts to teach a number of qualities, virtues, respect and responsibility, social and emotional learning, empathy and caring, tolerance for diversity, and service, to the community. (Beatty et al., 2006. p. 26)

Educators are focused on students’ academic performance and are accountable to administrators, who are in turn accountable to the state. Schools’ academic performance reports are publicized in the news and in local papers. Character

education efforts, morals, values are not a widely publicized. Educators wonder if character education is an initiative that will stay prominent in school districts.

Character education programs are seen as beneficial because, “The data presented in the two studies indicate that character education initiatives affect student attitudes and behavior, thus setting the stage for improved academic performance” (Beatty et al., 2006, p. 29).

Haynes and Berkowitz (2007) spoke with “Kristen Pelster, principal of Ridgewood Middle School, a rural/suburban school of about 503 students (42% of them economically disadvantaged) in Arnold, MO” (para. 7). Pelster’s concerns with Ridgewood Middle School paralleled most schools that were classified as failing by the state of Missouri. Students were frequently absent, scores were low on the MAP, students were failing and discipline issues took the majority of the teachers and administrators time. “Located in a poor community plagued by inadequate housing and methamphetamine labs, the school had graffiti on the walls, profanity echoing in the halls and a rusty chain fence surrounding it. It could have been the set for *Blackboard Jungle*” (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para 8).

Principals Tim Crutchley and Kristen Pelster both were new to the district, so they both researched the school and identified what was the root cause for the problems in the school. The main problem the principals identified was “Students didn’t feel as though anyone cared about them or the school (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para. 9). Principals, teachers, students, parents and community developed a vision and mission for “a school where there is caring, a sense of belonging and academic achievement” (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para. 10). The principals raised

the bar on attendance, would not allow failure in any of their students or teachers, and required teachers to infuse character education and ethical issues into the daily lessons and the discipline policies (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007). Teachers who did not show concern were replaced with teachers who understood the dedication it takes to develop a caring school community. Resources were allocated to provide staff development and students met with an adult mentor for 30 minutes each day.

“Parents now volunteer at the school and attendance at parent conferences has risen from 44.5% in 2000 to 75% in 2005” (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para. 22).

Academic performance is up and disciplinary referrals are down by more than 70%, and the student failure rate has dropped to zero. Attendance has also improved, with the formerly daily home visits for truant students now down to four or five per year. (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007 para. 23)

The school with a new vision from the principals and a commitment from the teachers and students to not accept failure has turned the school’s statistics in a positive direction. “Ridgewood was one of 10 schools and districts in the nation to be recognized as a 2006 National School of Character by the Character Education Partnership” (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para. 25).

Anser Public Charter School is a school with few resources in Boise, Idaho, where character education is paramount and is proven in the students’ academic performance. On standard achievement tests, “94% of Anser students scored at the advanced or proficient levels in reading, and 86% in math” (Broderick & Raymond, 2006a, para. 12). The fourth graders in their district scored a 100% in both areas.

Twenty-seven percent of the teachers are National Board Certified. The students in the school play a large role in decision making which in turn makes them feel valued.

According to Healy (2002), the September 11, 2001, terrorists' attacks have changed the lives of us all. Innocent children feel themselves threatened by that hatred. Healy (2002) wrote that children's artwork moves the spirit from tolerance to appreciation. He suggested that an image shows the truth to a child, so to distort the truth is to violate the trust of the children entrusted to our care (Healy, 2002). This approach to helping kids build character education involved exposing children to photographs and murals that sparked discussion regarding individual value systems based on their reactions to the photographs and images and their individual application of these concepts.

The authors, Patricia Broderick and Allen Raymond (2006b), visited Brigantine Elementary School in New Jersey in 2006 to observe a perfect example of a school with character. "This year Brigantine Elementary was one of five schools in the state nominated by the New Jersey Department of Education for the No Child Left Behind National Blue Ribbon School Award" (Broderick & Raymond, 2006b, p. 56). Kindness was emphasized and integrated not only into the core curriculums, but into all the curriculums of the school. The school designated October as Kindness Month. Acts of kindness were recognized within the community, at home, and in the classroom, "this emphasis on kindness - it seems like a no-brainer, but it isn't - has brought the Kindest School in New Jersey award to the school three times" (Broderick & Raymond, 2006b, p. 56). The students showed dramatic increases in standardized test scores in language arts and mathematics as well.

According to Diana Brannon, professor at Elmhurst College (2008), students in the past would come to school for their academics and would be taught their moral and ethical values from their families or church. The family dynamics have shifted in today's culture, so character education is expected to be a part of the students' school day.

Character education programs have a positive effect on students' achievement, classroom behaviors, and long-term test scores. They also result in a reduction of risk factors associated with school failure in middle and high school students....

Researchers have found that parent involvement is essential for students' success in school. Parent involvement results in students attaining higher academic achievement, more positive attitudes about homework, and improved perceptions of their own competence. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. (Brannon, 2008, p. 62)

Another reason why character education is needed is because, the media sends mixed messages and society excuses behaviors that are unacceptable in the classroom. Diana Brannon (2008) noted that young children are exposed to more mature content in the media. "This extensive exposure to media has resulted in children receiving mixed messages about the value of good character and has reduced children's opportunities for early 'community' learning through social interaction" (Brannon, 2008, p. 63). Parents in today's society may not want to be the disciplinarian for their child, but they want to be viewed as a friend to their child. Working parents may allow their children more freedom because they feel guilty (Brannon, 2008). "Many parents do not recognize the importance of sound,

thoughtful, and deliberate parenting choices. They are afraid of upsetting their child” (Brannon, 2008, p. 63). With the shift in parenting styles and lack of community service, students reflect the change in society which has become less tolerant, and less compassionate of others.

Since the inception of No Child Left Behind, many educators feel pressure to spend most of their time preparing students to perform well on standardized reading and math achievement tests-often at the expense of other subjects and critical facets of education, such as character development, civic engagement, creative thinking and social and emotional learning. (Allred, 2008, p. 26)

Carol Gerber Allred, president and founder of Positive Action, Inc., reported that, “Discovery Bay Elementary School is a success story from the more than 13,000 schools and districts, mainly in California, that have experienced the beneficial effects of Positive Action for more than 26 years” (Allred, 2008, p. 27). The Positive Action Program changes both values and academics and has been recognized nationally. Positive behaviors are the framework for all curriculum and programs in the school district. “It teaches students directly what positive actions are and how to do them holistically by including physical, intellectual, social and emotional domains” (Allred, 2008, p. 27).

The Positive Action Program teaches students to act appropriately and in a positive way, which in turn will make them feel good about themselves, and the positive reactions are contagious. “Everyone wants to feel good about themselves, and a three-step process called the Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle helps students understand and control their behavior to achieve that feeling” (Allred, 2008, p. 27).

First, students have a thought; second, they act consistently with the thought; third, they experience a feeling about themselves based on the action. That feeling leads to another thought, and the cycle starts again. With practice, students learn that if they have a negative thought, they can change it to a positive one that will lead to a positive action and a positive feeling about themselves.... This approach teaches students that it is all about them-who they are, who they can become, and how that person can be someone admirable. Positive Action provides a foundation of strong, proactive behavior, character development and academic achievement. (Allred, 2008 p.27)

According to Allred (2008) the Positive Action system has components that address all aspects of a student's life: teachers, principals, family, counselors, and community. Lessons are cross-curricular and reach the many interest and learning styles of the student (Allred, 2008).

Types of Character Education

Character education programs are vast in style and implementation methods. The school district and community must decide the best approach for their students. The school may provide character education through a specific course dedicated to ethical dilemmas or infused throughout Social Studies, Family and Consumer Science, or English courses. School districts also have the choice in either developing their own material or purchasing an already established character education program. Many character education programs promote a value for an extended period of time during the school year. Each month a school may focus on a character trait such as

respect or responsibility. Other character education programs integrate character education into all aspects of the written curriculum and extracurricular activities.

“Most successful character education efforts are school wide and employ a combination of many strategies, including the provision of community service opportunities (service learning) in addition to classroom activities” (Florida Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1998, p. 3).

An abundance of research indicates a need for character education in schools. Teaching morals in schools tends to be accepted more at the elementary levels, when not associated with a religion. Other types of character education tend to be centered on work ethic. Character education has become widely accepted at the elementary level, is starting to appear more in the middle schools, but is rarely seen in the high schools. “Society has made extraordinary technological advances because of the active imaginations of our scientists and researchers, but society has been slower to advance morally because of a general unwillingness to practice imagination in the moral sphere” (Telushkin, 2000, para 5). Davidson and Lickona (2007) noted,

If the national character education movement has had a motto to date, it’s been Theodore Roosevelt’s famous observation: “To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.” However - and we think this point has been overlooked – the reverse of Roosevelt’s maxim is also true: To educate a person in morals and not in mind is to educate, if not a menace, at least a detriment to society. Who wants an honest but incompetent doctor, lawyer, or mechanic? (p. 25)

Studies are limited in character education at the high school level. It has proven difficult to measure a student's character growth quantitatively and to determine if character education is affecting the learning environment.

A report by Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn and Smith stated, "The growth of character education programs in the United States has coincided with the rise in high-stakes testing of student achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act asks schools to contribute not only to students' academic performance but also to their character" (2006, p. 448). Legislators are asking educators to look at the student as a whole and not just focus on academics. "A growing body of research supports the notion that high-quality character education can promote academic achievement" (Benninga et al., 2006, p. 449). Over a three year period from 1999 to 2002, a study involving groups of 120 random elementary schools was conducted in California by Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn and Smith (2006). The schools in the sample were selected for the study by the extent of implementation or their character education program, with their API (Academic Performance Index) and state assessments used by California at that time.

Common principles and methods were present in schools with well implemented character education programs and high scores on achievement tests. Surveys indicated that well performing schools respected their environment and made the students feel secure. Students, teachers, and administrators were respectful and fair. The character education programs the schools used promoted a caring community and positive social relationships (Benninga et al., 2006).

It is no surprise that students need physically secure and psychologically safe schools, staffed by teachers who model professionalism and caring behaviors and who ask students to demonstrate caring for others. That students who attend such schools achieve academically makes intuitive sense as well.

(Benninga et al., 2006, p. 452)

Several character education programs are available for educators. What seems to be an important factor across all the programs is the connection to the students' homes. Developing a common language and expectations between home and school helps to create a cohesive program. "Character Counts" from the Joseph Institute of Ethics is the most popular curriculum today (Brannon, 2008). The Character Counts program focuses on reward from practicing good character rather than punishments. The program consists of "A framework centered on basic values called the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship" (Joseph Institute, 2008, para. 2). The Character Counts program includes all aspects of the community. Other programs focus on students with behavioral problems. These programs are more of a reactive program than a proactive program.

A comprehensive character education program involves the whole school and community. A school must reach out to the community, provide materials to both teachers and families, and value character education as being as important as academics.

Thomas Lickona (1997), of the Center for the 4th and 5th R's (Respect and Responsibility), identified nine classroom based components of a

comprehensive education program....teachers should: act as models and mentors for students, create a classroom that provides a supportive moral community, use discipline as an opportunity to teach about moral reasoning, encourage democracy in the classroom, teach character across the curriculum, utilize cooperative learning when teaching, provide opportunities for moral reflection, teach students about conflict resolution, and encourage students to take pride in their work. (Brannon, 2008, p. 63-64)

The Caring School Community is a type of character education program that touches on these nine components. Educators provide a caring and comprehensive learning environment, while encouraging their student's academic and moral learning. School districts work with the community and parents to build a strong foundation for character education. Students who form a strong attachment to their school tend to succeed academically and have a strong moral compass. The Caring School Community program focuses on building the bond between the school, students, and their home (Gibbons, 1999).

The Pros and Cons of Character Education

Florida Safe and Drug Free Schools (1998) suggest that in a democratic society, every citizen has responsibilities and rights. Only people of good character can sustain responsible government. Creating caring schools is indispensable to teaching and learning. In order to attract and keep quality teachers, administrators and educators must cultivate a positive school climate and address the moral development of our youth. Character education is perceived to make schools a caring community, it reduces violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, and negative attitudes, it

improves academic performance, and it prepares young people to be productive citizens.

Students in today's society face many threats and factors that influence their morality over generations. Therefore, schools focus on teaching good character to help control some of these risks that students face. Directly teaching character education to children is not a new idea; however it is still evolving in schools. Character education and moral conduct in former generations was left to the parents and their church. Many of the current generation of students either comes from a split home or both parents are working full-time, consequently the students have to take on more of the family responsibilities and stress. "Studies show that children spend only 38.5 minutes a week (33.4 hours a year) in meaningful conversation with their parents, while they spend 1,500 hours a year watching television" (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 151).

"Since children spend about 900 hours a year in school, it is essential that schools resume a proactive role in assisting families and communities by developing caring, respectful environments where students learn core, ethical values" (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 152). Schools are trying to create the sense of community for the students and their family by intentionally teaching character education. "We must be intentional, proactive and comprehensive in our work to encourage the development of good character in young people" (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p.152).

Hillary Clinton gave speeches of how it takes a village to raise a child. One of the main responsibilities of being a parent is to teach their child morals and values. Today's parents realize they cannot accomplish this task by themselves, so they look

to their community and school for guidance (Haynes & Thomas, 2007). Haynes and Thomas suggest that, “sadly, school may be the only place where some children are taught virtuous behavior because they live in homes where their families are not serving as positive role models and are not providing adequate character development” (2007, p. 156).

Universities and colleges of education are preparing teachers for the content and how to handle discipline issues, but few have classes on the pedagogy of character education.

Meanwhile, it appears that the nation’s schools of education are doing very little to prepare future teachers to be character educators, according to a 1999 study conducted by CEP and the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University. While character education is very strongly supported by the deans of education at the colleges and universities that are training new teachers, very few of the schools are addressing character education during teacher preparation. In order to implement effective initiatives, schools require access to resources and guidance in establishing, maintaining and assessing their programs. (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 157)

One such study from Michael Romanowski (2003) noted, “They [the teachers in the study] understood the problem of assessment, the limitations, and that any improved behavior could not be directly correlated to the character education because of the numerous other factors that play a role in student’s decision making process” (p. 10).

Studies are still limited in character education programs at the high school level. Many teachers and students believe that teaching character at the secondary

level is childish and should be left to the elementary schools. High school students also tend to believe that they have the right answer and are set in their decision making, since they are close to adulthood. Many adults in today's society still need character education or a sense of direction with their values, and they search for it in the thousands of published self help books, religion, or even on television.

Romanowski (2003) suggested that character education will not be the only influence on a students' decision making process or the outcomes of discipline and performance in schools. This is where studies tend to fail in helping school districts seeing the importance of a program at all levels and not just the elementary.

Several barriers exist when it comes to character education. Time is a major factor in incorporating character education into a curriculum that has a focus on academics. Philosophical differences regarding the teaching of character may arise (Brannon, 2008). Lack of materials and resources is another obstacle teachers face as they begin to teach character education. However, having an understanding that character education may enhance time and academic achievement helps teachers to persevere through these obstacles.

In a study by Brannon (2008), teachers noticed that directly implementing character education in their daily schedule promoted students' desire to learn which decreased the amount of time the classroom environment was focused on discipline. The time spent teaching character education did not take away from the core contents, but rather it increased the quality of time on the core contents. "Children became more accepting and respectful of one another. They learned to develop compassion and a sense of responsibility for their choices and actions" (Brannon, 2008, p. 63).

Students feel safe in an environment that is built around character education.

Students then focus more on the tasks and are willing to take risks answering questions. Diana Brannon (2008) offered the following strategies for teaching about character:

Children learn through example so it is important to treat your students the way you want them to be treated. It is important to keep it positive.

Classroom rules should be written with students' input. This provides a good opportunity for discussion and classroom application of character traits such as caring, fairness, and respect. Discussion is also a common strategy used to teach students about character development. Many teachers use direct instruction, cooperative learning, and role-playing activities to provide students with practice applying the concepts they are learning. Songs and service projects also are used to a limited extent to support teaching character.

(p. 63)

Character education is a joint responsibility between home and school.

Children need to see role models of good character in a variety of situations within the family and community and to receive consistent messages about the value of good character.

Administrators can do many things to positively influence their students' character and the climate of their school community. Diana Brannon (2008) interviewed teachers who identified five key elements:

- Reach out to the community. Hold parent education nights. Many districts offer monthly or quarterly meetings designed to help parents address issues related to character education or parenting.
- Provide materials to help teachers in teaching character education. Many books, videos, and character education curricula are available to help make adding character education to the daily curriculum possible without extensive expense or effort.
- Allow time each day or at least several days a week, for character education to be addressed. Many teachers use as little as ten minutes to teach lessons and address issues that have dramatic impacts on their students and classrooms.
- Set consistent school-wide expectations regarding character and values. Teachers, administrators and other school personnel should be aware of the school's expectations regarding character.
- Encourage and recognize teachers' efforts to develop the "whole child" and positively affect the school community. Value character education as important as other academics and test scores. (p. 64)

Character education begins at home. Children develop much of their identity and their beliefs about right and wrong before ever formally entering school.

However, schools and parents need to work together to continue developing students' character throughout their educational careers. Diana Brannon (2008) interviewed teachers who identified the five most successful ways to include parents in their character education programs:

1. Include a component of what you are teaching about character education as homework including a family discussion or activity.
2. Share what you are doing in class with parents through your newsletter or web site.
3. Let parents know about class rules, consequences and ways they can help.
4. Invite parents to serve as volunteers.
5. Plan events related to character education. Many parents are intimidated by volunteering in the classroom. A parent breakfast or character night is a great way to get them in the classroom beyond parent conferences. (p. 65)

Teachers may face some opposition when choosing to include character education in a school or district that has not adopted it as part of the curriculum. Some parents are uncomfortable with teachers using their role as an authority figure to influence students' character development. Administrators may be reluctant for teachers to take time away from core subject areas. Many teachers experienced some initial obstacles relating to time, materials, parents, or the curriculum. In spite of the challenges, each shared a belief that working with students regarding character is important and beneficial to students and society (Brannon, 2008).

Parents, teachers, administrators, and politicians are looking for proactive methods to prevent incidents of in-school violence (Starr, 2009). School districts adopt character education policies that fit the needs of the school, students, families and the community as a proactive measure to stop violence. The first school,

Newsome Park Elementary School in Virginia, incorporates community service learning projects into the curriculum at all grades levels.

The youngest students exchange visits with senior citizens. Second and third graders provide food and clothing to needy families and exchange letters with the families as part of their study of the postal system. Fourth and fifth grade also complete community service projects which have included adopting a ward at the local VA hospital and learn about the technology used to treat patients there. (Starr, 2009) para. 3)

Another school, Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School, in Massachusetts, focused on direct character education. "...each month's curriculum focuses on one of the cardinal virtues of fortitude, temperance, justice, and prudence, while the school fosters a sense of personal and social responsibility through a variety of voluntary community service projects" (Starr, 2006, para. 4). The last school mentioned, Buck Lodge Middle School in Maryland, features a combination of direct instruction which focuses on a new virtue each week and service learning project program which is part of a graduation requirement, and a peer mediation program (Starr, 2009)). The character education programs are not identical, but the commitment to their individual program is parallel in each school. "Although the individual programs vary, each school has made a commitment to providing students with character education along with the more traditional disciplines. Each school was also a recipient of The Business Week Award for Instructional Innovation in 1998" (Starr, 2009, para. 6).

Visionary leaders must look beyond school success and embrace the goal of life success, of helping students become active and committed citizens of their

classrooms, schools, families, communities, and workplaces. In model schools of sound character and academic excellence, principals see the roles of champion of vision and instructional leader as intertwined (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003). Children learn character through the adults around them and the way those adults set up experiences for them and interact with them. They function better and learn more effectively when they are encouraged to have clear, positive goals and values; when they are able to manage their emotions and make responsible decisions; and when they engage in setting goals for their own learning while also pursuing the academic goals that must be reached to function well in society (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003).

When students are given opportunities to participate in their learning and determine their path of education and become an integral part of their school's climate and programs, it encourages a school culture of caring, respect, responsibility and achievement (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003). When principals and teachers are willing to see through the eyes of students and to kindle students' spirit and joy as part of the learning environment, they are moved to create instructional programs that encourage them to make connections and create meaning through reality-based and project-based activities (Bencivenga & Elias, 2003).

Habits are the things people do when no one is watching. Habits help with defining who people are, what they value, and how they will spend their lives. The habits people develop when they are young have a profound influence on the quality of their lives (Baron, 2007). Shifting the focus of instruction from skills and knowledge to developing valuable habits in students and teachers leads directly to the

education of the whole student as well as the continuing development of the whole adult (Baron, 2007).

The worldwide issues of poverty, hunger, poor health care, short life expectancy, unjust legal systems, and global warming cannot be solved without people having the will to improve the quality of life for those who are less privileged than themselves (Baron, 2007). “Developing and maintaining concern for the welfare of others who are less fortunate is achieved through the development of the habit of using one’s heart well” (Baron, 2007, p. 50).

In a school that intentionally develops the habits of heart, students and teachers are expected to model mutually healthy relationships; perform meaningful community service; produce high-quality, collaborative work; and be sensitive to the needs of others (Baron, 2007). According to Baron, “...when young people have evidence that their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and passions matter in their school and community, they show an increase in engagement (both in the school and community), an increase in self-efficacy and confidence, and an improvement in attendance and grades” (2007, p. 51). To lead a successful life, students must learn to use their voice with confidence, purpose and meaning to be heard. Baron (2007) noted that understanding oneself and one’s own values, beliefs and ideas is essential to healthy human development. “Students develop good habits of voice through dialogue, self-reflection, and action that are intentionally built into the school day” (Baron, 2007, p. 52). A productive school, community, and society relies on the drive, skills, and capability of its students and citizens to move in positive direction.

Kathryn Wentzel (2003), professor of human development at the University of Maryland, suggested, "...that students who pursue goals valued by themselves as well as by teachers are likely to be competent students" (p. 321). She also noted, "...that children are more likely to adopt and internalize goals that are valued by others when their relationships are nurturing and supportive than if their relationships are marked by interactions that are harsh and critical" (Wentzel, 2003, p. 321). Teaching students in a supportive environment helps them succeed in school as well as later in their careers. "A full appreciation of why students display positive classroom behavior requires an understanding of a student's personal interests and goals, as well as the degree to which these are valued by teachers and peers" (Wentzel, 2003, p. 324). Creating a nurturing environment within the classroom in which teachers enforce rules consistently, outlines communication expectations for behavior, and values the opinions and feelings of the students, encourages positive student behavior and academic success.

Summary

Character education can be defined differently depending on the district, building, classroom, and community. Today's children and adults tend to feel a sense of entitlement and have lost a sense of responsibility. Many people think of character education as just acting appropriately to others. Davidson and Lickona (2007) stated, "Character has two essential parts: Performance character and moral character" (p. 26). Davidson and Lickona defined moral character as, "...integrity, justice, caring, respect, and cooperation" (2007, p. 26). These are the characteristics we tend to think of immediately when we think of character education. Parents and educators want

our students to get along, to treat everyone respectfully, and to be honest. The second part of character is the part most teachers look for in their students. They defined performance character as, "...diligence, perseverance, a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, ingenuity, and self-discipline" (Davidson & Lickona, 2007, p. 26). These are qualities that not only teachers want to see in their students, but managers in their employees, coaches in their players, and parents in their children. Kathy Beland (2007) noted that companies stated that, "The 5 rated most important [skills] for high school graduates were: Professionalism/work ethic, teamwork/collaboration, oral communication, ethics/social responsibility, and reading comprehension. Much farther down the list were two skills tested in high school assessments: Mathematics and science" (p. 69). Society has a need for character education not only in education, but in the workplace.

Since 2002 when nearly three-fourths of the states began to encourage character education, many have been looking for the most effective strategies. Strategies, although easy to implement at the elementary level, become difficult at the secondary level. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) noted these characteristics of effective programs: "Professional development, peer interaction, direct teaching and skill training, explicit agenda, family and community involvement, models and mentors, integration into academic curricula, and multiple strategies" (p. 29). The researchers compared elementary and secondary programs, and the same characteristics were seen in effective character education programs at both levels.

In secondary education programs, the teachers need to be role models and students want to be heard. The secondary program is for the entire school community

from students, to staff, and to others in the school district. If schools embrace the idea of character education and follow effective practices then:

Character education becomes far more than a passing fad; it is a road map to building a caring school culture, a safer and more-nurturing environment, and a more responsible and responsive student body, all which lay the foundation for improved academic performance. (Beatty et al., 2006, p. 30)

Character education should be integrated into the regular school day and viewed as an essential component for academic success, not as additional lessons to be taught when there is extra time available by teachers.

A great deal has been learned about the philosophies and characteristics of schools performing well academically and the connection to their character education programs.

We also know that to be effective, character education requires adults to act like adults in an environment where children are respected and feel physically and psychologically safe to engage in the academic and social activities that prepare the students best for later adult decision making. (Benningaet.al., 2006, p. 452)

Character education programs vary from district to district, but all have the same premise of guiding students to become well-rounded productive citizens. Society recognizes the need for more than just academics in schools in order to prepare students for the choices they will face in their future.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This collaborative study was a program evaluation of the implementation of Caring School Community, a Character Plus Education Program. The investigative team analyzed Caring School Community from different perspectives to determine the effectiveness of implementation concerning student achievement, student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals. The qualitative method was used to evaluate surveys with relevant student information regarding these areas. The study was also quantitative in nature, evaluating data from student achievement on the MAP.

The Caring School Community Leadership Team trained all classroom teachers during teacher orientation. Each grade level team leader was given a set of implementation materials covering the four components: class meetings, cross-age buddy activities, home-side activities, and school-wide activities to assist with lesson planning. Teachers were given a list of weekly “tiger traits”, acts of good character associated with the school’s mascot, which were highlighted one at a time throughout the school year. The tiger traits given to teachers were modeled for each classroom by the guidance counselors every Monday morning and included as part of daily announcements.

Wednesdays were early release days for students, and staff stayed to work in professional learning communities so Wednesdays were designated as Caring School Community Day for the last hour of the day. The Caring School Community Leadership Team observed classrooms during this time to offer feedback or model any component of the program as requested by the classroom teachers. Observations

were discussed during monthly Caring School Community Leadership Team meetings and shared with teachers during weekly grade level meetings.

From the discussions in these meetings, the Caring School Community Leadership Team determined that some teachers thought the program was something extra they did not have time to teach during their already very busy academic schedule. The Caring School Community Leadership Team created a plan to support the teachers in integrating Caring School Community in their daily schedules.

The Caring School Community Leadership Team participated in additional training during the school year with the Character Plus coaches to create a plan of action to support classroom teachers for full implementation of Caring School Community. During monthly staff meetings, the Caring School Community School Community Leadership Team provided extensive professional development for the classroom teachers regarding integration of Caring School Community into their daily schedule. The Character Plus coaches provided surveys for third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff to complete at the end of the school year to serve as data for the program evaluation. In this collaborative study, the district math coordinator became the academic investigator for the building, and the elementary principal became the school culture investigator. The academic investigator analyzed the MAP scores and the culture investigator analyzed the data collected from positive referrals, discipline referrals, and attendance.

Classroom teachers were instructed to include Caring School Community objectives in their daily lesson plans. The building administrators completed daily walkthroughs and recorded observation data onto a fourth cycle template that was

downloaded onto their Palm Pilots using the Ewalk software program. Tracked data included instructional strategies, instructional delivery methods, student engagement, teacher engagement, technology usage, and completed lesson plans. The lesson plans would only be marked complete if they included state standards, district objectives, Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, and Caring School Community objectives. This data was shared with classroom teachers during quarterly professional conversations and performance-based teacher evaluations with their assigned administrator.

The building also created a student leadership team called the Tiger 20. The team consisted of 20 fourth and fifth grade students who were required to complete and submit an application to the Caring School Community Leadership Team. The Tiger 20 team members were selected based on their academic progress, character, attendance, and teacher recommendations. The Tiger 20 met two times a week after school to create and organize service learning projects, like district and building recycling and change collection drives for a designated cause, and to receive additional training from Caring School Community Leadership Team members. The leadership responsibilities also included safety patrol, tour guides for new students and visiting adults, peer tutoring, classroom assistants, and front office helpers.

The investigative team utilized data from the surveys created by Character Plus to determine the success of implementation and to set goals with the Caring School Community Leadership Team for the following school year. The survey data included input from third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff. The academic investigator focused on MAP data to determine if student achievement scores were higher after one year of implementation of Caring School Community.

The school culture investigator focused on attendance, discipline and positive behavior referrals. The frequency of usage of Caring School Community objectives during classroom observations and survey data were analyzed to assess how well teachers integrated Caring School Community as intended, based on the professional development they received. Third through fifth grade students were selected to complete the computerized student surveys since they needed to read proficiently and independently to make the results accurate.

The fidelity of the program was examined through classroom observations and student, staff, and parent surveys. The investigative team utilized data from the surveys created by Character Plus to determine success of implementation and to set goals with the Caring School Community Leadership Team for the following school year. “The construct validity for the surveys is founded on the work of Carl Rogers, William Glasser, and others. This work has emerged as the ABCs of Healthy Schools. The reliability of the factors assessed has been established through several large scale projects” (Character Education Surveys and Forms, 2007, para. 1).

Process Evaluation Research Design

The academic investigator addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts?
2. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Mathematics?

The school culture investigator addressed research questions that pertain to student attendance, student discipline referrals, and student positive behavior referrals.

Variable

The independent variable was the implementation of the Caring School Community, a character education program in an elementary school, and teacher professional development with the help of Character Plus coaches, staff, students, and parents.

Student academic achievement on MAP data collected from 2006 to 2009 in Communication Arts and Mathematics were the dependent variables investigated by the academic investigator. Discipline and positive behavior referrals, and student attendance were the dependent variables investigated by the school culture investigator.

Elementary Communication Arts MAP scores. Communication Arts MAP scores collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Elementary Mathematics MAP scores. Elementary Mathematics MAP scores collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Discipline referral data. Discipline referral data collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for 2007-2008 fourth grade students and 2008-2009 fifth grade students. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Positive behavior referral data. Positive behavior referral data collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for the 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Student attendance data. Student attendance data collected for 2006-2007 third grade students prior to the implementation of the character education program were compared to data for the 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years.

Measurement Tools

Classroom observations. The classroom observation data categories in which teachers were trained included instructional delivery methods, instructional strategies, DOK levels, student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate, technology usage and complete lesson plans in advance of instruction.

Surveys. The investigative team utilized data from the surveys created by Character Plus to determine success of implementation and to set goals with the Caring School Community Leadership Team for the following school year. The survey data included input from third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff.

According to Dr. J. Marshall of Marshall Consulting (personal communication, July 17, 2010), the surveys were developed from the theoretical

constructs focusing on student belonging (also known as connectedness), autonomy and influence (student voice in their schooling) and feelings of competence (feeling safe in the environment of the school so that they can accomplish requisite learning) - these are drawn from the six needs defined by Glasser.

Based on data from the initial surveys, the Caring School Community Student Survey was developed for Cplus federal projects in 2002 (J. Marshall, personal communication, July 17, 2010). The items were logically placed into factors based on the expertise of the staff using data collected through earlier projects factor analyses were run (J. Marshall, personal communication, July 17, 2010). The Marshall Consulting group collected two years worth of survey data in the two federal projects, the data was analyzed to confirm the scales; at this time the final scales were developed for the ShowMe surveys. The belonging scale was divided into two scales: one called belonging and the other called school as a community. This division was supported by the correlation of a variable with a factor and better represented the concept of school as a community. The school safety factor was added using logical validity. The parent involvement factor was split into two factors: home and school; again this was supported by the factor analysis coefficients.

The investigators examined the survey data which included input from third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff. Michelle Wilkerson, the academic investigator, evaluated MAP data to determine if Caring School Community contributed to an improvement in students' academic performance as measured by the MAP. Debbie Kyle, the school culture investigator, evaluated student attendance,

student discipline and positive behavior referral data to determine if Caring School Community contributed to improvement in each area.

The classroom observation data categories included instructional delivery methods, instructional strategies, depth of knowledge levels, student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate, technology usage and complete lesson plans in advance of instruction. This data was tracked on a computerized walk through instrument (Ewalk). This chapter describes the methodology used in the research study, and provides information concerning the time frame, participants, instruments used, data collections, and data analyses.

Hypotheses

The academic investigator addressed the following hypotheses:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #1. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #2. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #3. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #4. There will be a significant change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

School Improvement

Caring School Community was not the only initiative of the district. At the time of this study, several other school improvement initiatives had already been implemented including professional learning communities, which was the core of the study district's school improvement efforts. The district also implemented two curriculum writing tools for Communication Arts and Mathematics called Build Your Own Curriculum and Build Your Own Assessment and a computerized assessment instrument called Discovery Education Assessment. The study district's intention was to improve teacher collaboration and understanding of student assessment data, which would in turn increase effective instruction and ultimately student achievement.

Prior to the study, the district had also focused on increasing the usage of technology and aligned the curricula with state standards and national core competencies using research-based instructional materials, effective instructional strategies, and various types of assessments to ensure a viable and guaranteed curriculum. The middle school became an eMINTS school where every classroom had a SMART board and a laptop computer for every student. This involved a commitment of around 200 professional development hours for all staff members. The elementary school installed a SMART board in every classroom and provided professional development for staff at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year to support teachers with implementation. The investigative team incorporated the district's comprehensive school improvement plan with implementation of Caring School Community.

Research Setting

The district involved in this study was a suburban district located in south St. Louis County, Missouri. The enrollment for the school district was 1,779 students with a total enrollment of 854 students in the elementary school. It is located in a low socioeconomic community and participated in the Voluntary Inter-district Choice Corporation Program where students from urban schools were transported from communities in St. Louis City to participating school districts in St. Louis County as part of a desegregation program. At the time of this study, about 6,100 city students were transferring to participating suburban school districts and about 170 county students were transferring to magnet schools in the city.

The study district is located in a small neighborhood in a county that borders a large city. The population had been declining since 1960 with a population of 17,215 in 2000 according to the U.S. Census data (Lemay Facts and Figures, 2003). The population was aging and school aged children represented only 20% of the population.

In general, the community was less affluent than the County as a whole. Household income represented 68% of the County's median in 2000. The median household income was \$34,559 in 2000. Census data showed that 10.4% of the population was below the poverty level, compared to the County wide average of 6.9%. The housing stock was comprised primarily of single family units, nearly 66% of which were constructed prior to 1960. The 2000 U.S. Census indicated the community to have a significant proportion of owner occupied housing, 77.6%, slightly higher than the County wide average

of 74.1%. (Lemay Facts and Figures, 2003, para. 2).

The district consisted of four schools that included one high school, one middle school, one elementary school, and one preschool. During the three years of this study, the district served an average of 1,798 students. The demographics of the district in 2006 were 71% White, 24.6% Black, 3% Hispanic, and less than 2% Asian and Indian. The population included 77.7% free and reduced lunch students (MO DESE, 2009d). The community surrounding the district was 97 % White and less than 1 % Black. The difference in the demographics between the school district and the surrounding community was the fact that the school district participated in the VICC desegregation program. The free and reduced lunch rate had remained at 70% or higher for the past four years. The total number of reported discipline incidents for the district had increased from 19 in 2005 to 50 in 2008. The attendance rate for the district was consistent at 94%. The demographics for this school district as of 2009 included 4 % Asian, 25.3 % Black, 3.5 % Hispanic, 4% Indian, and 70.5% White. The enrollment of students indicated as English Language Learners had continued to rise over the past ten years with the majority of students enrolled at the elementary building.

Elementary Demographics

The elementary building had 100% of its classes taught by highly qualified, certified teachers during the study. The study district dropped to a 98.50% classes taught by highly qualified teachers during 2009. One hundred percent of the professional staff at the elementary and study district had regular certificates. At the end of the study, there were no teachers who had temporary or special assignment certificates. Table 1 presents the average teacher salary, average administrator salary,

average years of experience and teachers with a master degree or higher in the elementary and study district, at the time of this study.

Table 1

Faculty Information

Elementary	2006	2007	2008	2009
Average Teacher Salary (Regular Term)	\$44,406	\$44,767	\$46,212	\$54,289
Average Teacher Salary (Total*)	\$45,550	\$45,153	\$46,688	\$54,995
Average Administrator Salary	\$80,460	\$84,500	\$85,400	n/a
Average Years of Experience	9.5	9.1	9.4	9.2
Teachers with a Master Degree or Higher (%)	68.2	68.8	67	100
District				
Average Teacher Salary (Regular Term)	\$43,076	\$44,330	\$46,197	\$46,984
Average Teacher Salary (Total*)	\$44,234	\$45,171	\$47,356	\$48,524
Average Administrator Salary	\$92,970	\$95,215	\$90,755	\$114,282
Average Years of Experience	8.9	9	9.7	10
Teachers with a Master Degree or Higher (%)	55.7	63	64.2	59

Note. Source Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education Core Data As Submitted by Missouri Public Schools Data as of November 2, 2009

*Includes extended contract salary, Career Ladder supplement and extra duty pay.

The professional staff’s average number of years of experience in the study district was 9.4 years. The average of professional staff with a master’s degree or higher was 60%. Table 2 presents the percent of teachers with regular certificates, those with temporary or special certificates, and the percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers in the elementary and study district.

Table 2

Certification Status of Teachers

Elementary	2006	2007	2008	2009
Teachers with Regular Certificates*	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Teachers with Temporary or Special Assignment Certificates	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Teachers with Substitute, Expired or No Certificates	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Percent of Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers**	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
District	2006	2007	2008	2009
Teachers with Regular Certificates*	98.30%	99.20%	100.00%	100.00%
Teachers with Temporary or Special Assignment Certificates	1.70%	0.80%	0.00%	0.00%
Teachers with Substitute, Expired or No Certificates	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Percent of Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers	99.80%	100.00%	100.00%	98.50%

Note. Source Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education Core Data As Submitted by Missouri Public Schools and the Missouri Teacher Certification System Data as of November 2, 2009 Table Posted to the Web November 7, 2009

*Regular Certificates – Includes Life certificate, Professional Class I & II certificate, Continuous Professional certificate (CPC) and Provisional certificate.

Both the elementary and study district maintained a student-teacher ratio below state and district expectations. Districts are expected to have qualified teachers by the state. Table 3 provides the staffing ratio at the elementary and study district.

Table 3

Staff Ratios

Elementary	2006	2007	2008	2009
Students per Teacher	15	13	13	194*
Students per Classroom Teacher	19	16	16	15
Students per Administrator	427	423	278	0*
District	2006	2007	2008	2009
Students per Teacher	15	14	14	28
Students per Classroom Teacher	18	17	17	16
Students per Administrator	254	209	168	566

Note: Source Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education. As submitted to Core Data by Missouri Public Schools Data as of November 2, 2009. Posted to the Web November 7, 2009.

* Error reported by DESE

The elementary school for the 2009 school year according to Laura Buscher in the Human Resource Department (personal communication, November 18, 2010), the elementary had 12 students per teacher and 252 students per administrator. The numbers recorded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the 2009 school year were inaccurate.

Sample Demographics

During the three years of this investigation the target elementary school served an average of 854 students. The study involved the 2006-2007 third grade students as a cohort including data from prior to implementation (2006-2007) and during two years of implementation (2007-2008 and 2008-2009) of Caring School

Community, a character education program. The students were in third grade in 2006-2007, fourth grade in 2007-2008, and fifth grade in 2008-2009. In 2006-2007, there were 114 third grade students, in 2007-2008 there were 107 fourth grade students, and in 2008-2009 there were 107 fifth grade students.

The age range of the participants in this cohort was eight to nine years old in third grade in 2006-2007, nine to ten years old in fourth grade in 2007-2008, and ten to eleven years old in fifth grade in 2008-2009. Of the total number of students selected as participants in this study, there were 25 students who dropped and went to another school, and eight new students added to the third grade class during 2006-2007. In 2007-2008, there were 20 students who dropped and went to another school, and 14 new students added to the fourth grade class. In 2008-2009, there were 21 students who withdrew or transferred, and 23 new students enrolled in the fifth grade.

The base line year was the 2006-2007 school year. The demographics of the 114 students represented in the base line year data were 54% boys, 46% girls, 71% White, 26% Black, and less than 3% Hispanic and Indian. Seventy-nine percent of the 114 students were receiving free and reduced lunch, 19% had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), and 9% were Limited English Proficient (LEP). The cohort group participated in the state MAP Mathematics and Communication Arts assessment during the 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 school years. Charts summarizing the results in MAP Mathematics and Communication Arts are provided in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The study did not address students who participated in the alternate MAP.

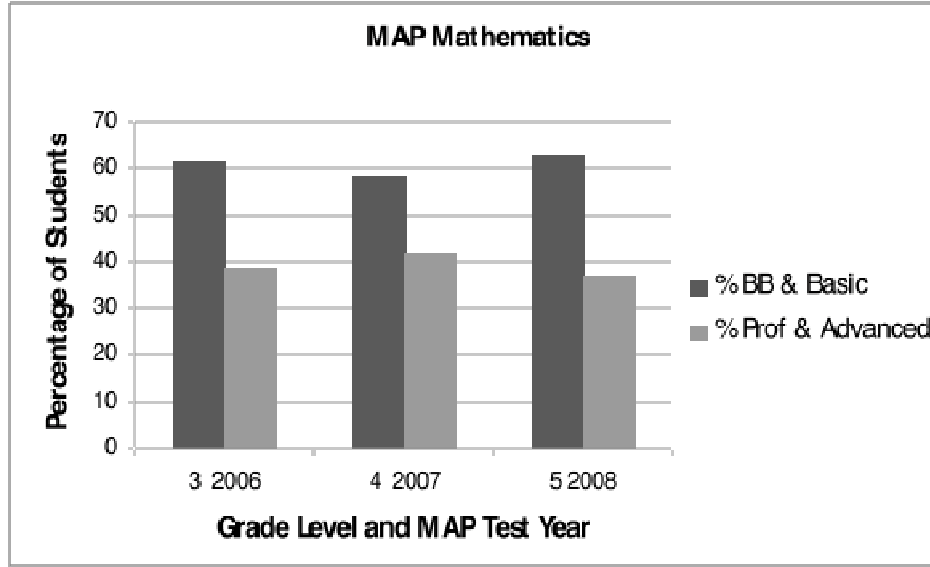


Figure 1. Missouri Assessment Program Mathematics Assessment Results
Note. Students’ Mathematics MAP scores from their 3rd grade year in 2006 to their 5th grade year in 2008. Provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (MO DESE, 2009e)

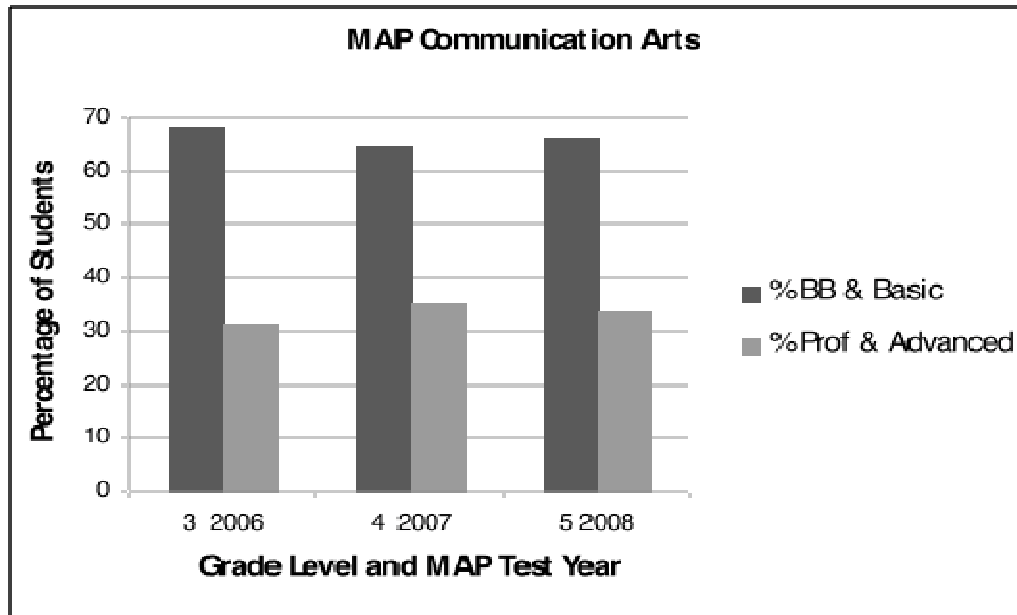


Figure 2. Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts Assessment Results
Note: Students’ Communication Arts MAP scores from their 3rd grade year in 2006 to their 5th grade year in 2008. Provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (MO DESE, 2009e)

The transient population and diversity were limitations in this study. Subject characteristics such as age, reading ability, socioeconomic status, and diversity may

impact the study. Because of a transient population, some of the subjects of the study were not be available for the final part of the study. In addition, the enrollment in the third grade classrooms was not ideal due to lack of space in the building. Student enrollment for the third grade classes was consistent with the state maximum guideline of 27 students, but it was above the desirable standard of 22 students (MO DESE, 2009f). Since all teachers have a unique approach to implementing the Caring Schools Community Project, results had the possibility of being affected by the variety of teaching styles within the school. The demographics of the cohort group studied are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Cohort Enrollment Analysis

	Total	Males	Females	Black	White	Hispanic	Asian	Indian	IEP	FRL	LEP	VTS
2006 - 2007	114	61	53	30	71	2	0	1	22	90	10	27
2007 - 2008	107	58	49	27	77	2	0	1	21	85	7	25
2008 - 2009	107	61	46	25	77	3	0	2	15	80	8	22

Demographic Data

Note: Provided by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (MO DESE, 2009d)

The study district participated in the free and reduced lunch program. State agencies that administer the school meal program must issue free and reduced prices to those who meet the requirements. The number of families eligible to receive free and reduced lunch served as an indicator of low wage households in the study district’s attendance area. Table 5 illustrates the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch for the cohort by grade level and as an entire school from 2006-2009.

Table 5

Site Enrollment Analysis by Free and Reduced Lunch

Cohort	Grade Level	Total Enrollment	FRL
2006 - 2007	3rd grade	114	78.9%
2007 - 2008	4th grade	107	79.4%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	74.8%
Elementary			
2006 - 2007	Elementary	823	78.1%
2007 - 2008	Elementary	822	76.8%
2008 - 2009	Elementary	723	77.0%

Note. District SIS Data

There was a 4.1% decrease from the 2006-2009 school year in the number of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch as a cohort group and a 1.1% decrease from the 2006-2009 school year of the number of free and reduced lunch students. This data served as an indicator of a consistent percentage of low-income families at the study elementary. Table 6 indicates the percentage of students enrolled in the cohort and the elementary that are Voluntary Transfer Students (VTS).

Table 6

Cohort Site Enrollment Analysis by Voluntary Transfer Students

Cohort	Grade Level	Total Enrollment	VTS
2006 - 2007	3rd grade	114	23.7%
2007 - 2008	4th grade	107	23.4%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	20.6%
Elementary			
2006 - 2007	Elementary	823	22.6%
2007 - 2008	Elementary	822	23.4%
2008 - 2009	Elementary	723	20.9%

Note. District SIS Data

The VTS students lived in the city but participated in the desegregation program which allowed them to transfer to a participating suburban school district in the county. The cohort had a slight decrease in the percentage of VTS students over the three years of the study. There was a drop in total enrollment of elementary students from the 2007-2008 to the 2008-2009 school year which may have accounted for some of the decrease in the percentage of VTS students in the cohort. There was an average of 22.5% VTS students out of the total enrollment in the cohort and 22.3% VTS students in the elementary during the study. Table 6 represents the percentage of males and females in the cohort and in the elementary building during the three years of the study.

Table 7

Cohort Enrollment Analysis by Gender

Cohort	Grade Level	Total Enrollment	Males	Females
2006 - 2007	3rd grade	114	53.5%	46.5%
2007 - 2008	4th grade	107	54.2%	45.8%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	57.0%	43.0%
Elementary				
2006 - 2007	Elementary	823	49.7%	50.3%
2007 - 2008	Elementary	822	49.4%	50.6%
2008 - 2009	Elementary	723	50.5%	49.5%

Note. District SIS Data

The percentage of boys and girls that participated in this study varied from 2006-2009. The percentage of boys continued to be higher than the percentage of girls in the cohort. Table 8 indicates the percentage of students with LEP for the cohort and the elementary during the three years of the study.

Table 8

Site Enrollment Analysis by Limited English Proficiency

Cohort	Grade Level	Total Enrollment	LEP
2006 - 2007	3rd grade	114	8.8%
2007 - 2008	4th grade	107	6.5%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	7.5%
2006 - 2007	Elementary	823	10.8%
2007 - 2008	Elementary	822	9.5%
2008 - 2009	Elementary	723	9.1%

Note. District SIS Data

The average percentage of students with LEP decreased to 7.5% for the students in the cohort during the study. The percentage of LEP students for the elementary remained consistent at 9.8%; even though the total enrollment decreased by 100 students from the 2007-2008 to the 2008-2009 school year. Table 9 represents the racial and ethnic percentages of the students in the cohort and the elementary during the study.

Table 9

Site Enrollment Analysis by Ethnicity

Cohort	Grade Level	Total	Black	White	Hispanic	Asian	Indian
2006 - 2007	3rd grade	114	26.3%	71.1%	1.8%	0.0%	0.9%
2007 - 2008	4th grade	107	25.2%	72.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.9%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	23.4%	72.0%	2.8%	0.0%	1.9%
Elementary							
2006 - 2007	Elementary	823	28.6%	68.0%	2.7%	0.2%	0.5%
2007 - 2008	Elementary	822	28.1%	68.2%	3.0%	0.1%	0.5%
2008 - 2009	Elementary	723	26.4%	69.8%	2.9%	0.3%	0.6%

Note: District SIS Data

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There was an average of 25% Black, 71.7% White, 2.1% Hispanic, and 1.2% Indian in the cohort during the study. The elementary had an average of 27.7% Black, 68.7% White, 2.9% Hispanic, 0.2% Asian, and 0.5% Indian during the study. The racial and ethnic percentages remained consistent during the three year study even though the elementary did have a decrease in total enrollment by 100 students from the 2007-2008 to the 2008-2009 school year. Table 10 presents the percentage of students with an IEP in the cohort and in the elementary building during the study.

Table 10

Site Enrollment Analysis by IEP

Cohort	Grade Level	Total Enrollment	IEP
2006 - 2007	3rd grade	114	19.3%
2007 - 2008	4th grade	107	19.6%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	14.0%
Elementary			
2006 - 2007	Elementary	823	14.5%
2007 - 2008	Elementary	822	12.0%
2008 - 2009	Elementary	723	12.7%

Note. District SIS Data

The average percentage of students with an IEP was 17.6% for the cohort during the study. The average percentage of students with an IEP was 13.1% for the elementary.

Procedures

In the spring of 2007, the two elementary guidance counselors attended a Character Plus workshop to gather ideas and resources for improving their school

culture. The counselors had a conversation with a Character Plus representative, who explained the possible grants available to low-socioeconomic schools interested in implementing Caring School Community, a character education program. The elementary school was asked to administer a computerized needs assessment survey developed by Marshall Consulting for parents, students, and staff to determine the need for implementation of a character education program. A letter was sent home to parents (Appendix A) explaining the surveys and their purpose to assist with determining the need for implementation of Caring School Community. Surveys were sent home at the beginning and the end of each school year once the Caring School Community program was adopted.

The evaluation of the study involved observing classroom instruction and lesson plan completion to evaluate fidelity to consistent integration of Caring School Community objectives, teacher engagement, student engagement, instructional climate, depth of knowledge levels, instructional strategies, instructional delivery methods, and technology usage. The Ewalk and results from the computerized surveys taken by students, parents, and staff to determine their sense of autonomy, belonging and competence also were used to determine outcomes of the program.

The academic investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine whether there was a significant impact on student achievement. The MAP results were used for Communication Arts and Mathematics over the three years of the study. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education use the survey portion of the Terra Nova and use a nationally normed achievement test published by CTB McGraw-Hill. “We ensure the

meaningfulness or validity of the MAP scores as indices of proficiency relative to the Show-Me Standards by using methodical and rigorous test development procedures” (MO DESE, 2010c, para. 7). Teachers from across the state of Missouri wrote extended response and performance events that correlate with a particular standard. A second group of teachers was chosen to review the questions to ensure that they matched the content or the process standard the question was assigned. The scoring process for these mental measurement items reflects some degree of error, but the developer ensures that the training reflects consistent records (MO DESE, 2010c). The school culture investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine whether there was a significant impact on student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals.

Surveys. In May 2007, surveys were given to the third, fourth, and fifth grade students during computer classes. Parents completed surveys in the computer lab during spring parent-teacher conferences. They were encouraged to participate in the study through an invitation to enter a drawing. Staff was given access to take a staff survey at their convenience with an appropriate deadline. The surveys were used to assess the needs of the school regarding possible implementation of Caring School Community. The parent survey (Appendix B) included questions regarding students’ feelings of belonging. Some sample items from the survey are as follows: “Parents perceive that students are nice to each other; they get along; they respect their teacher; they treat each other fairly, and they tell the truth” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 3). The survey also asked the parents about students’ sense of school as a community. Survey items included: “Parents perceive that students feel the school is like a family;

students help each other learn and treat each other with respect; they work together to solve problems and feel good when someone does well” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 3). The survey asked about parent and staff relations: “School staff members treat parents with respect, make parents feel welcome at school, value parents’ ideas and input, encourage parents to be involved in school, communicate effectively with parents and care about parents and their families” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 4). Some examples of the parent survey items covering school quality included: “Parents believe that their children are learning how to work with and respect others, learning to read and write, learning about science and how to do math, receiving a well rounded education, and getting an excellent education” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 4). The parents were asked about their involvement in the school and they were also asked about their involvement at home.

The staff survey (Appendix C) included items regarding students’ sense of belonging and students’ sense of school as a community also. Sample items from the staff survey that covered student sense of autonomy and influence included: “Staff perceive that students feel they plan things together with their teachers, have a say in what goes on in their classes, decide the rules together with their teachers, and help their teachers plan what they do in school” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 4) They were also asked about parent and staff relations. Survey items that covered staff feelings of culture and belonging included: “Staff members are supportive of one another, cooperative, and help each other; provide good counsel when there are teaching problems, share the same beliefs about the central mission of the school and do not fall into conflicting cliques” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 5). School

leadership items included the following: “Administrators actively support new ideas, did teachers take active roles in school activities, things are well organized, staff is recognized for a job well done, staff is involved in decisions that affect them and there is interest in innovation and new ideas” (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 5). Finally, they were surveyed about parent involvement at school.

The student survey (Appendix D) for students in third through fifth grades were asked questions regarding their feelings of belonging, their sense of the school as a community, their level of autonomy and influence, their feelings of competence, school safety, and parent involvement at school and home (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006).

The implementation survey (Appendix E) was also administered to staff. This survey included questions determining whether the school was considered a community where education is valued; whether the school is a safe, orderly learning environment; were students provided with assistance academically and counseling; have parents been welcomed to become an integral part of the learning community; have school leaders shown an understanding of the characteristics of a program to support a character education program; and whether stakeholders model the values set by the school district. The survey on school leadership included information such as:

District leaders visit the school on a regular basis; school climate data are collected from parents, students, staff, and community members; staff analyze and discuss the implications of data collected from parents, staff, and students; budget and other resources are provided to develop and sustain a caring school

environment; and school and district leaders support implementation of a program to build positive school climate. (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 5)

The school climate was addressed regarding staff developing relationships with parents, students becoming leaders and taking ownership in the development of procedures and rules, and student pairs working collaboratively to build a sense of academic confidence (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006). The survey included questions about staff collaboration such as:

Teachers collaborate on instructional planning; staff share ideas, strategies, and successes; staff form collaborative teams; staff engage together in reflection on the results of instructional activities; and teachers take a major role in shaping the school's norms, values, and practices. (Marshall & Caldwell, 2006, p. 6)

Sample questions about the level of application and skill included the following: do students from other grade levels support one another; are students provided time to contemplate their personal values; does the students' homework mix in community values with the academic activities; and are students provided opportunities to make decisions that demonstrate citizenship? Ten essentials of the Character Plus program include, "Community Participation, Character Education Policy, Identified and Defined Character Traits, Integrated Curriculum, Experiential Learning, Evaluation, Adult Role Models, Staff Development, Student leadership, and Sustaining the Process" (Marshall, Caldwell, & McKay, 2003, para. 10). Survey questions covering the ten essentials included:

Specific character traits have been defined for the school or district; students reflect on character traits in the education process; character education defined in terms of core ethical values; character traits defined for the school or district include both thinking and feeling; district commitment for the character education process evidenced by high levels of continuous support; the character process is infused throughout the day; all school staff help carry out the school's character education process; the character education process is planned and proactive; frequent communications on character education are common among school, parents, and broader community; regular assessments are made of students, parents, and staff to check the impact of the character education process. (Character Education Surveys and Forms, 2007, para. 22)

Character Plus collaborated with Jon C. Marshall, Ed. D., a consultant with Marshall Consulting, Rapid City, South Dakota and Sarah D. Caldwell, Ed. D., a consultant with International Learning Services, Inc., Orange Beach, Alabama, who both served as principal investigators and research team leaders, to compile the data from the student, staff and parent surveys from May of 2007, February of 2008, and June of 2009. During the summer of 2007, a Caring School Community Leadership Team was created to complete training through Character Plus, a program of Cooperating School Districts of Greater St. Louis, where the data was shared and goals were set for the 2007-2008 school year for implementation of Caring School Community.

Throughout the school year, the Caring School Community Leadership Team participated in training with the Character Plus coaches to create a plan of action to

support classroom teachers for full implementation of Caring School Community. During teacher orientation prior to the school year and monthly staff meetings, the Caring School Community Leadership Team provided extensive professional development for the classroom teachers regarding integration of Caring School Community into their daily schedule. The surveys were repeated for the students, parents and staff in February 2008 and June 2009 and the data was analyzed to review progress of program integration each year to set goals for the following school year.

Classroom observations. Classroom observations provided a short, focused and informal method of monitoring whether or not teachers were integrating Caring School Community objectives into their daily schedule. The classroom observation data was entered into Ewalk onto a fourth cycle administrator walk through template. The criteria on the template included: instructional delivery methods, instructional strategies, student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate, DOK levels, technology usage and lesson plans complete with state standards, district objectives, DOK levels and Caring School Community objectives.

The first section of the template (Appendix H) included the instructional delivery methods. The delivery methods tracked were: class discussion, cooperative learning, group work, modeling, experiments, learning centers, lecture, peer evaluation, questions and answer, seat work and student presentations. There was a district focus on integrating a variety of delivery methods and limiting the usage of low student engagement methods like lecture and seat work.

The second section included instructional strategies, which were analyzed primarily by the culture investigator. During classroom observations (Appendix H),

this investigator focused on observing highly effective instructional strategies such as: advanced and graphic organizers, nonlinguistic representations, project-based learning, research generating and testing hypotheses, similarities or differences, and summarizing. The school culture investigator also observed and recorded whether students were engaged in their learning. Their engagement was recorded as high (above 90% of students were engaged), moderate (75-89% of students engaged), low (50-74% of students engaged) and disengaged (below 50% of students engaged). Teacher engagement was also observed and recorded as either yes or no. The DOK level was recorded as recall, skill and concept, strategic thinking and extended thinking. The district focused on including a variety of DOK levels in instruction while aiming for level 2 and higher.

The next section included the instructional climate. The instructional climate (Appendix H) was observed and recorded as either conducive to learning, somewhat conducive to learning or not conducive to learning. The usage and level of technology integration was also observed and recorded since technology was a district focus. Technology was recorded as literacy usage (acquiring and practicing technical skills), adaptive usage (drill and practice where technology is optional), and transforming usage (complex learning and thinking tools, student-centered where technology is essential).

The investigative team used the district's classroom observation instrument, Ewalk, to document whether teachers and students were engaged in learning, to monitor integration of Caring School Community objectives-lesson plans, and to determine if the instructional climate was conducive to learning. Professional and

constructive feedback was provided to teachers during grade level team meetings, staff meetings, and professional conversations. The teachers provided feedback to the investigative team through the staff surveys and during professional conversations.

Caring School Community and Professional Development

Caring School Community is a multi-phased school wide character education program, with the central goal to help the school become a “caring community of learners.” The program focused on promoting teachers’ continuous improvement of practices as well as students’ intellectual, social, and ethical development. The four components of Caring School Community are: cross-age buddy activities, class meetings, home-side activities, and school-wide activities (Gibbons, 1999).

Each week the students completed class meetings, cross-age buddy activities were scheduled with buddy classrooms monthly, home-side activities were scheduled quarterly, and school-wide activities were scheduled two times throughout the school year (Gibbons, 1999). The Caring School Community Leadership Team also created a list of Tiger Traits, acts of good character, which were introduced to each classroom every Monday morning by the guidance counselors and reinforced daily during morning and afternoon announcements. Wednesday afternoons were dedicated to Caring School Community activities since students had an early release day every Wednesday and staff stayed to continue their work in professional learning communities.

There were several procedural steps taken to assist with successful implementation of Caring School Community and the study to determine if the

program may have promoted a change in student achievement, student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals.

In the first step, the Caring School Community Leadership Team participated in training with the Character Plus coaches during the summer of 2007 to create a plan of action for successful implementation of the program during the 2007-2008 school year. Caring School Community Leadership members reviewed the survey data collected during the spring of 2007 from students, parents, and staff along with the district and elementary school improvement goals to write the implementation plan of action.

Caring School Community professional development was planned and scheduled for the teachers for the 2007-2008 school year. The Caring Schools “Community Project is a research-based K-6 program, which has four components: Class meetings, mixed aged buddy activities, home-side activities, and school wide community-building activities” (Gibbons, 1999, p. 113). The four components of Caring School Community and teacher expectations were modeled for the teachers during teacher orientation. The Caring School Community School Community Leadership Team also provided videos of the four components for the grade level teams to view during grade level team meetings.

Teachers were expected to integrate Caring School Community objectives into their weekly lesson plans, and during a specific time every Wednesday. Each grade level team was given a kit for each classroom with the resources necessary for successful implementation of the components applied in Caring School Community. The kits included ideas for implementing each of the four components and the Caring

School Community Leadership Team scheduled times to visit all the classrooms to model for any teacher requesting further assistance. The teachers focused on implementing class meetings in their classrooms on a weekly basis. The kits provided to the grade level teams included 35 character building lessons for the teachers to use. The different types of class meetings included check-in meetings, problem-solving meetings, planning and decision-making meetings, reflection meetings, and academic meetings.

The second step for successful implementation involved giving the classroom teachers the results of the student, parent, and staff surveys given during the spring of 2007 to demonstrate the need for implementation of a character education program. Data was also shared with the teachers including student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals.

The third step required classrooms to partner with a buddy classroom and each student obtain a buddy. There was at least a two grade level difference between the buddy classrooms so the students could serve as mentors to each other. The cross-age buddy classrooms met at least one to two times every month to complete paired and whole-group activities that were designed to build caring relationships by integrating character into academics.

To encourage parental involvement, home-side activities were sent home quarterly with every child. These activities allowed the students to engage with their family members in conversations to strengthen the relationship between home and school. There were a total of 18 activities, approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length, available in the grade level team kits. The Caring School Community Leadership

Team came up with a different theme each quarter to support a building wide effort to implement home-side activities. For example, during the fall of 2007, the art teachers created a “thankful tree” for one wall in the cafeteria. Each student was sent home with a leaf to decorate with their families explaining what they were thankful for. The leaves were placed on the tree in the cafeteria for the students to read and discuss with their friends during lunch time.

School-wide activities were scheduled for two times throughout the school year which included non-competitive opportunities to build relationships that emphasized participation, cooperation, helping others, taking responsibility, and appreciating differences. Building wide efforts included recycling efforts and some grade levels had additional activities like Dimes for Dogs in which the collected money went to animal shelters.

The fourth step required the investigative team to collect, analyze, and evaluate data using various methods. The academic investigator evaluated student achievement data during implementation of Caring School Community. The school culture investigator evaluated student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. Both investigators evaluated weekly classroom observation data to monitor the fidelity of the implementation of Caring School Community.

At the conclusion of the study, the investigative team reviewed the student, parent, and staff surveys for feedback. Character Plus created the surveys that were utilized and two consultants were paid by Character Plus to serve as the co-principal investigators and data-base managers to ensure validity of the survey data. The

investigative team analyzed the data for patterns and compared the responses between the different surveys.

Data Analysis

The null hypotheses addressed in the analysis of data were:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

In order to determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts, a z test for differences in means was run with a 95% confidence

interval to compare the 2006- 2007 Communication Arts MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Communication Arts MAP test scores one year after implementation (Table 11).

A z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts, to compare the 2006- 2007 Communication Arts MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Communication Arts MAP test scores one year after implementation and the 2008-2009 Communication Arts MAP test scores two years after implementation.

Table 11

Cohort Communication Arts MAP scores

CA MAP year	Grade level	Participants	Prof/Adv
2006-2007	3rd grade	125	31%
2007-2008	4th grade	133	35%
2008-2009	5th grade	133	34%

Note. (MO DESE, 2009e)

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics, a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the 2006- 2007 Mathematics MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Mathematics Arts MAP test scores one year after implementation (Table 12).

A z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics, to compare

the 2006- 2007 Mathematics MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Mathematics MAP test scores one year after implementation and the 2008-2009 Mathematics MAP test scores two years after implementation (Table 12).

Table 12

Cohort Mathematics MAP scores

Math MAP Scores	Grade level	Participants	Prof/Adv
2006-2007	3rd grade	125	39%
2007-2008	4th grade	133	42%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	134	37%

Note. (MO DESE, 2009e)

Summary

Chapter three explained the methodology used in the program evaluation study of Caring School Community. Teachers were provided with extensive professional development to offer support and explain expectations of implementation of the components applied in Caring School Community. Caring School Community was implemented during the 2007-2008 school year following the completion of the student, staff, and parent needs assessment surveys during the spring of 2007. These surveys documented the need to implement a school wide character education program, where the central aim was to help the school become a caring community of learners. A program evaluation allowed the investigative team to measure the effectiveness of implementation of Caring School Community.

In this study, both quantitative (student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals) and qualitative (classroom observations and students, parent, and staff surveys) data provided the investigative team with information to determine the impact of implementing Caring School

Community on student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The academic investigator analyzed student achievement data and the school culture investigator analyzed student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referral data. Both investigators analyzed student, parent, and staff surveys and classroom observation data and compared it to data prior to implementation of Caring School Community. Chapter four presents the results obtained with those methods.

Chapter Four: Results

Purpose of the Study

Chapter four presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative data. This collaborative study evaluated implementation of a character education program, Caring School Community, to foster a school culture of respect and kindness. The fidelity of implementation of Caring School Community was measured using two methods: classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys. The fidelity of implementation of Caring School Community was evaluated to determine if the program promoted a possible change in student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals

The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of Caring School Community to determine the program's impact on student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The Caring Schools Community Project is a research-based K-6 program, which has four components: class meetings, mixed aged buddy activities, home-side activities, and school wide community-building activities.

The study district and elementary school had no current character education program in place, low student achievement on MAP testing, low student attendance, high student discipline referrals, and no process in place to recognize students displaying positive character. In an effort to improve student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals, all teachers were instructed to implement Caring School Community into their daily schedules. The Caring School Community Leadership Team provided extensive professional

development for the teachers to ensure successful implementation of Caring School Community.

First, classroom instruction was observed for student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate and complete lesson plans including Caring School Community objectives. Second, students, parents and staff were surveyed at the end of each year of the study for a total of three times. The investigators evaluated the fidelity of implementation as measured by classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys and compared those results to student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referral data prior to and at the conclusion of implementation of Caring School Community.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following questions were addressed in this study by the academic investigator: (a) Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts? (b) Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Mathematics?

The following questions were addressed in this study by the school culture investigator: (a) Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student attendance? (b) Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student discipline referrals? c) Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student positive referrals?

The academic investigator addressed the following hypotheses:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

The school culture investigator evaluated the impact of Caring School Community on the overall culture and climate issues at the school. Her research questions explored the program's impact on elements such as attendance, office referrals, and positive behavior referrals.

Survey Results

Character Plus created survey instruments for parents, students; staff in order to conduct a needs assessment for each specific school. The Caring School

Community Program created and compiled the survey data for this investigation. The surveys were given prior to implementation in May of 2007, six months after the Caring School Community program was implemented in February of 2008 and then again two years after implementation in June of 2009. The investigators were interested in how students viewed some important areas including the following: (a) their feelings about whether they were able to complete homework assignments, (b) if their parents attended conferences, (c) to what extent have parents talked with the teacher, (d) was there a place provided to do homework, and (e) did their parents discuss and review their homework. The student survey reports for May of 2007 and February of 2008 were listed by grade level and the final report for June of 2009 was listed by grade span in Table 13.

Table 13

Survey Results

	May-07	Feb-08	Jun-09
Parent Survey			
School Quality	88.7	87.91	87.16
Parent Involvement at School	70.06	71.32	69.34
Parent Involvement Home	94.58	95.83	91.82
Staff Survey			
Parent Involvement at School	43.83	51.84	52
Student Survey	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>	<i>Grade 3-5</i>
Sense of Competence	57.48	63.14	57.27
Parent Involvement at School	47.53	54.42	57.14
Parent Involvement at Home	75.59	66.41	65.77
Implementation Survey			
Content	44.02	61.53	59

Note: Each value is a score within the range 0 – 100, with a score of 100 indicating positive perception.

Survey questions that the school culture investigator examined included topics concerning student belonging, school as a community, parent-staff relations, parent involvement at school, parent involvement at home, staff autonomy and influence, school leadership, sense of school safety, and the process for implementation.

Data from the surveys were evaluated within a 95% confidence level for each category by Character Plus (ShowMe Character, 2007). The range of scores was from zero to 100. The lowest or minimum possible score being zero was the most negative perception and the highest or maximum possible score of 100 was the most positive perception.

The mean of Parent Home Involvement was the highest with 63.03. The scores fall toward the middle of the range which may mean there are a mix of positive and negative perceptions (large standard deviation) or it may reflect neither strong positive nor strong negative perceptions (small standard deviation) (ShowMe Character, 2007).

Classroom Observations

Evaluating Caring School Community implementation for fidelity involved observing classroom instruction to monitor consistent integration of Caring School Community objectives in daily lesson plans, teacher engagement, student engagement, and the instructional climate. The classroom observations provided a short, focused and informal method of monitoring whether or not teachers were integrating Caring School Community objectives into their daily schedule. The classroom observation data was entered into Ewalk onto a fourth cycle administrator walk through template.

Table 14 presents the 2007-2009 classroom observations recorded in Ewalk including student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate, and complete lesson plans. There were a total of 684 walk throughs recorded during the three year study.

Table 14

Fourth Cycle Walkthroughs 2007-2009

	Student Engagement
High (Above 90%)	89%
Moderate (75-89%)	10%
Low (50-74%)	1%
Disengaged (Below 50%)	0%
	Teacher Engagement
Actively Engaged	98%
Passively Engaged	2%
Not Engaged	0%
	Instructional Climate
Conducive to Learning	95%
Somewhat Conducive to Learning	5%
Not Conducive to Learning	0%
	Lesson Plans
Complete	95%
Incomplete	5%

Note. Retrieved from District E-Walk Data.

According to data on Table 14, 89% of students were highly engaged, 98% of teachers were actively engaged, 95% of classrooms had an instructional climate conducive to learning, and 95% of teachers had lesson plans complete with Caring School Community objectives. The instructional climate was observed and recorded

as conducive to learning, somewhat conducive to learning, or not conducive to learning. The investigative team used the district's classroom observation instrument, Ewalk, to document whether teachers and students were engaged in learning, to monitor integration of Caring School Community objectives, and to determine if the instructional climate was conducive to learning. Professional and constructive feedback was provided to teachers during grade level team meetings, staff meetings, and professional conversations.

Results and Analysis of Data

Research Question 1: Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts?

Null Hypothesis #1: There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts, a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the 2006- 2007 Communication Arts MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Communication Arts MAP test scores one year after implementation (Table 11).

The z test value of 0.549 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96.

This value led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis, which resulted in a lack of support for the alternative hypothesis for this question (Table 15).

Table 15

Fourth Grade z test Values

Compare 2006 – 2007 to 2007 – 2008	z test value
Communication Arts	0.549
Mathematics	0.363

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Communication Arts, a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the 2006- 2007 Communication Arts MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Communication Arts MAP test scores one year after implementation and the 2008-2009 Communication Arts MAP test scores two years after implementation (Table 11). The z test value of 0.381 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96. This value led the researcher to not reject the Null Hypothesis, which allowed a lack of support for the alternative hypothesis for this question (Tables 15 and 16).

Table 16

Fifth Grade z test Values

Compare 2006 – 2007 to 2008 – 2009	z test value
Communication Arts	0.381
Mathematics	0.203

Research Question 2. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student achievement as measured by the MAP in Mathematics?

Null Hypothesis # 3. There will be no change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2007-2008 fourth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics, a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the 2006- 2007 Mathematics MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Mathematics Arts MAP test scores one year after implementation (Table 12).

The z test value of 0.363 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96. This value led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis, which allowed a lack of support for the alternative hypothesis for this question (Table 15).

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics when comparing scores achieved before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to scores achieved after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the MAP in Mathematics, a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the 2006- 2007 Mathematics MAP test scores prior to implementation and the 2007-2008 Mathematics MAP test scores one year after implementation and the 2008-2009 Mathematics MAP test scores two years after implementation. The z test value of 0.203 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96. This value led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis, which allowed a lack of support for the alternative hypothesis for this question.(Tables 15 and 16).

The school culture investigator analyzed data on the impact of the implementation of a character education program and its effect on student success in the area of attendance rate, and discipline referrals. According to the analysis of relevant data to determine if there was a significant change in attendance, a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the attendance of the third grade students from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008, from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009, and then from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009.

The Null Hypothesis was: There will be no change in the proportion between the implementation of the Caring School Community Project and third grade student increase in attendance.

The z test values of 0.034, 0.024, and -0.309 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96. These values led the researcher to not reject the null hypotheses, which allowed for a lack of support for the alternative hypotheses for these questions.

According to the analysis of relevant data, to determine if there was a significant change in discipline referrals a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the attendance of the third grade students from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008, from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009, and then from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009.

The Null Hypothesis was: There will be no change in the proportion between the implementation of the Caring School Community Project and the overall elementary student decrease of Discipline Referrals.

The z test values of 0.953, 0.629, and -0.014 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96. These values led the researcher to not reject the null hypotheses, which allowed for a lack of support for the alternative hypotheses for these questions.

According to the analysis of relevant data to determine if there was a significant change in positive referrals a z test for the difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the positive referrals of the third grade students from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009.

The Null Hypothesis was: There will be no change in the proportion between the implementation of the Caring School Community Project and cohort third grade student increase of Positive Behavior Referrals.

The z test value of 1.261 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96. This value led the researcher to not reject the null hypothesis, which allowed a lack of support for the alternative hypothesis for this question.

Summary

Chapter four reported the results of this program study along with the student achievement data, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals from the study district. The academic and school culture investigators examined the fidelity of the program from classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys. The academic investigator analyzed student achievement data, while the school culture investigator analyzed student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals to determine if they validated each other. The study indicated that there was no significant statistical change in student achievement on the Communication Arts or Mathematics MAP test. The study indicated that an analysis of the fidelity of implementation and results from student, parent, and teacher surveys do not support the hypotheses that there was significant statistical change in student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals after implementation of Caring School Community. Chapter five provides a discussion of the results, research findings, connection to the literature, and recommendations for educators, administrators, and future research of Caring School Community, a character education program.

Chapter Five – Discussion, Summary, and Recommendations

The investigative team collaboratively analyzed the effectiveness of implementation of Caring School Community and its possible impact on student attendance, discipline and positive behavior referrals and academic achievement. Caring School Community is a multi-phased, school wide character education program, where the central aim is to help the school become a caring community of learners. The study evaluated the implementation of Caring School Community using Ewalk. Data from classroom observations in regards to student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate, and lesson planning were collected and analyzed to determine the fidelity of implementation within the study site. In addition results of student, parent, and staff surveys provided data relevant to the students' sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

The elementary school, prior to the 2006-2007 school year, expressed concerns that they had no current character education program in place. The school had low student achievement on MAP testing, low student attendance, high student discipline referrals, and no process in place to recognize students displaying positive character. In an effort to address these concerns, Caring School Community was implemented. This character education program focuses on promoting teachers' continuous improvement of practices as well as students' intellectual, social and ethical development. The investigative team observed that the program was not being implemented consistently in every classroom and wanted to ensure that students were being exposed to Caring School Community in order to promote successful implementation and accurate results.

The academic investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine if it promoted a change in student achievement. The school culture investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine if it promoted a change in student attendance, discipline and positive behavior referrals. Both investigators examined the results of classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys to determine if implementation of Caring School Community was successful. Each week teachers conducted class meetings, cross-age buddy activities were scheduled with buddy classrooms monthly, home-side activities were scheduled quarterly and school-wide activities were scheduled two times throughout the school year. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of this study provided the investigative team with the data necessary to determine the impact of Caring School Community.

Discussion of the Results

Based on the data gathered from MAP results, attendance, discipline, positive behavior referrals, classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys, the investigative team came to several conclusions. There was no improvement in student achievement on the MAP, student attendance, nor the number of discipline referrals, but the students in this cohort changed during the two year study due to a transient student population. The MAP assessment is more rigorous for the students each year. By the time students are in fifth grade they have questions that have a higher DOK; and the third grade Communication Arts test and the fifth grade Mathematics test has a performance event which is more challenging for the students. The assessments change according to the students' level each year, so the MAP assessment does not provide consistent information for this study.

The school culture investigator found the number of positive behavior referrals dropped, which may have been due to staff not recognizing student behavior consistently instead of an actual drop in the number of students displaying positive behavior. There were a total of 684 walk throughs recorded during the study which showed high levels of student and teacher engagement, a positive instructional classroom climate conducive to learning, and a high number of completed lesson plans, but walk throughs were not tracked or recorded prior to implementation of Caring School Community.

The parent surveys showed a decrease in parents' perceptions of school quality, a decrease in parent involvement in school, and a decrease in parent involvement at home. The staff surveys showed gains in the percentage of staff who perceived the parents were involved at school. The student surveys showed an increase in the number of students who perceived that their parents were involved in school, but a drop in their perception that parents were involved at home. The student surveys indicated an increase in students' sense of competence in the first year, but dropped in the last year of the study. There were no significant improvements according to the surveys.

The study provided encouraging preliminary information about staff perceptions and the instructional climate, but discouraging preliminary information about parent and student perceptions and lack of improvement in academic achievement attendance, discipline, and positive referrals after implementation of Caring School Community.

The results of this study of Caring School Community produced the following important findings: According to the walkthroughs that were implemented the final year of study, 89% of students were highly engaged during instruction, 98% of teachers were actively engaged during instruction, 95% of classrooms were conducive to learning, and 95% of lesson plans were completed. At the conclusion of the study, it was determined that the Caring School Community program, as identified through classroom observations, increased the components of engagement for students and teachers in instruction, the instructional climate was conducive to learning and teachers had completed lesson plans in advance of instruction.

In addition, parent survey data were analyzed to reveal that there was only a 1.54% decrease in the number of parents' perception of school quality, a 1.6726% decrease in the number of parents who perceived they were involved in school activities, attended parent-teacher conferences, talked to teachers about their child's progress, and attended school activities. Also, a 2.76% decrease in the number of parents who perceived they were involved at the home. Staff surveys indicated there was an 8.17% increase in parent involvement at school. According to student surveys, there was a 0.21% decrease in the number of students who felt a sense of competence, a 9.61% increase in the number of students who perceived their parents were involved at school, and a 9.82% decrease in the number of students who perceived their parents were involved in helping them with their studies at home. While the parent surveys did not show an improvement in parents' involvement at school, the students and staff perception increased. Caring School Community promotes improvement of the school, parent, and community culture. The connection between school and the

community ranges from small activities students take home to engage their families in their education and to whole school activities that involve inviting people from the community to attend school functions.

Staff showed the most gains but students and parents showed little to no gains in their sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence, which validated the need for a character education program in the school. Staff who implemented the program supported the Caring School Community program; therefore, perceived improvements. Students and parents were only introduced and then involved in the program for a couple of years at the time of this study. The implementation survey indicated a 14.98% increase in the character education content and an 11.27% increase in staff collaboration. The investigative team utilized this data, along with the Caring School Community Leadership Team, to make modifications to more effectively meet school improvement goals. The Leadership Team developed programs that involved parents and community in school activities. Parent contact was increased about school functions and their child's progress.

Student cohort Mathematics achievement scores on the MAP showed a decrease in the top two achievement levels (Advanced and Proficient) from 39% to 37% and student cohort Communication Arts achievement scores on the MAP showed an increase in the top two achievement levels (Advanced and Proficient) from 31% to 34%. These were not statistically significant, so the academic investigator found a lack of support for the alternative hypotheses.

The results did not demonstrate an overall benefit from implementing Caring School Community. Providing more professional development on character education

for staff might increase staff participation and promote more effective implementation while meeting the school improvement goal of becoming a school of character.

Providing more instructional options for students to make ethical decisions, express good character, experience leadership and learning including reflection on their own behavior, and provide adult role models with good character who exemplify the core values of the school, might encourage them to make better choices, attend school regularly, and improve academically. The school district leaders will continue to evaluate the program over a longer period of time to see if benefits can be realized.

Connection to Literature Review

Caring School Community embedded opportunities for teachers to integrate character education lessons across all content areas and to partner with buddy classrooms to allow students opportunities to work cooperatively with others. Parents were included with home-side activities quarterly and school-wide activities involved the community members two times throughout the school year. Character education programs have a parent and community component. The implementation of the programs is determined by each individual school district.

In reviewing the literature that related to the rationale for character education, the investigative team focused on the increasing need to teach students about the value of being a good person. Studies suggest that students who develop a strong sense of character will perform better academically and the discipline issues will decrease in schools.

When students feel safe to speak up in class and take on academic challenges and when they have peers and a caring teacher they can turn to for support,

they are more likely to adopt school norms, follow rules and apply effort in their classes. (Beland, 2007, p. 70)

The group of students studied was a small portion of the elementary school population that were given only one Mathematics and Communication Arts state test each year of the study. A recommendation would be to use benchmark testing to provide additional sources of records for the cohort group studied. It was the investigative team's goal to expand the Caring School Community program to the district level so that more students would be exposed to character education. This study focused on just a few years of data with a cohort group. Expanding the study to include more students, or even other districts, would be beneficial for future studies.

Brannon (2008) stated that there are several character education programs available for educators and that the most important factors are the connection to the students' homes and developing a common language and expectations between homes and school to create a cohesive program. Caring School Community is a character education program that focuses on increasing students' attachment to school and creates a caring learning environment that fosters academic and social and ethical learning and parental involvement. The Caring School Community Program has all the components of a quality character education program. A recommendation for the elementary school is to review the components that the community values and determine how to strengthen the connection to the students' homes, develop a common language, and raise the expectations between homes and school to create a cohesive program that is distinctive to the school district.

In the review of the literature that related to the pros and cons of character education the investigative team learned that intentionally teaching good character is important in today's society since students today are bombarded with media and technology issues that were not a part of their parents' culture. Haynes and Thomas stated, "Since children spend about 900 hours a year in school, it is essential that schools resume a proactive role in assisting families and communities by developing caring, respectful environments where students learn core, ethical values" (2007, p. 151-152). Brannon (2008) stated that several barriers exist when it comes to character education such as time and the philosophical differences that may arise from teaching character. The elementary school overcame the barrier of time by scheduling components of the character education program into the daily routine of the school. A recommendation for the elementary school is to monitor the teachers' time spent on character education. "Developing good character is first and foremost a parental responsibility, but the task must also be shared with schools and the broader community" (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 160). The barrier of philosophical differences needs to be addressed on a one to one basis from the leadership team, administration, and staff.

The investigative team attempted to support the study district's goals to become a school and district of character and improve student achievement by analyzing the Caring School Community program and its projected impact on academic achievement, student attendance, discipline and positive behavior referrals. The investigative team remains confident that by integrating character education into daily instruction, providing opportunities for students to voice their ideas,

incorporating cooperative learning strategies, engaging students in self-reflection, and implementing cross-age learning activities, student academic performance and moral character would both improve. However, these may be difficult to analyze quantitatively, which may be why there were not statistically significant differences in student achievement.

The goal of the professional development provided for staff was for them to become more knowledgeable of character education and the value of implementing Caring School Community with fidelity. Through observations and walk throughs it was noticeable that the staff, students, parents, and community were provided with a framework for future development of the program.

Implications of the Findings

The literature strongly supported the implementation of Caring School Community, a character education program. Beatty, Dachnowicz, and Schwartz (2006) noted that character education is a road map to building a caring school culture, a safer and more nurturing environment, and a more responsible and responsive student body, all of which lay the foundation for improving academic performance. The Caring School Community program is still in its infancy and will continue to strengthen the components to build a program that is distinctive to their community and school. The investigative team determined that at the study elementary school, every child would be exposed to character education on a consistent basis. Based on analysis of the data, academic achievement on the MAP Communication Arts and Mathematics scores, student attendance, and discipline did not improve and positive behavior referrals dropped. Fidelity of implementation determines the outcomes of the program. It is recommended that teachers, students,

staff, and community need to have a cohesive belief for implementing the components of the program. The implementation needs to be monitored and altered so the philosophy of the program is apparent through the school and is distinctive to the school's belief system.

The investigative team recommended revisiting the study elementary school's core values of the school, community, and district and integrating them into all aspects of the school. They recommended asking collaborative teams to share ideas and strategies and to reflect on results of instructional activities, allocating time in staff and or grade level team meetings to discuss strategies for integrating core values (character traits) into the curriculum, school wide activities, school-home activities, and expectations for staff behavior and role modeling. They also recommended engaging staff in additional and ongoing professional development activities that promote intentional infusion of character into all aspects of the school.

This study has the potential to help the elementary become a school and district of character. Prior to this study, there was no character education program in place at any school in the district so the investigative team saw a need to implement Caring School Community into the elementary to ensure that students were being taught moral development. Based on analysis of the student, parent, and staff surveys, it was important to consider all the different perspectives and opinions to determine if they had any impact on the outcomes of the study. It was equally important to provide feedback to the students, parents, and staff based on observations of implementing Caring School Community. These components of the study ensured that students, parents, and staff had input in implementing Caring

School Community to improve the school culture and ultimately student academic achievement. After analyzing staff survey data, it became evident that staff felt implementing the character education program had a positive effect on improving their autonomy, influence, relationships with parents, and their sense of belonging. They were more aware of the responsibility and need to teach character education, provide recognition and reinforcement of student effort, and provide ongoing feedback to students and parents. However, these results did not translate into differences in parent or student responses.

The investigative team especially enjoyed observing students working together collaboratively during cross-age buddy activities. Students were taking turns, praising each other for a job well done, and assisting each other with the task. It was apparent which classrooms were receiving the most exposure to character education by the way they positively responded to each other, handled conflict individually and as a group, and made ethical decision together. Building character in adults and students and establishing a positive school culture is critical to improving student academic achievement. Caring School Community provided staff and students with opportunities to practice character and it did prove to benefit the social and instructional climate of classrooms. Based on analysis of classroom observation data, students and teachers were highly engaged in instruction, the instructional climate was conducive to learning, and teachers had lesson plans completed prior to instruction, including Caring School Community objectives. The investigative team was disappointed with the feedback from student and parent surveys regarding the drop in the percentage of those who thought the school was a community, thought

they had a voice in decision making, and felt they belonged. The elementary school did decide to continue Caring School Community for the next school year, and the district leaders will continue to gather data to evaluate the program.

Recommendations for Educators

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made regarding the implementation of Caring School Community. First, a kit of implementation materials for each classroom is important to help teachers effectively integrate Caring School Community into all aspects of their school day. Each grade level team was given one kit, but it was difficult to share the materials in a timely and consistent manner between seven teachers. Second, Caring School Community can be used in conjunction with the existing curriculum and opportunities to teach character can be infused into the curriculum. Character education should not be viewed as something optional or extra they need to teach. Teachers should integrate Caring School Community across all content areas. Third, when implementing a new program, it would be beneficial that teachers receive professional development prior to the beginning of the school year in order to prepare for implementation on the first day of school. This would allow time for staff to become more comfortable with the components, lessons, and activities of the character education program and therefore gain the confidence needed to integrate the program across all content areas. Fourth, teachers need to provide many opportunities for students to practice character daily. “Fundamental to learning and practicing positive actions is understanding that you feel good about yourself when you think and do positive actions and that there is a positive way to do everything” (Allred, 2008, p. 27). Students should be recognized for displaying good character in their school and community and their efforts need to

be reinforced and supported by staff, parents and community members. Allred stated, “With practice, students learn that if they have negative thought, they can change it to a positive one that will lead to a positive action and positive feeling about themselves” (2008, p. 27).

Students need multiple exposures to character education to learn that they are capable of achieving their goals and becoming a person they admire and respect. Students could be paired with their cross-age buddies to practice character in their school and community. Pairing students with their cross-age buddies to practice character in their school community and sponsoring a contest to see which buddy classrooms could come up with a community service project that experienced the most success are two ways that would increase student participation and gain the much needed recognition for this program. Writing about their project and their efforts along the way would further serve to reinforce the lessons developed by the program and help to improve their academics in the area of Communication Arts. The students being paired with their cross-aged buddies would also help with academic tutoring. While the students are engaged in the different activities, teachers are monitoring their progress while reinforcing and providing ongoing recognition.

The next recommendation is to include parents in the process of implementing Caring School Community. From the survey results, parents did not perceive an improvement in the school environment, and this may be because of a lack of communication or understanding of the character education program. Conducting monthly meetings with parents would support the home school connection. This would be a great opportunity for teachers to provide parents with activities they could

do with their children at home. Inviting parents to attend discussions regarding core values, encouraging them to support school efforts to implement character education with their families and community, and providing opportunities to engage parents and community members in whole school activities like school picnics, fairs, celebrations, assemblies, programs, events, etc. would foster and reinforce the program through a home school connection. Parent involvement in the development of a child's character is critical.

The final recommendation is to get more staff involved in character education leadership within the building. Providing staff with the opportunity to visit schools of character and participation in additional professional development would create more staff acceptance of the program and increase understanding of the elements of a successful character education program.

Teachers can use the data collected to set goals for improvement in student academic performance and moral character development. Students would benefit from additional time working with an older cross-age buddy, student peer, or adult mentor to practice character specific academic content they may be struggling with. Students could be placed in small groups with similar concerns like constant absenteeism, high discipline referrals, etc. Students could also be given more leadership opportunities to practice character and serve as a positive role model for others.

Implications for Administrators

There are three implications for administrators regarding the implementation of Caring School Community. First, the Caring School Community study allowed opportunities for administrators to foster collaboration while building teacher

capacity. The benefits gained were high student and teacher engagement, an effective instructional climate conducive to learning, and lesson plans completed prior to instruction. The Ewalk process provided teachers with frequent feedback and suggestions for improvements. Collaboration also helped to support school efforts to build a professional learning community where the focus was on student achievement. Administration is responsible for building a community of trust and collaboration in which teachers feel comfortable in sharing ideas and trying new ideas. Leadership played an important role in the implementation of Caring School Community. Student success in school depends on the leader ensuring fidelity and rigor when implementing new programs. Healthy schools are those where staff and students would rather be at school than anywhere else, where students are excited about learning and show respect for other students and staff, and where student behavior is responsible and achievement is high. There are districts where principals and central office display respect and trust for each other and work as effective teams. These are schools and districts of character.

The second recommendation is that the instructional leader (principal) has background knowledge in character education. The instructional leader should be familiar with the Caring School Community study by participating in the professional development along with the teachers and participate on and support the Caring School Community Leadership Team. The additional professional development will help the principal as he or she conducts classroom walk throughs and provides feedback to staff.

Third, the investigators recommend that Caring School Community be integrated in the new curriculum the school and district are in the process of writing. The district's commitment to implementing character education would then be apparent since it would be infused in the curriculum they were expected to teach. As teachers integrate character education across all content areas, they can display for students that character development is equally important as getting good grades. This would also demonstrate the district's commitment to teachers and parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

The investigators suggested five recommendations to be considered for future research using Caring School Community. First, it would be ideal to conduct this study for a longer period of time since it takes time to implement a new program effectively and across an entire building the size of the study elementary school with approximately 790 students and 80 staff members. There were some grade levels that did a great job with integrating character into all aspects of their day but at the end of the study not all teachers were committed to the program.

Second, several cohort groups should be studied with some groups using the Caring School Community, and the others without the program. This poses a challenge due to the fact that education does not want to give an unfair advantage to a group of students of a program that may be beneficial to their learning. In larger districts, the study could use two different elementary schools with similar curriculum with the only difference being the Caring School Community Program.

In order to sustain progress with Caring School Community implementation and make improvements for success, the third recommendation would be to ask for different teachers to serve on the Caring School Community Leadership Team to

promote more buy in and shared leadership and responsibility among staff. To make the Caring School Community program most effective, ongoing communication is necessary. The leadership team still consists of the original staff members from implementation two years ago, so it is recommended that new members participate to bring in fresh ideas to the program.

The fourth recommendation for consideration is ongoing administrative support. Using data from this Caring School Community study, staff may not initially feel validated for their efforts to implement this character education program. Leaders will empower teachers to continue their efforts through ongoing communication, additional professional development, visiting schools and districts of character, and asking different teachers to serve on the Caring School Community Leadership Team. Student data should be shared and discussed with teachers at grade level meetings to foster teacher accountability and expectations for student improvement. These four recommendations are the basis to ensure sustainability and accountability when implementing Caring School Community.

The final recommendation would be to expand the study to include other school districts with similar demographics that are implementing either the same character education program or a similar program. Results could then be compared between school districts to determine the best strategies for the program. The study would then provide opportunities for districts to learn best practices of a character education program. This may also build a sense of partnership between districts that would benefit students across neighboring districts.

Summary

Caring School Community has the potential to address character and achievement issues faced by students from a diverse school population. Character development can be difficult for students in the elementary grades especially in low socioeconomic communities and single parent households. Dedicated educators are always searching for innovative ways to assist students to reach their maximum learning potential. It is important for educators to collaborate and find ways to fully integrate character education into all aspects of educating children so that all students learn the academic and social skills necessary to compete in the workforce and become successful and productive citizens. Educators need to respond with a sense of urgency in the attempt to teach every student, especially those with little to no role models, the character skills necessary to function as a healthy and productive adult. Caring School Community has a great promise to promote a caring community of learners. The findings of this study provide discouraging results that Caring School Community was not able to positively affect the performance and moral development of children at this elementary school, at least not in the first few years of implementation.

Appendix A
Parent/Guardian Letter



December 11, 2007

Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

This year we are excited to introduce a program called Caring School Community (CSC). This program will help us expand the culture of kindness and respect at our school. Studies show that such a culture is important for many reasons. Children who feel part of a caring school community tend to do better academically over time and may be less likely to engage in problem behaviors such as cigarette smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, and violence.

The CSC program provides specific lessons and activities that build a caring community for children throughout the school day and the school year. These lessons include regular class meetings in which the teacher and students solve problems and discuss how they can make the class a place that is caring a safe for everyone. The lessons also include "buddy activities". Your child will be paired with an older or younger student (buddy" for activities once or twice a month that focus on developing friendships as well as academic skills.

You are an important part of our school community. The CSC program helps you participate in two ways. Once or twice a month, your child will bring home a Homeseide Activity. These will engage you and your child in conversations about many topics. Other schoolwide activities will bring you to the school for exciting family events.

Please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter giving permission for your child to participate in this program and to document you have been made aware that we are collecting data to determine its effect on student achievement, attendance, and the number of discipline and positive referrals.

We look forward dot working with you to make our school a warm, caring place for everyone and to make this a great year for your child.

Sincerely,

Elementary School Principal

I hereby give permission for my child, _____, to participate in the Caring School Community Program and to document that I have been made aware that the Elementary School is collecting data to determine its effect on student achievement, attendance, and the number of discipline and positive referrals.

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Name (Signature)

Appendix B Parent Survey

ShowMe Character Parent Survey

Directions: Use a Number 2 pencil to respond to all the questions on this survey. Respond to this survey in terms of your child(ren) attending the school for which the survey is being completed. Please respond to all the questions.

District _____

School _____

School Level: Elementary
 Middle School
 High School

Mark your agreement or disagreement with each of the statements in this survey.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use a No. 2 pencil only.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase clearly any marks you wish to change.

CORRECT:    

INCORRECT:   

Comments

Appendix C
Staff Survey

ShowMe Character
Staff Survey

Blank Tablets™ Form by Pearson NCR MM95001 1 GB6601 Printed in U.S.A.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use number 2 pencil only.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.

CORRECT: ● INCORRECT: ✗ ☹ ☹ ☹

Directions: Use a Number 2 pencil to respond to all questions on this survey.

District: _____ School: _____

MARK ALL THAT APPLY

Position: Administration Teacher Support

School Level: Elementary Middle School High School

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Mark your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements.

The students in this school...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Are nice to each other.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Get along well together.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Respect their teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Treat one another fairly.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Tell the truth.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Are like a family.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Help each other learn.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Treat each other with respect.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Work together to solve problems.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Feel good when someone does well.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Plan things together with their teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Have a say in what goes on in their classes.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Decide rules together with their teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Help plan what they do in school.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Are asked by their teachers to help decide what they are to do.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Help decide rules for the school.	0	1	2	3	4



CARING SCHOOL COMMUNITY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION 131

The school staff members...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. Treat parents with respect.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Make parents feel welcome at school.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Value parents' ideas and input.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Encourage parents to be involved in school.	0	1	2	3	4
21. Communicate effectively with parents.	0	1	2	3	4
22. Care about the students' families.	0	1	2	3	4
23. Work in isolation.	0	1	2	3	4
24. Support each other.	0	1	2	3	4
25. Help each other out.	0	1	2	3	4
26. Take responsibility for student learning.	0	1	2	3	4
27. Frequently consult with each other.	0	1	2	3	4
28. Cooperate with one another.	0	1	2	3	4
29. Support me when I try out new ideas.	0	1	2	3	4
In this school...					
30. Administrators actively support new ideas.	0	1	2	3	4
31. Teachers take active roles in school activities	0	1	2	3	4
32. Things are well organized.	0	1	2	3	4
33. Staff are recognized for a job well done.	0	1	2	3	4
34. Staff are involved in decisions that affect them.	0	1	2	3	4
35. There is interest in innovation and new ideas.	0	1	2	3	4
In this school parents...					
	Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Often	Regularly
36. Volunteer to help with school activities.	0	1	2	3	4
37. Attend parent-teacher conferences.	0	1	2	3	4
38. Talk with teachers about their child's progress in school.	0	1	2	3	4
39. Go to school activities.	0	1	2	3	4
40. Help at school when they can.	0	1	2	3	4

HAVE YOU MARKED EVERY ITEM?

Appendix D
Student Survey

ShowMe Character
Student Survey

Mark Release Form by Pearson NCC MM250020-2 321 Printed in U.S.A.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use number 2 pencil only.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.

CORRECT: ● INCORRECT: ⊗ ⊘ ⊙ ⊚

Directions: Use a Number 2 pencil to answer all questions on this survey. Complete the information below. Follow the directions given for doing this.

District: _____ School: _____

What grade are you in this year? ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫

Mark One: Female Male A B C D E F G

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Mark your agreement or disagreement with each of the following.

The students in this school...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Are nice to each other.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Get along well together.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Respect their teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Treat one another fairly.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Tell the truth.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Are like a family.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Help each other learn.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Treat each other with respect.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Work together to solve problems.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Feel good when someone does well.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Plan things together with their teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Help decide what goes on in their classes.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Decide rules together with their teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Help plan what they do in school.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Are asked by their teachers to help decide what they are to do.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Help decide rules for the school.	0	1	2	3	4



Mark your agreement or disagreement with the following.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. I can do the school work teachers ask me to do.	0	1	2	3	4
18. I have difficulty doing my homework.	0	1	2	3	4
19. I have trouble figuring things out in class.	0	1	2	3	4
20. I worry when I have to take a test.	0	1	2	3	4
21. Teachers like the work I do.	0	1	2	3	4
22. School work is difficult to understand.	0	1	2	3	4
23. Teachers expect too much.	0	1	2	3	4
24. Teachers in this school care that students are safe.	0	1	2	3	4
25. I feel safe when at school.	0	1	2	3	4
26. There are students who pick on (or bully) others.	0	1	2	3	4
27. Students in this school respect school property.	0	1	2	3	4
28. I feel safe when going to and from school.	0	1	2	3	4
29. Students take things that do not belong to them.	0	1	2	3	4

My parents...	Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Often	Regularly
30. Volunteer to help with school activities.	0	1	2	3	4
31. Attend parent-teacher conferences.	0	1	2	3	4
32. Talk with my teachers about my progress in school.	0	1	2	3	4
33. Go to school activities.	0	1	2	3	4
34. Help at school when they can.	0	1	2	3	4
35. Set study times at home.	0	1	2	3	4
36. Are interested in what I am doing at school.	0	1	2	3	4
37. Go over my school work.	0	1	2	3	4
38. Talk with me about what I am doing in school.	0	1	2	3	4
39. Have set up a place at home for me to do my homework.	0	1	2	3	4

HAVE YOU MARKED EVERY ITEM?

Appendix E Implementation Survey

ShowMe Character Implementation Survey

Mark Release forms by Pearson ICS 100230024-1 104121 Printed in U.S.A.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use number 2 pencil only.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.

CORRECT: ● INCORRECT: ⊗ ⊘ ⊙ ⊚

Directions: Use a Number 2 pencil to respond to all questions on this survey.

District: _____ School: _____

MARK ALL THAT APPLY

Position: Administrator Teacher Support

School Level: Elementary Middle School High School

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Mark the level to which each of the following attributes have been implemented in your school. Rate the implementation from *Not Evident* to *Exemplary Implementation*.

Mark the level of implementation	Not Evident	Low	Middle	High	Exemplary
1. This school has a safe, orderly learning environment.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Students are supported emotionally and academically.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Parents have opportunities to experience the school as a learning community.	0	1	2	3	4
4. School leaders understand the characteristics of a program to build a caring environment.	0	1	2	3	4
5. The administration, staff, and students share the core values of the school.	0	1	2	3	4
6. District leaders visit the school on a regular basis.	0	1	2	3	4
7. School climate data are collected from parents, students, staff, and community members.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Staff members analyze and discuss the implications of data collected from parents, staff, and students.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Budget and other resources are provided to develop and sustain a caring school environment.	0	1	2	3	4
10. School and district leaders support implementation of a program to build positive school climate.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Staff members create partnerships with parents.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Students take part in setting classroom norms and rules.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Student pairs work collaboratively on activities that are aligned to the academic curriculum.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Students learn to work cooperatively.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Students feel competent that they can achieve academic success.	0	1	2	3	4

Mark the level of implementation	Not Evident	Low	Middle	High	Exemplary
15. Teachers collaborate on instructional planning.	0	1	2	3	4
17. Staff members share ideas, strategies, and successes.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Staff members form collaborative teams.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Staff members engage together in reflection on the results of instructional activities.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Teachers take a major role in shaping the school's norms, values, and practices.	0	1	2	3	4
21. Cross-age student pairs engage in interviewing, listening, speaking, and helping.	0	1	2	3	4
22. Students are taught to reflect on their personal values.	0	1	2	3	4
23. Take-home activities relate to academic, social, citizenship themes that are important to the instructional program.	0	1	2	3	4
24. Reflection is encouraged on what has been learned from experiences of working together.	0	1	2	3	4
25. Students have a sense of democratic values.	0	1	2	3	4
26. Specific character traits have been defined for this school (or district).	0	1	2	3	4
27. Students reflect on character traits in our education process.	0	1	2	3	4
28. Character education is defined in terms of core ethical values.	0	1	2	3	4
29. Character traits defined for this school/district include both thinking and feeling.	0	1	2	3	4
30. District commitment for the character education processes is evident by high levels of continuous support.	0	1	2	3	4
31. Our character process is infused throughout the school day.	0	1	2	3	4
32. All school staff help carry out the school's character education process.	0	1	2	3	4
33. Our character education process is planned and proactive.	0	1	2	3	4
34. Frequent communications on character education are common among the school, parents, and broader community.	0	1	2	3	4
35. Regular assessments are made of students, parents, and staff to check the impact of the character education process.	0	1	2	3	4

HAVE YOU MARKED EVERY ITEM?

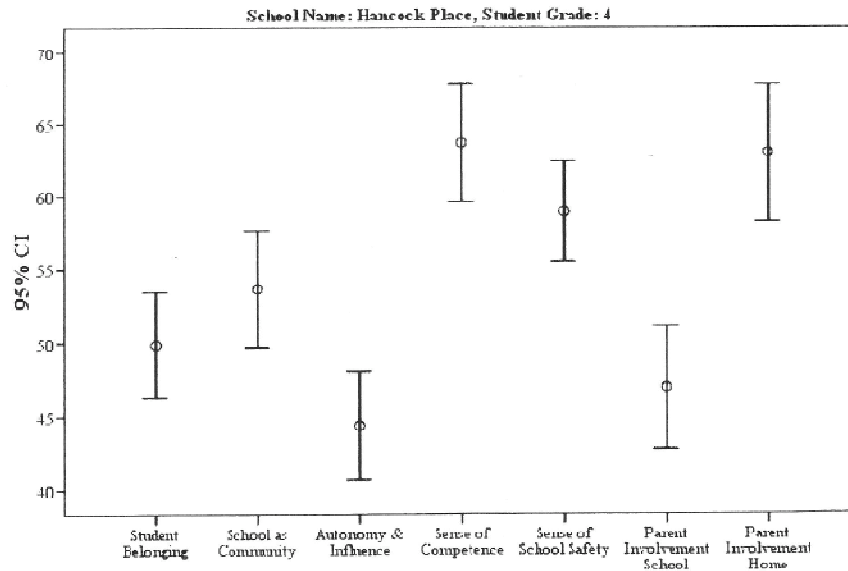
Appendix F
Student Survey Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Student Survey Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student Belonging	116	0	95	49.87	19.63
School as Community	113	0	100	53.67	21.26
Autonomy & Influence	111	4	92	44.37	19.56
Sense of Competence	100	14	96	63.71	20.61
Sense of School Safety	108	0	100	58.95	18.22
Parent Involvement School	108	0	100	46.94	22.09
Parent Involvement Home	114	0	100	63.03	25.59
Valid N (listwise)	73				

School Name = Hancock Place, Student Grade = 4

Figure 3. Student Survey Interval Chart



Appendix G

Student Survey Definitions

Operational Definitions for ShowMe Character The CHARACTERplus® Way Student Survey Factors [High Positive Scores]

- *Students' Feelings of Belonging* [Items 1 – 5]

Students are nice to each other; they get along; they respect their teachers; they treat each other fairly and they tell the truth.
- *Students' Sense of School as a Community* [Items 6 – 10]

Students feel that the school is like a family; students help each other learn and treat each other with respect; they work together to solve problems and feel good when someone does well.
- *Autonomy and Influence* [Items 11 – 16]

Students feel that they plan things together with their teachers, have a say in what goes on in their classes, decide the rules together with their teachers, help plan what they do in school, are asked by their teachers to help decide what they are to do, and help decide rules for the school.
- *Feelings of Competence* [Items 17 - 23]

Students believe that they can do the school work teachers ask of them, do not have difficulty with their school work or figuring things out, do not worry when they have to take a test, find school work easy to understand, and feel that teachers' expectations are reasonable.
- *School Safety* [Items 24 – 29]

Students believe that teachers in this school care that they are safe; students feel safe when at school; students do not pick on (or bully) others; students respect school property; students feel safe going to and from school; students do not take things that do not belong to them.
- *Parent Involvement at School* [Items 30 – 34]

Parents volunteer to help with school activities, attend parent-teacher conferences, talk with teachers about their children's progress in school, and attend school activities.
- *Parent Involvement at Home* [Items 35 – 39]

Parents set study times at home, are interested in what their children are doing at school, go over students' homework, talk with the student about what s/he is doing in school, and set up a place at home for their children to do homework.

Appendix H Ewalk Form

MSIP 4th Cycle Classroom Observation Form

District _____ Building _____ Room No. _____ Team Member _____

Date _____ Time _____ Beginning Middle End Grade Level _____

Subject/Learning Objective _____

Was instructional activity observed? Yes No

Large group Small group Independent work Co-teaching/Class within a class Special Education self-contained

Instructional Delivery Method Observed (Mark "E" for extensive, "M" for moderate, or "S" for slight)			
Class discussion	E	M	S
Cooperative learning (specify structure)	E	M	S
Distance learning	E	M	S
Group work	E	M	S
Guided practice/modeling	E	M	S
Hands-on/experiments/laboratory work	E	M	S
Learning centers	E	M	S
Lecture	E	M	S
Peer evaluation	E	M	S
Question and answer	E	M	S
Seat work (e.g., worksheets, textbook readings)	E	M	S
Student presentations	E	M	S
Other	E	M	S

Instructional Strategies (Mark "E" for extensive, "M" for moderate, or "S" for slight)			
Advance organizers	E	M	S
Graphic organizers	E	M	S
Nonlinguistic representation	E	M	S
Problem-based/project-based learning	E	M	S
Research (generating and testing hypotheses)	E	M	S
Similarities and differences	E	M	S
Summarizing and note taking	E	M	S
Other	E	M	S

DOK Level	DOK Description	Prevailing	Highest Reached
Level 1	Recall		
Level 2	Skill/Concept		
Level 3	Strategic Thinking		
Level 4	Extended Thinking		

Technology
Was technology used? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, please check the type(s) used and the use level.
Type(s) of Technology In Use <input type="checkbox"/> Student computer <input type="checkbox"/> Digital camera/multimedia <input type="checkbox"/> Graphing calculator <input type="checkbox"/> Handheld computer <input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Lab equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Projector <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher workstation <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive whiteboard <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Technology Use Level <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy - Centers on acquiring and practicing technical skills; technology is something to learn. <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive - Automates traditional teacher and student roles; technology is optional. <input type="checkbox"/> Transforming - expands role and/or products; technology is essential.

Student Engagement Level
 High (Above 90%)
 Moderate (75-89%)
 Low (50-74%)
 Disengaged (Below 50%)

Teacher Engagement
 Yes No

Student Work on Display
 Student work is displayed
 Work is displayed with scoring guide
 Work is displayed without scoring guide
 Displayed work indicates a high level of learning is expected
 Displayed work does not indicate a high level of learning is expected
 Level of expectation is not distinguishable through the displayed work
 Student work is not displayed

Differentiated instruction observed.
Describe _____

Teacher reinforced effort or provided feedback.
Describe _____

Comments (if necessary): _____

Classroom Learning Environment

The physical climate is:
 Conducive to learning
 Somewhat conducive to learning
 Not conducive to learning
(Check all that apply)
 Classroom design
 Attractiveness
 External disruptions
 Cleanliness
 Temperature
 Other: _____

The instructional climate is:

Conducive to learning
 Somewhat conducive to learning
 Not conducive to learning
(Check all that apply)
 Disruptive behavior
 Off-task behavior
 Lack of organization
 Internal disruptions
 Other: _____

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Vitae

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