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The Relationship Between Caring School Community Program Implementation
and Elementary School Attendance, Discipline, and Climate

by

Debra A. Kyle

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

Doctor of Education

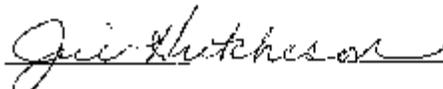
School of Education

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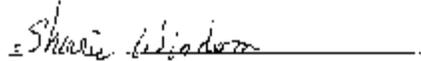
This dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
at Lindenwood University by the School of Education



Dr. Jill Hutcherson, Dissertation Chair

1-14-2011

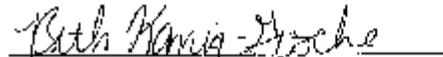
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Dr. Sherrie Wisdom Committee Member

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Date



Dr. Beth Kania-Gosche Committee Member

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: Debra Ann Kyle

Signature: Debra Ann Kyle Date: 1/14/11

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This amazing journey and great achievement was made possible with the constant encouragement and love from my family and friends.

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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, the school of study 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 attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals. The evaluation of this program involved observing classroom instruction to track student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional climate, and lesson plan completion using Ewalk, a computerized walk through tool and the results of student, parent, and staff surveys. All third through fifth grade students completed 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 effect on student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals. The companion dissertation examined results of implementing Caring School Community and its effect on student achievement. 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, positive behavior referrals, and student achievement data prior to and at the conclusion of the study of Caring School Community implementation. The findings of this study indicated that implementation of Caring School Community had no statistical impact on student attendance, student discipline, positive behavior referrals, or student achievement two years after implementation. The investigators made suggestions to be considered for future research: conduct this study for a longer period of time, provide professional development prior to the beginning of the school year, provide leadership opportunities for teachers, study several cohort groups or several schools with similar demographics, and encourage ongoing administrative support and participation.

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Chapter One – Introduction

There are districts 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, where student behavior is responsible, and achievement is high. These are schools and districts of character. Each year the Character Education Partnership recognizes the schools that have met certain criteria 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)

This study was a program evaluation of the implementation of Caring School Community, a Character Plus Education Program. 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.

Two school counselors were offered a grant to implement this program at their elementary school at a Character Plus Workshop during the spring of 2007.

Computerized needs assessment surveys were given to third through fifth grade students during computer class, to parents during parent teacher conferences, and to staff in May 2007. A team of teachers, parents, and administrators was formed, called

the Caring School Community Leadership Team, who 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.

Background of the Problem

As schools continue to deal with issues involving bullying, substance abuse, school violence, and lack of work ethics; students being educated in this environment risk becoming a part of society's problems. Schools cannot ignore the academic or social-emotional needs of students as they work to meet state standards and graduate children who will contribute to the community and society.

About a century ago, Whitman and Dewey envisioned the United States as a country where students were taught the process of voting, branches of government, history of the nation, and appreciation for the democracy in which they live (Noddings, 2008). Following Dewey's recommendations would mean teachers would allow students time to research, discuss, and present their ideas about controversial issues using a method they prefer rather than simply memorizing facts (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).

Scores from summative assessments provide data to the United States to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and subsequent indicators of national school failure. Many countries are soaring above the United States in both math and science. As a nation, Americans cannot sit back and

allow this trend to continue. Students, teachers, and schools need to be held accountable for the lack of achievement. By deciding to make a school's curriculum more rigorous, educators are not guaranteeing success for all students. When schools make the decision to create more rigorous curricula, academically challenged students often continue to struggle. In order to produce a society of life-long learners, educators need to focus on a child's character and work ethic (Bradshaw, 2006).

At the time of this writing, the nation is in an economic crisis. 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.

There is a steady 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 limit their opportunities to develop individually through the learning process (Noddings, 2005). Many children come to school today

with overwhelming needs. Their basic needs of love and safety are often ignored. Children spend all their energy on worrying, enduring, hiding, and inventing new emotional needs and sometimes trying to cover up the physical ones (Noddings, 2005).

Academic and social problems are interconnected, and one cannot be solved without the other. The nation should provide shelter assistance for families so that no child is homeless, and school districts should offer parenting classes to assist families as needed. A caring society should offer every family adequate housing, childcare, medical insurance, and a way to earn a living. These things should be provided not so that achievement scores will rise, but because caring people should be willing to help those in need (Noddings, 2005).

Students need to understand the connection between the objectives they are learning in school and how they will utilize these skills in real life. Teachers who send students the message that they will not allow them to fail establish relationships of trust and respect that encourage students to work harder. The school day must include instruction for building caring and trustworthy relationships, for making connections among common interests, and meeting the individual learning needs of students using a variety of instructional materials (Noddings, 2005).

Many school districts leaders are working diligently to reduce the rates of student truancy and chronic absenteeism, but there has been little attention given to these issues from educational researchers (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). In later school years, students with chronic attendance concerns struggle to master grade level expectations because they have missed the instruction necessary to be successful

(Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). School funding is dependent on the number of students who attend school regularly, so chronic absenteeism affects more than just individual students.

Early absenteeism is a reliable predictor of high school dropout rates so school leaders must show students that being in class daily is important (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). School districts are working diligently to improve student attendance by “developing productive school-family-community connections which has become one of the most commonly embraced initiatives in schools and school districts” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p. 309).

With the diversity of American families today it is difficult for schools to establish home and school connections. The number of single parent families continues to rise as well as the number of grandparents assuming responsibility for raising their grandchildren. Single parents must often work more than one job to make ends meet, and therefore, depend on the school district to meet the academic needs of their children. “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 to demonstrate for children that it is possible to live in a manner that promotes their values (Berreth & Berman, 1997).

Character education advocates believe that a person of good character possesses 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. Schools are integrating character with academic objectives since character education advocates believe there is a direct connection between character and intelligence. “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).

Most national character education organizations suggest guidelines for evaluating successful character education programs such as the following: identifying core values; instruction in appropriate behavior and decision making; opportunities for students to demonstrate character and commitment from staff, students, parents, and community members (Exstrom, 2000). The federal government provides funding to states for character education programs, but without a commitment from the state, local school districts may not follow through (Exstrom, 2000).

A Midwestern elementary school decided to implement a character education program after examining data from various surveys, student achievement, and attendance rates. Surveys were given to students in third through fifth grade, parents, and teachers to determine the need for character education implementation. The web-based surveys were developed and distributed electronically by Marshall Consulting and International Learning Services, Inc. in 2005. The elementary school 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 School Community, a character

education program, during the following fall. The elementary school's goals included improving student achievement, improving school culture, and improving student attendance. This study will examine if these goals were met.

In this collaborative study, the elementary principal of the study school became the school culture investigator, and the district math coordinator became the academic investigator. Together they developed this study to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of Caring School Community. The school culture investigator and the academic investigator will be referred to as the investigative team. This study focused on school culture elements, including student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referrals, while the collaborative study authored by Michelle Wilkerson focused on student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Education can no longer be just about reading, writing, and mathematics. It must also integrate lessons about life, citizenship, and the value of being a good person. Students need schools that are safe and staffed with teachers who care about them and who ask students to demonstrate care for one another. When school personnel teach and model these behaviors, a child's world, and perhaps the world around us, may 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. The school of study employs a literacy coach, reading specialists, and math facilitators to provide professional development for teachers on instructional strategies that will increase student achievement in the core content areas. Teachers and administrators review data frequently to determine if methods are working in these tested areas because school districts have more pressures today to succeed on local, state and national testing due to No Child Left Behind.

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 fund programs that enable schools to implement character education programs, there have been no criteria established for implementing or evaluating these programs. Character education is an umbrella concept that is the subject of 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

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. Debbie Kyle, the principal of the elementary school being studied, investigated the success of Caring School Community in terms of student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals, and the school climate. Michelle Wilkerson, the district math coordinator for the district which includes the school of the study, investigated the success of Caring School Community in terms of student academic achievement on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The evaluation of the program involved observing classroom instruction to monitor student engagement, teacher engagement, the instructional climate, and lesson plan completion using Ewalk, a computerized walk through tool and the results of student, parent, and staff surveys. All third through fifth grade students completed the computerized surveys to determine success of implementation based on their sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

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 results of this study may help this school community better understand the importance of character education and its effect on student achievement, discipline referrals, positive referrals, and student attendance.

Research Questions

The school culture investigator addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student attendance?
2. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student discipline referrals?
3. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student positive behavior referrals?
4. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community?

The academic investigator addressed research questions pertaining to student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts and Mathematics.

Independent Variables

Caring School Community, a character education program, was implemented in an elementary school in conjunction with teacher professional development, guidance from Character Plus coaches, and collaboration among students, parents, and staff.

Dependent Variables

The number of observations recorded on the fourth cycle administrator walk through classroom 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.

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 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years. Positive behavior referrals were given to students who were observed by teachers as demonstrating positive character and making good choices. Positive behavior referrals were not part of the Caring School Community Program but were added by the Caring School Community Leadership Team during implementation.

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 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years. Student daily average attendance was reviewed by grade level for the three years of this study.

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. The classroom observations used as a measurement tool to collect data, in which teachers were trained, included student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional delivery methods, instructional strategies, depth of knowledge (DOK) levels, technology usage, instructional climate,

and complete lesson plans before instruction. This data was used to determine fidelity of implementation of the Caring School Community Program.

Surveys. 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. The surveys were also measurement tools that provided initial baseline data for program planning and development and subsequently mark growth and provide comparison between the years.

Elementary Communication Arts and 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. This data was used to measure the dependent variables investigated by the academic investigator.

Hypotheses

The school culture investigator addressed the following hypotheses:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the number of positive behavior referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community, when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #1. There will be a change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #2. There will be a change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #3. There will be a change in the number of positive behavior referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #4. There will be a change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community, when

comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

The academic investigator's hypotheses addressed student academic achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts and Mathematics.

Rationale for Study

The implementation of Caring School Community in 2007 was achieved through 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 recorded 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, it is believed that there is 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 has a transient population, which meant some of the subjects of the study were not available for the final part of the study.

Location. The class sizes for the 2006-2007 third grade classrooms were not ideal due to lack of space in the elementary building. The number of 2006-2007 third grade students per classroom was 27, which was consistent with the state maximum of 27 students but 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 may affect 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 may have had 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.

Supervision. One member of the investigative team is the principal and supervisor of the teachers. Even though the principal routinely conducts walkthroughs in the classrooms on a weekly basis, teachers may modify their behavior when they are observed in order to meet expectations of the principal.

Definition of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 requires all schools, districts and states to show that students are making 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 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], 2009b, p. 1)

Caring School Community. 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. The Caring School Community Program includes 30 to 35 character building lessons (Gibbons, 1999).

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).

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)

Homeside 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 described in section 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 program 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, 2010a, 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)

Schoolwide Activities. These activities are a collection of noncompetitive 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 school” (MO DESE, 2009a, para. 7).

Summary

This collaborative study assessed the impact of implementation of Caring School Community, a character education program, at a Midwestern Elementary School. The investigators used data collected from students, parents, and staff as well as academic achievement data to evaluate the effectiveness of school-wide implementation. Debbie Kyle, the elementary principal of the elementary school being studied, investigated the success of implementation of Caring School Community and its possible impact on student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals and the school culture. Michelle Wilkerson, the district math coordinator of the elementary school being studied, investigated the success of implementation of Caring School Community and its possible impact on student academic achievement on the MAP by investigating academic and school culture components to determine the effectiveness of implementation using measurable outcomes. Effective implementation was possible if the building 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 that many students were 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, increase 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 chapter 2 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 education 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, focusing primarily within the United States. The increase in violence and crime in the United States, especially in schools, has caused many school officials to begin researching for 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. Another theme emerging from the literature review are concerns voiced by educators regarding the time needed to teach character education along with required curricula and how to effectively include both during a limited amount of daily instructional time. The theories regarding the implementation of character education and the impact it has on student social and achievement success were researched as well.

Historical Background

Education, in the United States, has always had the same goals which were to assist others with gaining the knowledge necessary to become contributing 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 for 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 for the 4th & 5th R's, 1994, para. 6)

From its beginning, character education has included processes for helping young people develop good character. Character education is provided in school districts today so that young people receive regular instruction in displaying positive character. Children are now exposed to mixed messages from the media about sex, drugs, and violence at an earlier age which requires clarification of core values

(Florida Safe & Drug Free Schools, 1998). 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 in developing policies for character education has increased among government officials, educators, and parents. However, most schools must continue to focus on increasing academic performance due to the need to meet annual proficiency targets. School districts across the United States are implementing high-quality character education programs in their efforts to improve academic achievement and meet state proficiency requirements. Schools are beginning to gain a large amount of national support regarding their efforts.

Developing good character in young people is now becoming an essential part of the educational mission. “In the mid-1950s, 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 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 new 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 responsibility to display good character, but fail to live and act accordingly. It is essential that young people be exposed to opportunities to practice good character 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 school day helps to teach students how to be contributing members of society. “Students should be encouraged and given the opportunity to make positive contributions to the well-being of other students and the school” (National Council for Social Studies, 1997, para. 20).

Teachers in schools with character education programs must model the values they expect from 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 the school and teachers as having unfair discipline and grading policies and procedures, it is unlikely they will establish a positive school

culture. 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 from the school and community to discuss the development of values that will be taught and reinforced in school and at home. The committee should develop recognition programs for the school and community to honor adults and students who display good character.

The development of character education in the school requires all the stakeholders to set aside cultural differences to develop an approach that will improve the school culture. “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 model appropriate character and embed character education in their instructional day. “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).

Schools understand the importance of involving parents in their effort to meet the academic and social needs of students. “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). 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 need 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). These problems have occurred in large urban cities, small towns, and rural communities. Educators and community members spend countless hours developing policies and plans of action to prepare for the possibility of a violent crime taking place within the school.

Most major American cities have violent crimes being committed daily which children are seeing firsthand or on television news stations. Educators need to focus on improving students’ academic achievement, but students dealing with violence in their homes and neighborhoods are more concerned with safety and survival than their grades. Schools may be the only place for students to feel safe from the violence.

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)

Educators and many caring adults understand that a stable family environment, a sense of belonging, and a strong moral foundation within the family and community help to prevent the spread of violence. A well-balanced child begins in a well-

balanced home with love and support from a caregiver who supports their 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 and having 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 they face in their everyday lives.

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 and preserves their kind, free, and democratic society. The lives of morally enlightened children will be saner, safer, more dignified and more humane” (Sommers & Fellow, 1998, p. 5). Children are exposed to mass media for the majority of their day which often exposes them to violent and criminal behavior. This has caused some confusion with their understanding of the difference between right and wrong, thus, some

children do not feel remorseful for their inappropriate behavior. Character education provides schools with resources to teach children about the importance of becoming respectful, responsible. Character education provides schools with resources to teach children about the importance of becoming respectful and responsible.

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 States citizens share” (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 155). School districts have integrated character education in the school curriculum to provide students with opportunities to practice displaying important ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others. School safety requires long-term solutions that address the moral and academic issues that are negatively impacting schools and communities.

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)

Haynes and Thomas (2007) determined that Americans are examining the quality of education their children are receiving and are looking to schools to assist

them in academic, 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 community members 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 the 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)

Davidson and Lickona (2007) noted that schools need to help students develop performance and moral character because they are interdependent and should be taught together. When a person has performance character but no moral character they may set and achieve goals using unethical means. Moral character is what motivates individuals to accomplish their goals in an ethical manner (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 the ability to teach content well is a common problem in teaching. Other teachers have the opposite problem: they have excellent knowledge of their content area but demonstrate poor moral character by insulting and embarrassing students and then validating such behavior as a means of motivation (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.

Most teachers are willing to do whatever it takes to meet the needs of students and therefore support the integration of character education in schools. 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 now seeking support from state legislatures and their local communities to continue them (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). Newark prompted education officials to draft a proposal for state funding to continue their character education program after reviewing reports of their improved school climates and student behavior (Delisio, 2000).

In another example, educators in a small elementary school in Lebanon, Pennsylvania took on a new approach for the disadvantaged students of the small coal town. A new principal believed the students were a discipline issue because they were not engaged and were bored with education. Harding Elementary School began to

develop a character education program, and students began reading books 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). As a result, the school’s reading scores improved and they became an above average school instead of being included on the state’s warning list. Harding Elementary became the second-highest achieving elementary school in the district on writing tests and their discipline referrals 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 opened up, students did too. The teachers at Harding began sharing experiences from their own lives, which caused students to feel safe, open up and the dialogue became richer. Assessment wasn’t just for test day. The teachers began meeting the individual needs of students through small, flexible groups. The lunchroom made 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. 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).

Georgia legislators encouraged schools to teach character education but did not provide any additional funding.

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)

With little to no funding from the state and no formal method of accountability for the school districts to follow, it is unlikely the school districts in the state of Georgia will effectively and consistently implement character education according to their state mandates.

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 may be seen in the culture of the schools and academic achievement in students.

In Washington, D.C., the 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, Dachinowicz, & Schwartz, 2006, p. 26). This school was one of approximately 10 elementary and secondary schools recognized as National Schools of Character because of their exemplary implementation of 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.

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.

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)

Character education is not mandated by the state so educators are concerned the initiative will not continue in school districts. “The data presented in two studies indicated that character education initiatives affect student attitudes and behavior, thus setting the stage for improved academic performance” (Beatty et al., 2006, p. 29).

The CEP found that character education benefited both private schools with small populations and large public schools. Education is not just about teaching the core contents of science, social studies, language arts and math but also living a fulfilled life, being a productive citizen and contributing positively to the world. “When a school teaches these things, a child’s world and perhaps the world around us, will begin to change” (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para. 1).

Haynes and Berkowitz (2007) spoke with “Kristen Pelster, principal at 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 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 were both new to the school so they had to identify the main problem first. 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 members developed a mission and vision 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 as an option, and required teachers to infuse character education into daily lessons and discipline procedures (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 raised from 44.5% in 2000 to 75% in 2005” (Haynes & Berkowitz, 2007, para. 22).

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

The school with a new vision from the principals and a commitment from the teachers, parents, and students to not accept failure has turned the school in a positive direction. “Ridgewood Middle School was one of ten schools 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 student academic achievement has greatly improved. 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 school scored 100% as proficient/advanced in both areas. Twenty-seven percent of the teachers in this school are National Board Certified. The students feel valued because they play a major role in decision making.

Children must be exposed to adults who display appropriate character and taught how character plays an important role in making the world a safer place. According to Healy (2002), the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks have changed the lives of many. Innocent children feel themselves threatened by the hatred displayed by the terrorists. Healy (2002) wrote that children's artwork moves the spirit from tolerance to appreciation. He suggested that an image displays the truth to a child which helps to develop their character and 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 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 an 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 into the core curriculum and throughout the daily curriculum. 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 a no-brainer, but it isn’t - has brought the Kindest School in New Jersey Award to Brigantine 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 (Benninga, et al. 2003), classroom behaviors (Character Counts, 2001), and long-term test scores (Zins et al., 2004). 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 (Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, and Miller-Johnson 2000). Parent involvement results in students attaining higher academic achievement (Fan and Chen, 2001), more positive attitudes about homework, and improved perceptions of their own competence (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Parents are their children’s first and most important teachers. (Brannon, 2008, p. 62)

Another reason why character education is needed is the media sends mixed messages to children 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 today. “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 learning through social interaction” (Brannon, 2008, p. 63). Also, 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). Raising children without teaching them the appropriate values and behaviors is setting them up for failure. Students reflect the change in society which has become less tolerant and less compassionate of others.

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 focuses on positive behaviors to improve character and academics and has been recognized nationally. “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, parents, counselors, and community members. Lessons are cross-curricular and address the many interests and learning styles of the student (Allred, 2008).

Types of Character Education

Character education programs offer a variety of implementation methods and materials. Schools must decide which program, methods, and materials will work best for their students. Many schools provide character education through social studies, extracurricular activities, or by integration of character traits into all core curriculum

areas. Some schools develop their own materials, borrow materials from another district, or purchase an existing program from curriculum companies. “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 is starting to appear more in the middle schools but is rarely seen in the high schools. Studies are limited in character education at the high school level, because it has proven difficult to measure a student’s character growth quantitatively and to determine if character education is effecting the learning environment at that level. “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). There are concerns that educators are not preparing students adequately for college and the work force if they are only taught academic skills and no means of expressing themselves effectively in order to achieve their goals. 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)

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 teach the whole child and not just from the academic perspective. “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 120 randomly selected elementary schools was conducted in California by Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, and Smith (2006). All the schools in the sample had implemented a character education program, had a similar Academic Performance Index, and administered the state assessments utilized by California at that time.

Common principles were present in the schools with successful character education programs and high scores on achievement tests. Well-performing schools provided a clean and safe school environment. Administrators, teachers, students, and parents displayed respect for each other and 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. It is also no surprise that students who attend such schools achieve academically 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 also includes all aspects of the community.

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)

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 students' academic and moral development. School districts work with the community and parents to build a strong foundation for character education. Students who feel connected to their school tend to succeed academically and resist the peer pressures of drugs, violence, and delinquency. The Caring School Community program focuses on building the bond between the school, students and their parents (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, educators must cultivate a positive school climate and address the moral development of the students. Character education is theorized to assist schools with establishing a caring community, reduce violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, and negative attitudes, improve academic performance, and prepare young people to be productive citizens.

Students in today's society face many issues and dangers that were unknown to previous generations. Therefore, schools are teaching character education to students to address the negative influences they are bombarded with on a daily basis.

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 divorced family or both parents are working full-time, causing the students to assume more of the family responsibilities and the stress involved. “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 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 efforts to encourage the development of good character in young people” (Haynes & Thomas, 2007, p. 152).

One of the main responsibilities of being parents is to teach their children morals and values. Today’s parents realize they cannot accomplish this task by themselves so communities and parents are looking to the school for guidance (Haynes & Thomas, 2007). Haynes and Thomas suggest that “sadly, schools 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 teaching the content areas and classroom management but few offer courses on integrating character education. Staff development is the only method of character education training offered to most teachers across the nation.

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 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. However, 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 student's decision-making process or the outcomes of discipline and performance in schools. This is where studies tend to fail in helping school districts see 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 academic achievement over a period of time helps teachers to persevere through these obstacles.

In a study by Brannon (2008), teachers noticed that directly implementing character education into 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). Children concentrate more on their learning when they have a safe and caring classroom environment. They are more likely to take risks when participating in class

discussions and building lasting relationships with other students. 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. Children must be encouraged to take responsibility for their behavior and held accountable by parents and teachers (Brannon, 2008).

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 the following five key elements:

- Reach out to the community by holding 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 should be taught in schools but must begin at home with their parents and guardians as their first teachers. 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 lack of time and appropriate materials. In spite of the challenges, most teachers share the 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 to put a stop to this violence. In an elementary school in Virginia, Newsome Park Elementary School, has included community service projects into their curriculum at every grade level.

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)

In a charter school in Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School, they focused on direct character education. Cardinal virtues are embedded into their curriculum and they foster personal and social responsibility through participation in a variety of community service projects. In a middle school in Maryland, Buck Lodge Middle School, they feature a combination of direct instruction which focuses on a new virtue each week and a service learning program, which is a graduation requirement and a peer mediation program. “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 decisions about their education, the climate and programs of the school, 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 help with defining who people are, what they value and how they will spend their lives. Habits are the things people do when no one is watching. 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" (Barron, 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). Students, teachers and administrators need to utilize and model their will, skill, capacity, and knowledge to make a better life for themselves and the community in which they live.

Kathryn Wentzel (2003), professor of human development at the University of Maryland, suggested, "Students who pursue goals valued by themselves as well as by teachers are likely to be competent students" (p. 321). She also noted, "Children are more likely to adopt and internalize goals that are valued by others when their relationships are caring and supportive than if their relationships are negative and critical" (Wentzel, 2003, p. 321). It has become critical for educators to establish

positive relationships with students, so they have a better understanding of the reasons why some of them display negative behaviors. “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, outline communication expectations for behavior, and value 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); and defined moral character as, “integrity, justice, caring, respect, and cooperation” (2007, p. 26). These are the characteristics individuals talk about most often when discussing character education. Students are expected to get along with each other, treat everyone respectfully and 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). High schools are not preparing graduates appropriately for the future when they are focused mainly on academic content and not the necessary skills and character needed for success in college or the workplace. 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 the following 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, Dachnowicz, & Schwartz, 2006, p. 30)

There are concerns that educators may find it difficult to maintain a balance between teaching academics and character education. However, character education should be integrated into the regular school day and viewed as an essential component for academic success and 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. (Benninga, et al., 2006, p. 452)

School districts across the nation are considering the implementation of character education programs to meet the diverse needs of students. Many educators have expressed frustration with little resources and time available to address student concerns. With the breakdown of families plaguing the nation, children lack the guidance of appropriate role models and are spending the majority of their day plugged into mass media. They experience violence within their families, communities, and at school on a daily basis. They engage in violent video games and

view inappropriate movies on television and at theaters regularly. Unless students are taught the values and skills necessary to function as healthy adults, it is unlikely they will grow to be contributing members of society.

Chapter Three- Methodology

This 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 attendance, student discipline, positive behavior referrals, and student achievement. The qualitative method was used to evaluate student surveys providing relevant information regarding these areas. The study was also quantitative in nature, evaluating data from student achievement on MAP. 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 survey data included input from third through fifth grade students, parents and staff. Debbie Kyle, the school culture investigator (elementary principal) evaluated student attendance, student discipline, and positive behavior referral data to determine if Caring School Community may have contributed to improvement in each area. Michelle Wilkerson, the academic investigator (district math coordinator) evaluated MAP data to determine if Caring School Community may have contributed to an improvement in students' academic performance. Both investigators also analyzed the fidelity of implementation as measured by surveys given to third through fifth grade students, parents, and staff as well as classroom observations.

The classroom observation data categories included instructional delivery methods, instructional strategies, DOK 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 describes information concerning the timeframe, participants, instruments used, data collections, and data analyses.

Process Evaluation Research Design

The school culture investigator addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student attendance?
2. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student discipline referrals?
3. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student positive behavior referrals?
4. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of students, parents and staff who indicated their school had a caring community?

The academic investigator addressed research questions that pertain to student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts and Mathematics.

Independent Variables

Caring School Community, a character education program, was implemented in an elementary school in conjunction with teacher professional development,

guidance from Character Plus coaches and collaboration among students, parents, and staff.

Dependent Variables

Discipline and positive behavior referrals and student attendance were the dependent variables investigated by the school culture investigator. 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 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 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders. Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years. Positive behavior referrals were given to students who were observed by teachers as demonstrating positive character and making good choices. Positive behavior referrals were not part of the Caring School Community Program but were added by the Caring School Community Leadership Team during implementation.

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 2007-2008 fourth graders and 2008-2009 fifth graders.

Thus, the same group of students was followed for three years. Student daily average attendance was reviewed by grade level for the three years of this study.

Measurement Tools

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. The classroom observations used as a measurement tool to collect data, in which teachers were trained, included student engagement, teacher engagement, instructional delivery methods, instructional strategies, DOK levels, technology usage, instructional climate, and complete lesson plans in advance of instruction. This data was used to determine fidelity of implementation of the Caring School Community Program.

Surveys. 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. The surveys were also measurement tools that provided initial baseline data for program planning and development and subsequently mark growth and provide comparison between the years. “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). According to Dr. J. C. 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 C-Plus federal projects in 2002 (J. C. Marshall, personal communication, July 17, 2010). The items were logically placed into factors based on the expertise of the staff (when instruments originally developed) using data collected through earlier projects (several thousand cases), confirmatory factor analyses were run (J. C. 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 factor analyzed to confirm the scales. 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 (J. C. Marshall, personal communication, July 17, 2010).

Hypotheses

The school culture investigator addressed the following hypotheses:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006 -2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the number of positive behavior referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community, when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #1. There will be a change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #2. There will be a change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #3. There will be a change in the number of positive behavior referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion

recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Alternative hypothesis #4. There will be a change in the number of students, parents and staff who indicated their school had a caring community, when comparing the proportion recorded before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Study District

The study involved students in third through fifth grades in an elementary school in a suburban school district. The study occurred during the 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 school years. For the purposes of confidentiality, the school will be referred to as the elementary school or the school of the study. 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 school of study served an average of 800 students and approximately 80 teachers. The teachers had an average of nine years teaching experience.

The study district is located in a small neighborhood in a county that borders St. Louis, Missouri. Adults 65 years old and older represented 20% of the aging population in the community.

In general, the community is 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 consisted primarily of single family units, nearly 66% of which were constructed prior to 1960. (Lemay Facts & Figures, 2003, para. 2)

Table 1 presents the average teacher salary, average administrator salary, average years of experience, and teachers with a master degree or higher in the school of the study and the average teacher salary, average administrator salary, average years of experience, and teachers with a master degree or higher in the entire district.

Table 1

Faculty Information

Elementary	2006	2007	2008	2009
Average Teacher Salary (Regular)	\$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 w/Master Degree	68.2	68.8	67	100
District				
Average Teacher Salary (Regular)	\$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 w/Master Degree	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 degree or higher was 76% for the school of the study and 60% for the entire district. The average teacher salary was \$48, 096.50 for the school of the study and \$45,146.75 for the entire district. The average administrator salary was \$83,453.33 for the school of the study and \$98,305.50 for the entire district. Table 2 presents the percentage of teachers with regular, temporary or special certificates and the percentage 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 w/ Regular Cert.*	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Teachers w/Temp/Spec Cert.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Teachers w/Sub/Exp/No Cert.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Highly Qual. Teachers **	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<u>District</u>				
Teachers w/ Regular Cert.*	98.30%	99.20%	100.00%	100.00%
Teachers w/Temp/Spec Cert.	1.70%	0.80%	0.0%	0.0%
Teachers w/Sub/Exp/No Cert.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Highly Qual. 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, Professional Class I & II, Continuous Professional (CPC), and Provisional certificates. **Highly Qualified Teacher-Appropriate certification for teaching assignment.

The elementary building had 100% of their classes taught by

highly qualified 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 3 provides the staffing ratio at the elementary and study district. Both the elementary and study district maintained a student-teacher ratio below state and district expectations.

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*
<u>District</u>				
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.

School Improvement

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.

Elementary Demographics

During the three years of this study, the elementary school served an average of 790 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. The students were in third grade in 06-07, fourth grade in 07-08 and fifth grade in 08-09. 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 10 years old in fourth grade in 2007-2008 and 10 to 11 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 dropped and went to another school, and 23 new students added to the fifth grade.

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 serves as an indicator of low wage households in the study district's attendance area. Table 4 illustrates the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch by grade level and as an entire school from 2006-2009.

Table 4

Cohort 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 of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch as a cohort group. There was a 1.1% decrease from the 2006-2009 school year of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch as an elementary. This data serves as an indicator of a consistent percentage of low-income families at the study elementary. Table 5 indicates the percentage of students enrolled in the cohort and the elementary that are Voluntary Transfer Students (VTS). These 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 highest percentage of VTS students enrolled annually was mainly at the kindergarten level. District administrators encouraged kindergarten enrollment so the students would have opportunities to receive highly effective instruction, and participate in academic programs as early as possible to increase their potential for future success in school.

Table 5

Cohort 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 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 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. The percentage of males and females that participated in this study varied from 2006-2009. The percentage of males continued to be higher than the percentage of females in the cohort. The percentage of females was higher than the percentage of males for the entire elementary school for the 2006 – 2007 school year and the 2007 – 2008 school year, but lower during the 2008 – 2009 school year.

Table 6

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%
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

There was a drop in total enrollment of elementary students from the 2007-2008 to the 2008-2009 school year but there was not a significant drop in the number of students in the cohort. There were more males in the cohort but more females in the elementary building during the study.

Table 7 indicates the percentage of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) for the cohort and the elementary during the three years of the study. The cohort enrollment went from 114 students in third grade during the 2006 – 2007 school year to 107 students in fifth grade during the 2008 – 2009 school year. The enrollment for the entire elementary school went from 823 students during the 2006 – 2007 school year to 723 students during the 2008 – 2009 school year. The average percentage of students with LEP dropped to 7.6% for the students in the cohort during the study. The percentage of LEP students for the elementary remained consistent at 9.8%.

Table 7

Cohort 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%
Elementary			
2006-2007	Elementary	823	10.8%
2007-2008	Elementary	822	9.5%
2008-2009	Elementary	723	9.1%

Note: District SIS Data

Table 8 represents the racial and ethnic percentages of the students in the cohort and the elementary during the study.

Table 8

Cohort 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

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 9 presents the percentage of students with IEPs in the cohort and in the elementary building during the study.

Table 9

Cohort 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.

The transient and diverse student population contributed to the limitations in this study. Subject characteristics such as age, reading ability, socioeconomic status, and cultural diversity may have impacted the study. Since the student population was

transient, some of the subjects of the study were not be available for the final part of the study. The students who withdrew or transferred were in the original data collection and the new students were only in the final data collection. 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). The study of implementation of Caring School Community in this elementary school may have also been affected by the variety of teaching styles within the school.

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 students, parents and staff to determine the need for implementation of a character education program. A letter was sent home to parents (Appendix A) explaining the annual surveys and their purpose to assist with planning for continued improvement of the Caring School Community Project within the school.

The evaluation involved observing classroom instruction and lesson plan completion to determine consistent integration of Caring School Community

objectives, teacher engagement, student engagement, instructional climate, DOK levels, instructional strategies, instructional delivery methods and technology usage using Ewalk, and results from the computerized surveys taken by students, parents and staff to determine their sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

The school culture investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine if it promoted a possible change in student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The academic investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine if it promoted a possible change in student achievement. MAP results were used for Communication Arts and Mathematics over the three years of the study. Both investigators examined the results of the classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys to determine if implementation of Caring School Community was successful.

Surveys

In May 2007, the surveys were given to the third, fourth, and fifth grade students during computer classes, because students in kindergarten through second grade would not be able to complete the surveys independently. Parents completed the survey in the computer lab during spring parent-teacher conferences. They were encouraged to complete the surveys by being invited to enter a drawing for the chance to win a family entertainment basket if they completed the survey. Teachers were given access to take the 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 parent survey are: "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 questions 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: “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 administered to staff also. This survey included data determining whether the school was considered a learning community, whether the school is a safe and orderly learning environment, were students supported emotionally and academically; were parents encouraged to become an integral part of the learning community; whether school leaders displayed an understanding of the characteristics of a program to support a character education

program, and whether administrators, staff, and students shared the core values of the school. The school leadership survey included information such as:

District leaders visit the school on a regular basis; school climate data collected from parents, students, staff and community members; staff members analyze and discuss the implications of data collected from parents, staff and students; budget and other resources 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 creating partnerships 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 information about staff collaboration such as:

Teachers collaborate on instructional planning, share ideas, strategies and successes; staff form collaborative teams and engage 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 incorporate 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, & Owens, 2003, para. 10).

Survey questions covering the 10 essentials included:

Specific character traits have been defined for the school or district; students reflect on character traits in the education process; character education is defined in terms of core ethical values; character traits are 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 staff help to 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; and 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 at the beginning of 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

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 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, guided practice and modeling, experiments and laboratory work, 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. During classroom observations (Appendix H), the school culture investigator (elementary principal) focused on observing highly effective instructional strategies such as: advanced and graphic organizers, nonlinguistic representations, problem-based and project-based learning, research generating and testing hypotheses, similarities or differences, summarizing, and note-taking. The school culture investigator (elementary principal) 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 actively engaged, passively engaged, or not engaged. DOK levels were 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 technology), 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 into daily instruction, 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, where the central aim is to help the school become a "caring community of learners." The program focuses 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, homeside activities, and schoolwide activities (Gibbons, 1999).

Each week the teachers facilitated class meetings, cross-age buddy activities were scheduled with buddy classrooms monthly, homeside activities were scheduled quarterly, and schoolwide 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. The good character traits were called Tiger Traits because the school's mascot is a tiger. 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.

The Caring School Community Leadership Team 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. They met two times a week after school to create and organize service learning projects like district and building recycling efforts, fundraising for animal shelters, along with receiving additional character training from the Caring School Community Leadership Team members. The Tiger 20 also had responsibilities that included safety patrol, escorting new students, and visiting adults on building tours, peer tutoring, classroom assistants, and front office helpers.

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 attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals, and student achievement.

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 an action plan to successfully implement 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 action plan.

Caring School Community professional development was planned and scheduled for the teachers for the 2007-2008 school year. “The Caring School 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 staff during teacher orientation. The Caring 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, including every Wednesday right before early release time. Each grade level team was given a kit with the resources necessary for successful implementation of the four components of Caring School Community in every classroom. 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 included giving 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 each classroom to partner with a buddy classroom and each student to 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, homeside 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 homeside 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.

Schoolwide 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 fundraising for animal shelters.

The fourth step required the investigative team to collect, analyze, and evaluate data using various methods. The school culture investigator evaluated student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The academic investigator evaluated student achievement data during implementation of Caring School Community. 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 as follows:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the

implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006 -2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the number of positive behavior referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypotheses #4. There will be no change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community when comparing the proportion recorded before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

In order to determine if there was a change in proportion of 2006-2007 third grade 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.

Table 10

Attendance Analysis

Attendance Year	Grade level	Enrollment	Total
2006-2007	3rd grade	114	95%

2007-2008	4th grade	107	96%
2008-2009	5th grade	107	95%

Note. Retrieved from District School Information System (SIS) Data

In order to determine if there was a change in proportion of 2006-2007 third grade discipline referrals, a z test was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the discipline referrals 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.

Table 11

Discipline Analysis

Discipline Year	Grade Level	Enrollment	Discipline
2006-2007	3rd grade	114	36%
2007-2008	4th grade	107	31%
2008 - 2009	5th grade	107	36%

Note. Retrieved from District Student Information System (SIS) Data

In order to determine if there was a change in proportion of 2006-2007 third grade positive referrals, a z test was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the positive referrals of the third grade students from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009.

Table 12

Positive Referral Analysis

Positive Referrals	Grade level	Enrollment	Positive Ref
2007-2008	4th grade	107	18%
2008-2009	5th grade	107	11%

Note. Retrieved from District Student Information (SIS) Data

Summary

Chapter 3 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 four components of Caring School Community in every classroom. 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. The 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 student, parent, and staff surveys) data provided the investigative team with information to determine the possible change promoted by the implementation of Caring School Community on student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The school culture investigator analyzed student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals and the academic investigator analyzed student achievement 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 4 presents the results obtained with those methods.

Chapter Four- Results

Chapter 4 presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative data. This study evaluated implementation of a character education program, Caring School Community, designed to foster a caring community of learners. 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 the extent to which the implementers were able to carry out the intended activities of the program. The school culture investigator analyzed whether or not the character education program promoted a possible change in student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The academic achievement investigator analyzed whether or not the character education program promoted a possible change in student achievement.

The purpose of Caring School Community was to establish a character education program within this elementary in order to foster a school culture of respect and kindness, where students, parents and staff were treated as valued, contributing members of the school community. The purpose of this study was to conduct a program evaluation of Caring School Community to determine the extent of teacher implementation fidelity and the possible change the program may have promoted in student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals. The research problem was that 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, a character education program, 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. Both the school culture and academic investigators examined the implementation of Caring School Community using two methodologies. First, classroom instruction was observed for student engagement, teacher engagement, the 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 analyzed 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

The school culture investigator addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student attendance?
2. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student discipline referrals?

3. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student positive referrals?
4. Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community?

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?

Hypotheses

The school culture investigator addressed the following hypotheses:

Null hypothesis #1. There will be no change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #2. There will be no change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006 -2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

Null hypothesis #3. There will be no change in the number of positive behavior referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion

recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion following implementation.

Null hypothesis #4. There will be no change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community, when comparing the proportion before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

The academic investigator addressed the following null hypotheses regarding student achievement:

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 academic investigator evaluated the impact of CSC on student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts and Mathematics.

The program evaluation of implementation of Caring School Community consisted of examining and analyzing data that was related to the research questions. The results of classroom observations, student, parent, and staff surveys and student achievement, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals were analyzed to determine if results validated one another. The investigative team analyzed and compared the data prior to and at the conclusion of each of the three years of this study.

Surveys Results

Character Plus created the survey instruments given prior to implementation in May of 2007, and then 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 survey questions the school culture investigator examined included 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. The parent survey questions included whether parents believed the students were respectful and truthful, whether they felt staff treated them with respect, and whether they attended school activities. Staff survey questions included whether they perceived the students as respectful and truthful, whether they felt staff were

supportive of one another, that students helped to make decisions within the school, and whether they felt supported by administration. Student surveys included questions similar to the parent and staff surveys, but also pertaining to school safety and feelings of autonomy, belonging, and competence. The student survey report 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.

Table 13

Survey Results

	May-07	Feb-08	Jun-09
Parent Survey			
Student Belonging	75.23	74.58	76.67
School as a Community	74.83	74.31	77.98
Parent-Staff Relations	85.04	86.05	87.71
Parent Involvement at School	70.06	71.32	69.34
Parent Involvement at Home	94.58	95.83	91.82
Staff Survey			
Student Belonging	51.75	63.47	64.00
School as a Community	51.42	66.94	66.67
Autonomy and Influence	48.06	58.50	60.00
Parent-Staff Relations	80.23	86.73	8.000
Staff Belonging	80.01	86.22	90.71
School Leadership	58.89	57.40	68.61
Student Survey			
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grades 3-5
Student Belonging	58.02	52.44	55.68
School as a Community	64.72	55.00	59.89
Autonomy and Influence	62.75	57.43	61.75
Sense of School Safety	62.26	56.14	58.92
Implementation Survey			
School Climate	57.18	67.04	65.67
Staff Collaboration	70.40	75.92	81.67
Ten Essentials	48.69	63.01	58.83

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

The survey questions examined by the academic investigator included topics concerning school quality, parent involvement at school, parent involvement at home, sense of competence, and the process of implementation. The parent survey questions included whether parents believed their children were learning to read and write, learning to do science and how to do math, whether they talked with teachers about their children's progress in school, set study times at home, go over their child's homework, and set up a place for their child to do homework. The staff survey questioned whether parents talked with teachers about their children's progress in school. The student survey questions included whether students believed they could do school work teachers ask of them, whether parents attended conferences, talked to their teachers about their progress, set study times at home, were interested in what the children were doing at school, discussed their homework with them, and provided a place at home to do homework.

Data from the surveys were evaluated using a 95% confidence interval for each category (ShowMe Character, 2007). The range of scores on the surveys 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 at 63.03 and the lowest category was Autonomy and Influence at 44.37. The scores fall toward the middle which may mean there were a mix of positive and negative perceptions (large standard deviation) or it may have reflected neither strong positive nor strong negative perceptions (small standard deviation) (ShowMe Character, 2007).

Classroom Observations Results

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 teachers were integrating Caring School Community objectives into their daily schedule. The classroom observation data was entered into Ewalk onto a fourth cycle walk through template.

The school culture investigator observed and recorded whether students were engaged in their learning. Student engagement was recorded as high, moderate, low, or disengaged. Teacher engagement was also observed and recorded as actively engaged, passively engaged, or not engaged. 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 in daily lesson plans 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.

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 walkthroughs recorded during the three year study.

Table 14

Fourth Cycle (E-Walk) 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

Table 14 indicates that 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.

Results and Analysis of Data

Research Question #1: Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in student attendance?

Null hypothesis #1: There will be no change in the attendance rate for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing rates before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to those after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in proportion of 2006-2007 third grade attendance, a *z* test for difference in proportion 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 *z* test values of 0.034, 0.024, and -0.309 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected for each case (Table 10). Therefore, there was not a change in attendance for each comparison (Table 15).

Table 15

Attendance

School Years Compared	<i>z</i> test values
compare 2006-2007 to 2007-2008	0.034
compare 2007-2008 to 2008-2009	0.024
compare 2006-2007 to 2008-2009	-0.309

Research Question #2: Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student discipline referrals?

Null hypothesis #2: There will be no change in the number of discipline referrals for 2006-2007 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded before the implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in proportion of 2006-2007 third grade discipline referrals, a z test for difference in proportions was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the discipline referrals 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 (Table 11). The z test values of 0.953, 0.629, and -0.014 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected for each case. Therefore, there was not a significant change in discipline referral rates for each comparison (Table 16).

Table 16

Number of Discipline Referrals

	z test values
compare 2006-2007 to 2007-2008	0.953
compare 2007-2008 to 2008-2009	0.629
compare 2006-2007 to 2008-2009	-0.14

Research Question #3: Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of student positive referrals?

Null hypothesis #3: There will be no change in the number of positive referrals for 2006 third grade students when comparing the proportion recorded after one year of implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in proportion of 2006-2007 third grade 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 2008-2009b (Table 12). The z test value of 1.261 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there was not a significant change in positive referral rates for each comparison (Table 17).

Table 17

Number of Positive Referrals

	z test values
compare 2007-2008 to 2008-2009	1.261

Research Question #4: Does the implementation of Caring School Community promote a change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community?

Null hypothesis #4: There will be no change in the number of students, parents, and staff who indicated their school had a caring community when comparing the proportion recorded before implementation of the Caring School Community Project to the proportion recorded after implementation.

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of May 2007 to June 2009 survey results, a z test for the difference in proportion was run with a 95% confidence interval to compare the May 2007 survey results prior to implementation and the June 2009 survey results two years after implementation. The z test value of 0.307, 0.823, and 0.69 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected for each case (Table 18).

Table 18

Survey Results

Compare May 2007 to June 2009	z test value
Parent Survey	0.307
Staff Survey	0.823
Student Survey	0.69

The academic investigator analyzed data on the impact of the implementation of a character education program and its effect on student achievement as measured by the MAP in Communication Arts and Mathematics.

The cohort group participated in the state MAP Mathematics and Communication Arts assessment during the 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 school years. A chart summarizing the results in MAP Mathematics and Communication Arts is provided in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

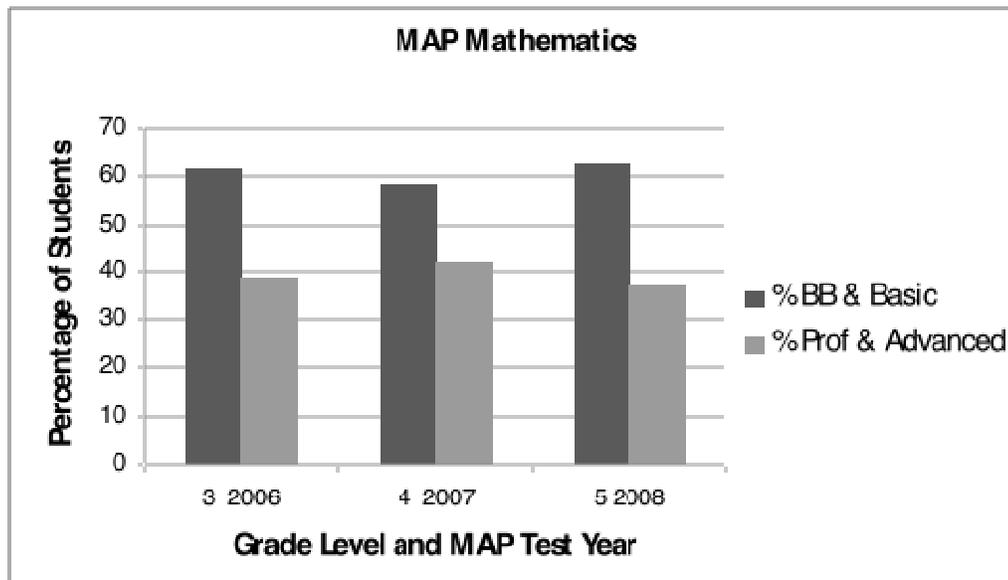


Figure 1. Students' Mathematics MAP scores from their 3rd grade year in 2006 to their 5th grade year in 2008.

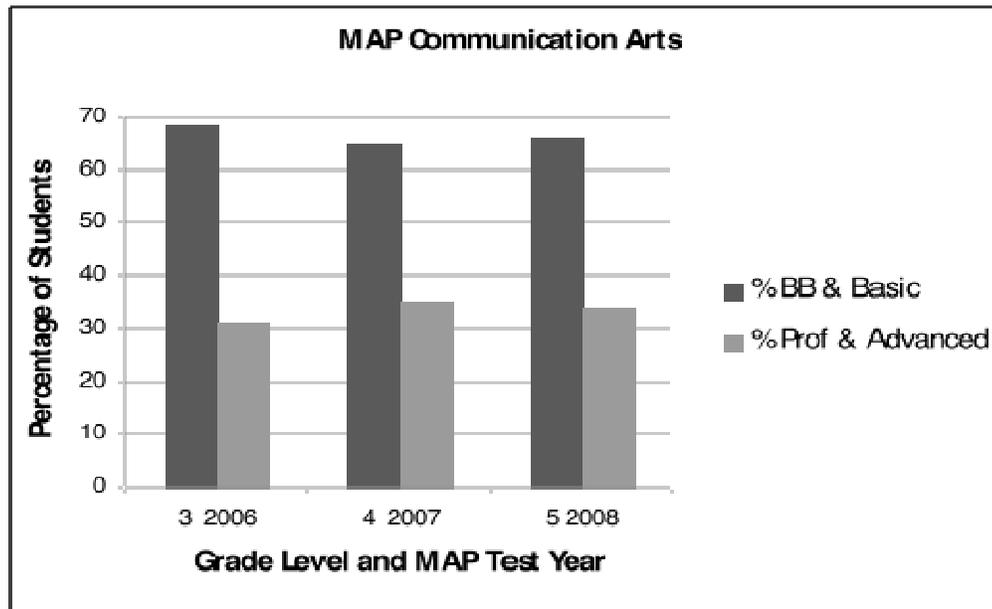


Figure 2. Students' Communication Arts MAP scores from their 3rd grade year in 2006 to their 5th grade year in 2008.

The academic investigator addressed the following research questions:

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. The z test value of 0.549 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected. So, there was not a significant difference in the proportion of students scoring Proficient and Advanced when comparing the year before implementation to the year 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.

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. The z test values of 0.549 and 0.381 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected in each case. So, there was not a significant difference in the proportion of students scoring Proficient and Advanced when comparing the year before implementation to each of the two years following implementation.

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 Missouri Assessment Program 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. The z test value of 0.363 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected. So, there was not a significant difference in the proportion of students scoring Proficient and Advanced when comparing the year before implementation to the year 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.

To determine if there was a change in the proportion of 2008-2009 fifth grade students scoring Proficient and Advanced on the Missouri Assessment Program 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 (Table 5). The z test values of 0.363 and 0.203 fell between the critical values of -1.96 and 1.96 to indicate that the null hypothesis is not rejected in each case. So, there was no a significant difference in proportion of students scoring Proficient and Advanced when comparing the year before implementation to each of the two years following implementation.

Summary

Chapter 4 reported the results of the two methods used in 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 data from classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys along with student achievement data, student attendance, student discipline and positive behavior referrals to determine if they validated each other. 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 5 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 the Caring School Community Program and its 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.

Both the district and the study elementary school expressed concerns that they 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 address these concerns, Caring School Community was implemented as an appropriate option for improvement. 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 school culture investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine if it promoted a change in student attendance, and discipline and positive behavior referrals. The academic investigator examined the results of implementing Caring School Community to determine if it promoted a change in student achievement. 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 of the study teachers conducted class meetings, cross-age activities were scheduled with buddy classrooms monthly, homeside activities were scheduled quarterly, and schoolwide 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 implementation on student attendance, discipline and positive behavior referrals, and student achievement. The fidelity of implementation of Caring School Community was measured using two methods. The two methods were classroom observations and student, parent, and staff surveys. The investigators analyzed the fidelity of implementation of Caring School Community to ensure the results were valid and the study was conducted as intended.

Discussion of the Results

Based on the data gathered from the study district Student Information System, including attendance, discipline, positive behavior referrals, MAP results, classroom observations, and student, parent, and staff surveys, some assumptions were made by the investigative team. There was no statistically significant improvement in student attendance, the number of discipline referrals, and student

achievement on the MAP. These results may have been impacted by the nature of the transient population which changed the students in the cohort during the two year study. In addition, 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 little gains in the percentage of parents perceiving the school as a community, parent/staff relations, and parent involvement in the school. The staff surveys showed gains in the percentage of staff who perceived the school as a community and in their sense of belonging. The student surveys showed a drop in the number of students who perceived the school as a community and in their sense of belonging. 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 attendance, discipline, positive referrals and academic achievement after implementation of Caring School Community.

Research Findings

The results of this study of Caring School Community produced the following important findings: 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. During classroom observations, students and teachers were highly engaged in instruction, the instructional climate was conducive to learning and teachers had completed lesson plans in advance of instruction.

However, parent survey data were analyzed to reveal that there was only a 1.44% increase in the number of parents who felt the school was a community, a 2.67% increase in the number of parents who thought parent/staff relations had improved, and a .72% decrease in the number of parents involved at the school. According to student surveys, there was a 2.34% decrease in the number of students who felt they belonged, a 4.83% decrease in the number of students who felt the school was a community, and a 1.00% decrease in the number of students who felt they were included in decision making. Staff surveys showed a 15.25% increase in the number of teachers who felt the school was a community, an 11.94% increase in the number of staff who felt they were included in decision making, and a 10.70% increase in the number of staff who felt they belonged. 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. The implementation survey indicated an 8.49% increase in the number of staff who felt they had a positive school climate, 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.

A third set of data regarding attendance revealed that these indicators remained at 95% with no increase, discipline referrals remained at 36% with no decrease, and positive referrals dropped 7% during the study. 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 Communication Arts achievement scores on the MAP showed an increase in the top two achievement levels (Advanced and Proficient) from 31% to 34%.

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 buy-in and promote more effective implementation while meeting the school improvement goal of becoming a school of character. Providing more instructional opportunities for students to make ethical decisions, demonstrate 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.

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 homeside activities quarterly and schoolwide activities involved the community members two times throughout the school year.

The investigative team considered the many pros and cons of implementing a character education program in their school. First they reviewed student, parent, and staff surveys to determine the need for a character education program within their school. Second, the investigative team conferred with teachers concerning the goal to become a school and district of character. Professional development was provided for teachers to assist with successful implementation of Caring School Community in all classrooms. Third and finally, classroom observations were focused on the integration of character education as well as student and teacher engagement and the instructional climate. Haynes and Thomas determined, “As Americans examine the moral standards of our society and the quality of our nation’s education system, they are increasingly looking to schools and communities to help develop good character in our young people” (2007, p. 162).

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)

It was the investigative team's goal that Caring School Community would eventually be implemented at the district level so that more students would be exposed to character education.

Reviewing the literature, the investigative team also learned more about the different types of character education programs.

There is no one set method for implementing a character education program in a school. Some schools provide it through civics and social studies courses that emphasize citizenry. Others identify a set of basic character traits such as justice, fairness, and honesty and promote these. Some infuse character education into all aspects of curricular and extracurricular activities. Some schools develop their own materials; others obtain them from other districts or curriculum companies. Most successful character education efforts are school wide and employ a combination of strategies, including community service opportunities (service learning) in addition to classroom activities. (Florida Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1998, p. 3)

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' home and developing a common language and expectations between home and school to create a cohesive program. Caring School Community is a character education program that focuses on strengthening students' connectedness to school and creates a caring learning environment that fosters academic and social/ethical learning and parental involvement.

Review of the literature that related to the pros and cons of character education, the investigative team learned that intentionally teaching good character is particularly important in today's society since our youth face many opportunities and dangers unknown to earlier generations. Haynes and Thomas stated, "Since children spend about 900 hours a year in school so it is therefore 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). Schools must accept the responsibility for integrating character into daily instruction and establishing positive partnerships with parents to extend student learning at home. "Developing good character is first and foremost a parental responsibility, but the task must be shared with schools and the community" (Haynes & Thomas, 2007 p. 160). 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.

In reviewing the literature, the theories of character explained that 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 character education as just acting appropriately to others. However, Davidson and Lickona stated, "Character education has two critical parts: performance character and moral character" (2007, p. 26). They defined moral as integrity, justice, caring, respect, and cooperation. We want 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).

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 success of implementation of Caring School Community and its projected impact on student attendance, discipline and positive behavior referrals, and academic achievement. 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. 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.

Implications of the Findings

The literature strongly supported the implementation of Caring School Community, a character education program. Beatty, Dachinowicz, and Schwartz (2006) noted that character education is a road map to building a caring school culture, a safer and more nurturing environment, a more responsible and responsive student body, all of which lay the foundation for improving academic performance. The investigative team determined that at the study elementary, every child would be exposed to character education on a consistent basis. Based on analysis of the data, student attendance, discipline, and academic achievement on the MAP

Communication Arts and Mathematics, scores did not improve and positive behavior referrals dropped. The investigative team recommended revisiting the study elementary school's core values (character traits) of the school, community, and district and integrating them into all aspects of the school and 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 on-going 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 the elementary or anywhere 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.

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. Even though negative feedback was received, many positive outcomes were also noted that convinced the

Caring School Community Leadership Team to continue their efforts at integrating Caring School Community during the next school year.

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 that included resource materials, examples of lessons, and a timeline for conducting class meetings, cross-age buddy activities, homeside activities, and schoolwide activities, 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. 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, 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 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. While the students are engaged in the different activities, teachers are monitoring their progress while reinforcing and providing ongoing recognition.

The fourth recommendation is to include parents in the process of implementing Caring School Community. 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 fifth and 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 buy in 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. Collaboration also helped to support school efforts to build a professional learning community where the focus was on student achievement. Leadership played an important role in the implementation of Caring School Community. Student success in school does depend 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.

Harding teachers learned that rich materials matter and kids and teachers can talk conflict out. Teamwork pays off and high expectations foster high-level thinking. Differences can be embraced when teachers and students open up. All kids can succeed and students should be encouraged to read during lunch time. (Adams, 2007, p. 28-30)

She also stated that their teachers began combining lessons on reading with character, every class focused on the same themes-friendship, democracy and individual perspective. She then shared that as a result of implementing character education in their school, reading scores climbed and the school moved from a state warning list to above average.

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/she conducts classroom walk throughs and provides feedback to staff.

Third, the investigators recommended 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 very apparent since it was part of 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.

Recommendations for Future Research

The investigators suggested four 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 the school did not have 100% buy in at the end of the study. Second, 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. 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 Caring School Community most effective, ongoing communication is necessary. The leadership team still consists of the original staff members from implementation two years ago. The fourth and final 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.

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 very 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 social and academic 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. Despite the discouraging results of this study, with more time Caring School Community could positively affect the performance and moral development of

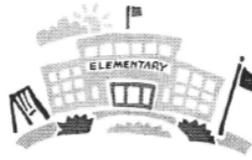
children at this elementary school. When students feel safe to speak in class and take on academic challenges and when they have peers and a caring teacher they can turn to for support, they are more likely to adopt school norms, follow rules and apply effort in the classes. When character education is highly regarded by educators and is implemented effectively, positive results will be seen in the school culture and academic achievement of students.

Appendix A

Parent/Guardian Letter

Hancock Place Elementary

9101 South Broadway
St. Louis, MO 63125



Debra Kyle
Principal

Michael Dittrich
Asst. Principal

Kevin Grawer
Asst. Principal

Jerry Langsdorf
Asst. Principal

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 and 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 Homeside 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/positive referrals.

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

Sincerely,

Debra Kyle
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 Hancock Elementary is collecting data to determine its effect on student achievement, attendance, and the number of discipline/positive referrals.

Parent/Guardian Names—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: ① Elementary
② Middle School
③ 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 cleanly any marks you wish to change.

CORRECT: **INCORRECT:**

Comments

Appendix C
Staff Survey

ShowMe Character Staff Survey

Blank Bubble Form by Pearson NCS 30255001-1 054021 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



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 Tolley® Form by Pearson NCE MM258926 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	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.

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 Selfish forms by Pearson PDS MM250024-1 154321 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

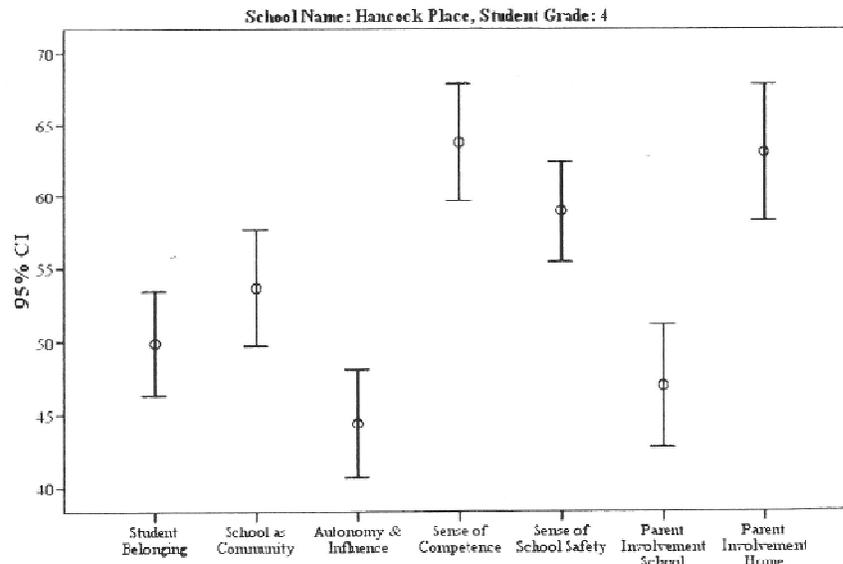
Student Survey Descriptive Statistics

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

Debra A. Kyle currently serves as a Communication Arts educator at Hancock Place Middle School in St. Louis, Missouri. Her 11 years in the field of education have afforded many opportunities to impact student achievement. Career experiences have included serving as a parent educator, teaching fifth grade and kindergarten, curriculum coordinator/assistant principal and elementary principal. In addition, Debra has served over 20 years as a dental hygienist. Her areas of interest include curriculum, instruction, character education, and parent involvement.

Educational studies have resulted in a Master degree from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri and a Master of Arts Degree in Educational Administration (2003). In 1999, Debra completed a Bachelor of Science in Education from Central Methodist University in Fayette, Missouri. She currently holds teaching certification in Early Childhood (PreK-3) and Elementary Education (1-6). In her spare time, Debra likes to read fiction novels, walk, sing, go to the movie theatre, attend church, and spend time with her family.