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Teacher perception of character education

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TEACHER PERCEPTION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family, with special recognition to Brian, Erik, and Alecia, for

whom without your support and patience this would not have been possible. This journey

could only have been possible with you by my side. Thank you so much!

Abstract

This study explores teachers' understanding of character education, their perceived role in curriculum development, implementation effectiveness, and their teaching practices. This two-part investigation surveys teachers from two schools, followed by an interview process with six of those participants. The school staffs of one elementary school and one elementary-junior-high school were surveyed to provide a general overview of teacher understanding of expectations, their knowledge of character traits identified in the curriculum goals of their Board of Education, and opinions about how their current teaching practice addresses the development of character. The interview data provided in-depth information about teacher interpretation of character by their Western Canadian urban Public Board, details about their current teaching practices, including techniques and strategies incorporated, and their feelings about how character education should be taught in the school. The research revealed that teachers were generally unaware of the board's curriculum expectations of the 11 character traits to be taught in school. There were mixed responses about who was responsible for teaching character: Some felt the responsibility was on the parents, while others felt it should be all adults. The study found that teachers were, in fact, currently teaching and assessing students on many of the traits identified as being significant as part of the hidden, lived curriculum.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my mentors in this journey. Dr. Fowler, Dr. Aitken, and Dr. Bedard, your leadership and knowledge have been an inspiration. You have challenged us to reflect on our beliefs and defend those same beliefs both from a philosophical as well as an educational perspective.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Character education: is it hidden curriculum? In society we expect people to act and follow social norms. There is an assumption on the part of observers that everyone should be aware what the rules are and abide by them. Often we do not think about who, where, and when this learning should have taken place but are quick to judge when we observe character traits not in keeping to societal expectations.

Over the years, schools have been given more roles that were once thought to be parenting responsibilities such as human sexuality, and Career and Life Management skills (C.A.L.M. course). Classroom teachers have taken on responsibilities of delivery of curriculum, counselors, nurses, social workers, managers, and leaders. Some would argue that character development is the responsibility of the parents and schools should not play a role. Others would argue that families today are more complex with extended, blended families, teen pregnancy, and single parenting, parents today are dealing with more of their own problems. According to Statistics Canada (2006), in the urban area of this study, of the 295,345 families: 132,670 families are married couples with an average of 1.1 children; common-law families are reported at 11,235 with an average number of 0.5 children; and single parent families total 42,220 with 1.5 children. Due to the variety and increased pressures on family, children have less support at home and miss out on some valuable life skills. So, if teaching is not occurring at home, school is the natural place, as this is where children spend 5.5 hours for 182 days a year. Now the question becomes: whose values are we teaching, and how do we teach character attributes to our young people?

Alberta's *Commission on Learning* has made a number of recommendations to improve the quality of education in Alberta. Among those is the development of character and citizenship within our students. The belief is:

> schools play an important role, along with parents and community members, in modeling and reinforcing essential values and preparing students to be productive and contributing citizens. In partnership with parents and communities, we expect schools to reinforce certain values in every child. (Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 53)

The Commission goes on to identify 10 character traits: (a) respect, (b) responsibility, (c) honesty, (d) empathy, (e) fairness, (f) perseverance, (g) initiative, (h) courage, (i) integrity, and (j) optimism. It is the expectation that school boards reinforce and model these values to students.

Background

As an assistant principal in a dual campus situation within a large urban board, hereafter referred to as the Board, I am assigned to two schools, one a small elementary school, School A (65 students), the other School B Elementary/Junior High School with 600 students. The schools are within five blocks of one another. I work mainly out of School A, spending a day a week at School B. I am required to attend weekly staff and school learning team meetings at both locations. At School A, I set the agenda and chair the weekly meetings. I do not have a teaching role in the classroom at this time but am working with the special needs students providing resource support at School A. At School B, I oversee the Individual Program Plans of all of the identified students. These are students who have been assessed by a psychologist or doctor and meet the criteria set by Alberta Education as "special needs" and requiring differentiated programming to

meet their learning needs. My role also includes supporting teachers in the development and implementation of differentiated instruction to meet the learning needs of the students.

We were looking at implementing a school wide character education program at both locations, with one of the objectives being that of meeting the Board's mandated goal on character. The statement reads, "Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others." (Board of Education, Three Year Education Plan 2006-2009, p. 1). I felt that being in two schools which would be implementing a program aimed at character education, I would be able to interview staff members to get their perceptions of what character education looks like and how they develop these qualities within their students. Neither school had been actively focused on building character directly, but had done so through activities and classroom expectations. A goal of the Board is to focus on character development and possible implementation of a character education program. This would require teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and the difference they may or may not be making for the character education of students.

The Board is able to collect quantitative data to assess Character by analyzing Provincial Achievement Test results, Accountability Pillar Survey data, schools' vision and mission statements, trends in community population, an annual survey of school based performance measures (service contributions, community projects, decreased bullying, fewer misconduct forms, and formal character development programs), report card descriptors, and high school exit survey data.

Impetus for Study

Britzman (2005) contends the development of consensual ethical values, while still respecting individual values, is essential for a healthy school environment. In accordance with Alberta Learning (2003), the Board has set character education as one of its goals which schools are expected to incorporate, demonstrate and report growth on an annual basis. The Board has identified the following as characteristics each student will demonstrate: (a) integrity, (b) compassion, (c) decency, (d) civility, (e) fairness, (f) courage, (g) initiative, (h) perseverance, (i) respect, (j) optimism, and (k) responsibility. I was aware that the Board had 5 End Statements; the Mega End, Academic Achievement, Citizenship, Personal Development, and Character. However, in regards to the Character End statements, until I began this thesis process I was unaware that the Board had also provided a list of characteristics they deemed important. I have not been on a staff where this information has been shared and yet it is a goal we are to be working towards, as a school system, with our students on a daily basis.

I have often questioned and wondered whose beliefs and values we as educators are to follow. On one hand, we are told that we cannot influence our students with our values and beliefs. For example, as a public school teacher, I do not have the right to teach my students about Christianity. However, simply by expecting students to display certain character traits in our classrooms we are teaching them our values. I was curious to find out how my colleagues in the public system understood and interpreted their role, and their level of responsibility in developing character with our students. I have been a member of a number of staffs, in different divisions, but have not been involved in a staff discussion regarding which character traits are important and how they should or should

not be taught. I believe that this has been the case for a number of reasons. The first is time. We are given three days at the beginning of the school year to meet and prepare our classrooms. This seems like a lot of time; however, it is never enough. Staffs at schools do have to prepare a School Development Plan each year, depending on the focus and leadership within the school; this could be a forum for a values discussion. Many schools today focus on academic achievement, literacy, and technology. Mission and vision conversations at the school level tend to be a confirmation of existing statements; thus we do not engage in the discussion of character traits. It is my belief that we as teachers are currently teaching students values and morals based on what we deem to be important character traits. I believe that most teachers are unaware of the character traits the Board has identified and deem essential.

I am of the opinion that character education should be integrated into all curricular areas and is not intended to be subject specific. As a teacher I am constantly capitalizing on opportunities to teach character skills in those "teachable moments". These moments occur out in the hallway, on the playground, during lunch and regularly in the classroom during the teaching of lessons, class discussions, and even during independent work time. Students need to be taught and shown positive role modeling to act morally and make decisions that are right for others and themselves; to do this effectively I do not believe we can isolate the teaching to a specific class time, lesson or program. I think that confusion occurs for students when they are shown and taught competing values by teachers, parents, and their community. McArthur (2002) and Berkowitz and Bier (2005) comment on the need for social skills to be taught so students learn what the social expectations are. Decisions regarding what skills to teach are critical

and need to be decided upon by teachers, parents and administrators. The researchers feel parents have the biggest influence into the development of character and therefore must have a voice in which skills and traits are taught.

According to Alberta Education, in today's schools there is an expectation that teachers teach and prepare the whole student to be an independent contributing member of society. Our mandate is not only the academic curriculum, but also the social and emotional needs of the student.

My research addresses this through my central thesis question: What are teachers' perceptions of character education?

Subquestions of interest:

1. What knowledge do teachers have of the Board's Ends Statements focused on character development?

2. Were teachers aware of the identified character traits as outlined by the Board?

3. How great a role should teachers play in the development of character?

4. How great of a role do teachers play in the development of character?

5. What role does character education play in teaching in the school?

6. What role does character education play in teaching in the classroom?

7. Is a formal character development program necessary to teach these skills?

Implications

The results of this research project may bring about awareness by teachers and administration of the importance of dialogue at the school level to develop a plan of best practices needed to ensure that all staff is actively involved in character development.

The benefits of this study could include: (a) important conversations amongst teachers about character development; (b) learning about curriculum directives as defined by the Board; (c) extending teaching of character development; (d) more involvement by teachers in character development; (e) commitment to teach character development; (f) students benefiting from learning about character development; (g) reaping the benefits in teaching by working with students who are respectful and honest; (h) overall improved school achievement and atmosphere; and (i) an increased involvement to school environment by students thus causing a ripple effect into the community and society.

Teachers' perceptions are central to the successful implementation of character development and character education in our schools and classrooms. The interpretation of this data can inform leaders of the challenges or issues concerning the delivery of a character education program. It can also enlighten leaders and teachers of the successes that are occurring in the area of character development. Because teachers are on the front line they are best able to communicate and inform how character development is progressing. By collaborating with staff, leaders can make informed decisions based on their responses. Professional development opportunities can also be guided by the information received from teachers.

The Board has completed a detailed report on the intent, implementation, and progress of Character. The Board requires annual reporting on the incremental progress through the analysis of data collected relating to: (a) participation of students in character development programs and activities; (b) perceptions of students, parents and teachers; (c) discipline reports; and (d) new initiatives-case studies, report card descriptors, High

School Exit Survey. The Superintendent has also prepared what he defines as a "reasonable interpretation" of the 11 character traits students will demonstrate.

In January 2007, the Board initially did an in-depth inventory of schools and the Character Development Programs and activities schools were currently implementing to meet the Ends Statement. The report also recognized that even though schools were participating in character development programs this did not guarantee that students were developing the character traits as outlined in the Board's report on Character, but by participating they were practicing and modeling some of the habits for good character development. The report presented in June 2007 found that there was an increase in the number of elementary and junior high schools offering a prescribed character education program. There was increase noted in the participation in programs such as *Roots of Empathy, Conflict Resolution, Safe and Caring Schools, Virtues Program* and Peer Tutoring and Reading. High schools addressed character development through courses such as Career and Life Management (CALM) and activities to promote school culture.

Evaluation of character is also measured using the Alberta Education Accountability Survey. In the survey, four of the measures are relevant to the development of character. They include responses to the statements: "(a) students are safe at school, are learning the importance of caring for others, are learning respect for others and are treated fairly in school; (b) students respect each other; (c) students treat each other well; (d) students feel safe at school" (Board of Education, 2007). Based on the perception of parents, students and teachers all measures stayed the same or indicated improvement from the previous year 2004-2005.

In the school year 2008-2009, the Board piloted with select elementary and middle/junior high schools, the use of report card descriptors addressing three of the identified Ends Statements; Citizenship, Personal Development and Character. For character, teachers are required to comment on the following: (a) takes initiative for his/her own learning; (b) treats others with respect and compassion; and (c) takes responsibility for his/her actions.

The High School Exit Survey provides data about the student's perceptions of character development by responding to the following: (a) ability as listeners; (b) caring for others; (c) respect for others; (d) initiative to complete tasks; and (e) responsibility for their actions. The Board has made efforts through these reporting methods to ensure students are receiving character education along with academic instruction.

Research Questions

In this study, a mixed method approach employing a triangulation design (Creswell, 2005) incorporates data collected in quantitative and qualitative forms. Teachers were asked to voluntarily participate in a survey and interview process. Survey and interview questions have been attached in Appendices A through D. My interview questions which were intended to elicit elaborated responses and gain in-depth perception of character development included:

1. The Board has given us a statement, "Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others." As a teacher, what does this statement mean to you?

2. From the list of characteristics (a) integrity, (b) compassion, (c) decency, (d) civility, (e) fairness, (f) courage, (g) initiative, (h) perseverance, (i) respect, (j) optimism, and (k) responsibility; which of these characteristics are you currently teaching? Why or why not?

3. Are any of these characteristics difficult to teach? What strategies and techniques might you use to teach them to your students?

4. Please identify which characteristics you teach and describe what activities, resources, or methods you use to teach these characteristics to your students?

5. What forms of assessment do you have in place to evaluate the character education learning?

6. Please talk about how character development is implemented in your school and your involvement in the implementation?

7. What challenges do you face in teaching character education?

8. What impact, if any do you think teaching character education has on student achievement or the school environment? How do you know?

9. What can you tell me about formal character development programs which teach these skills? For example, *Lion's Quest, Safe and Caring Schools.*

Definition of Character Education Terms

Based on the central question: What are teachers' perceptions of character education? The following definitions apply:

Teachers' perception – is the understanding and interpretation of a teacher.

Character education – is anything that school might try to provide outside of academics,

especially when the purpose is to help children grow into good

people (Kohn, 1997).

Board - board of education for a western Canadian urban public board.

Circles of Courage - character education program model based on the Native American

approach to life comprised of four core values; belonging, mastery,

independence, generosity (Alberta Education, 2005).

Lions Quest - character education program designed to teach life and citizenship skills

promoting and reinforcing positive social behaviours (Alberta Education,

2005).

Based on the Board's reasonable interpretation, see Table 1 (Character Descriptors-

Attachment I: Report to the Board of Trustees, February 7, 2006).

Table 1

Board's Reasonable Interpretation of Character Descriptors

Character	Descriptor
Integrity	To behave in an ethical and honourable manner, even when no one else is around. A person's actions consistently match their words. Doing what you say you are going to do is consistent with the values of a democratic society.
Compassion	Respecting the feelings of others, seeking to understand what others are thinking, to appreciate their perspective, listen and consider others' views, even if we do not agree. Act with kindness. Sympathetic to others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.
Decency	Value others, treat people with dignity, celebrating diversity.
Civility	Acting in polite, courteous and caring ways. Treating people with dignity and consideration.
Fairness	Sensitivity to the needs of individuals. Include others and value their uniqueness. Celebrate diversity. Treating people with dignity and consideration. Gathering as much information as possible in order to make a decision that is just.
Courage	Faces challenges directly. Speaks up for oneself and others, even when unpopular. Asks for help when necessary. Recognizes risks and dangers. Doesn't take unwise chances to please others.
Initiative	Eager to do what needs to be done without being prompted by others. Sees opportunities and is willing to take the steps necessary to achieve

Character	Descriptor
	the goals.
Perseverance	Finish what is started, even when it is difficult. Do not give up when faced with obstacles and challenges. Complete all tasks and assignments to the best of one's ability.
Respect	Polite, courteous and caring. Value for self and others. Treat all people with dignity, and uphold their rights. Protect property and the environment.
Optimism	Positive attitude. View challenges as opportunities. Think, speak and act to make the world a better place. Have hope.
Responsibility	Responsible for thoughts, words and actions. Accountable for choices, admitting mistakes, and working to correct them. Can be counted on to honour commitments. Demonstrate active citizenship.

In this chapter, I have introduced myself and my research topic of character education. I was curious to gain an insight into what teachers' perception of character education, what their knowledge of the Board's expectation, and what character development looks like in their school. Teachers were asked to participate by completing an electronic survey and some were interviewed.

The following chapter delves into the literature surrounding character education by first looking at research on moral development, formal character education programs, perceptions held by stakeholders, effectiveness of character education, and methodology. Chapter three provides a detailed description of the qualitative and quantitative research methods used to conduct this study. Chapter four is a summary of the data collected through the surveys and interviews. The qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed in chapter five with a discussion of the implications of the study and suggestions for further research in chapter six.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Over the years there have been a number of articles and research studies

published on the topic of character education. This is an area of development which is

gaining a lot of attention, once again, in light of all the perceived issues faced within

society today. Some of the concerns today include dual income families, breakup of the

family, variance in family configuration, teen pregnancy, increase in gang activity, and

drug use. According to some researchers (Evans, 2006; Covell & Howe, 2001) character

development is a societal problem in which we all need to play a role for the younger

generation.

Research on the Stages of Moral Development

W.C. Crain (1985) identifies and describes Kohlberg's six stages of moral

development. In 1958, Kohlberg interviewed 72 boys, ages 10, 13, and 16, from lower

and middle class families from Chicago. In his research, he presented scenarios to the

boys of various moral dilemmas. The boys were then asked to respond to the scenario by

identifying agreement or disagreement of the resolution. Kohlberg's interest was in the

reasoning behind their response--not the "yes" or "no" decision.

Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are: (a) Stage 1: Obedience and

punishment orientation. Children feel that they must follow the rules set without question

and failure to comply would result in punishment; (b) Stage 2: Individualism and

exchange. Children realize that there is not one correct viewpoint, but individuals are free

to pursue their own personal interest; (c) Stage 3: Good interpersonal relationships.

Generally children in their teens reach this stage. At this stage, children believe that

everyone should put their faith and values in family and community, and therefore act

accordingly. This includes demonstrating concern for others, love, trust, and empathy; (d)

Stage 4: Maintaining the social order. Children become more concerned about respecting authority, obeying laws, and acting in accordance to maintain social order; (e) Stage 5: Social contact and individual rights. Individuals begin to question what makes a good society, recognize different social groups, focus on rights, and the democratic process; (f) Stage 6: Universal principles. Stage 6 emphasizes how to achieve fair and equal justice, respecting the rights of all individuals. Kohlberg believes that as children engage in independent thinking they begin to move through the stages of moral development.

In his book, Griffin (1991) summarizes Gilligan's findings from her 1982 study on moral development. Gilligan, a former student of Kohlberg, felt that the research conducted by Kohlberg in 1958 did not accurately reflect females' moral development. Her belief is that females do develop morally through the same stages as males but do so differently. She asserts females act under an ethic of care, as opposed to Kohlberg's development theory based on ethic of justice. Gilligan notes that what distinguishes the two is the quality and quantity of relationships. When making decisions, females often consider the feelings of others and the impact their decisions may have on others. She felt that ethic of justice was impersonal whereas the ethic of care demonstrated connectedness. When asked to describe themselves, women tended to use vocabulary which was relationship based, using words such as mother, daughter, friend, and wife. Women tended to be more concerned about keeping groups together and ensuring no one was isolated. In comparison, men tended to speak in terms of "I", their accomplishments as a solitary journey, and being considered different or isolated from others was acceptable. Gilligan recognized that both sexes were capable of dealing with moral judgments from an ethic of justice or care depending on their self image.

Character Education Programs

Every school, within the school board that I work, received a book entitled "The Heart of the Matter" (Alberta Education, 2005), a resource which outlines available programs for teaching character education and citizenship. *Lions Quest* Canada is one of many recognized programs. *Lions Quest* has been developed for three distinct age groups: Kindergarten to Grade 5, Grades 6 to 8, and Grades 9 to 12. The Kindergarten to Grade 5 program focuses on "responsibility, good judgment, self-discipline and respect for others" (p. 155). The Grade 6 to 8 program has as its focus "establishing a supportive partnership with parents, the school and the community" (p. 155). For the Grade 9 to 12 students the focus is on getting students to "take an active and meaningful role in dealing with issues that affect their lives" (p. 156).

Another program, by Dr. M. Borba, for developing character education is *Moral Intelligence* (Alberta Education, 2005). She states that "moral intelligence consists of seven essential virtues including: empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness" (p. 157). Borba believes that the teaching of character traits can be interwoven into learning activities throughout the day and in all subject areas. *Moral Intelligence* is based on teaching character traits by following these five steps; "(1) accentuate a character trait; (2) tell the value and meaning of the trait; (3) teach what the trait looks and sounds like; (4) provide opportunities to practice the trait; and (5) provide effective feedback" (p. 157).

The *Circles of Courage* program developed by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, is inspired by the Native American philosophy of life (Alberta Education,

2005). It is comprised of four core values; (a) belonging; (b) mastery – developing competence; (c) independence; and (d) generosity. The belief is individuals are at risk emotionally and behaviourally if all core values are not strong. With this model schools can create environments in which there is a "sense of belonging by listening to, interacting with and respecting youth" (p. 144).

Perceptions

Wood & Roach (1999) researched the perception administrators had about character education in South Dakota. They note that as far back as 1913, character education has been a topic of discussion. In 1918 the National Education Association's "Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" (cited in Wood & Roach) identified Ethical Character as one of its principles. The 1930's brought about the education of students with life skills, and in the 1950's saw a shift to academic education. According to Wood & Roach (1999), we once again have a need to focus on character education. Two hundred administrators were randomly selected and asked to complete a questionnaire, 60% responded. Administrators were asked to comment on the following; (a) school policy, (b) character education in the curriculum, (c) perceived parent and teacher support, (d) importance of selected values, (e) positive and negative aspects of teaching, and opportunities to comment on character education as well list any other values deemed important. The study found that 99% of administrators agreed that character education was important and should be part of the curriculum; however, most did not have a school policy. The administrators felt that parents and teachers supported the program, but with only 50% of teachers having any formal training. The study presented some recommendations to meet current needs: (a) adequate training for

teachers and parents, (b) efforts to develop knowledge base through workshops, in-services, (c) discussion of need for school policy, (d) further debate on the positive and negative aspects of character education, and (e) additional research into practice.

In his research, Romanowski (2003) interviewed 144 high school students to determine their perspectives of need for character education, program effectiveness, resistance, issues and concerns, and feedback on program implementation. He found that high school students felt that character education was important but "they questioned the need for it in their own lives and the appropriateness of teaching character at the high school level" (p.7). Students believed it should be taught at the elementary level; by high school it was too late because they already knew it and were set in their ways. The students felt the lessons were too simplistic and therefore most dismissed character education programs. In the school studied, posters were placed around the building to remind students of the character traits; according to the research they went unread. However, if teachers used posters as teaching tools they had more impact. According to the students, some teachers were resistant to the program. The times that were set aside for teaching character education were used as free time or study hall. By not using the time allocated and not validating the program, teachers gave students more reason to reject character education programs. Romanowski found both teachers and students believed that character education could not be taught in isolation and was more effective when integrated into all curricular areas. Students, in this study, felt that if teachers taught character education by analyzing television shows and movies, such as *The Simpsons* and *Mulan*; bringing in guest speakers; and class discussions, the topic would be more relevant, as this was something they could relate to, as well as making it more interesting.

Character education is becoming more prevalent in schools as society is recognizing a lack of respect and acceptance of responsibility, along with personal safety being threatened, according to Henson (2001). He also found that parents and teachers were united but their roles were disjointed in the development of character. Through the examination of journal entries of preservice teachers, researchers found four schools of thought. The first group believed "teachers were moral leaders, moralizing agents, and people who should take responsibility for their students' developing belief systems" (p. 50). The second group were of the opinion moral development had been defaulted to teachers due to the absence of good parenting. A third group thought teachers were responsible, but subtly, through role modeling rather than direct teaching. The fourth group believed that due to the amount of time students spent at school teachers had to be responsible for the development of character and value systems.

Effectiveness

Researchers, Covell and Howe (2001), found that children are not receiving socialization skills from home, thus putting the onus on schools to teach students values and moral education. Covell and Howe found that children who were taught about their rights felt respected and worthy and were more apt to show respect towards others and feel supported by their peers and teachers. The study found that females demonstrated more support towards the rights of others than their male counterparts. The study also found that gaining knowledge about rights improved students' behaviour because of the improved understanding. The researchers recognized that not all teachers or schools would be comfortable teaching students about their rights, especially if there is a culture of authoritarianism. Covell and Howe's study was completed in a working-class

neighbourhood; family stability was evident and behaviour measures were not assessed. They caution that implementing children's rights curriculum in all schools may not have the same positive results as this study.

In his study, Evans (2006) researched specialist secondary teachers in Ontario and England to discover what learning goals teachers preferred, pedagogical practices, and how and why teachers support educating for citizenship. Citizenship education in the curriculum in Ontario was largely responsibilities and rights based. In England, according to the Citizenship Order, learning outcomes were based on three broad dimensions: "knowledge and understanding, developing skills of enquiry and communication, and developing skills of participation and responsible action" (p. 415). He found an incongruity between teacher rhetoric and practice; and noted that citizenship education, even though written in policy, was missing from daily professional practice. He notes teachers defined citizenship education in various ways, reflecting personal beliefs and practices. In the classroom there were some differences noted between the Canadian and English teachers. Canadian teachers emphasized social development through cooperative learning structures in contrast to their English counterparts who took a more academic emphasis by focusing on student thinking skills. English teachers were also found to be less likely to accept input from students regarding classroom expectations and seating arrangements, and "stressed the importance of teacher direction and authority" (p. 420). To explain the incongruity between what teachers say and do, he speculates, "One possible explanation is that the breadth of learning goals is so broad that teachers simply make choices to cover certain elements of the curriculum in ways that are workable for the day-to-day classroom realities" (p. 428).

Winton (2007) defines character education as "the explicit attempt by schools to teach values to students" (Introduction section, ¶ 1). Her research examines the York Region District School Board policy on character development and focused on whether character education supports citizenship education. There is debate as to the purpose of citizenship education. "Should it enable students to fit into society or prepare them to change it? Should citizenship education emphasize social cohesion, students' personal characteristics, or the methods of academic discipline?" (Purposes of Citizenship Education, ¶ 1). The York Region District School Board developed a character development policy in 2003 entitled "Character Matters!". Character Matters! identifies "ten character attributes: respect, responsibility, honest, empathy, fairness, initiative, perseverance, courage, integrity, and optimism" (Character Matters!, ¶ 3). The policy makes the assumption character can be taught. Through the examination of one hundred and eighty one documents, Winston concluded that Character Matters! assumes students do not possess character and without adults they would not develop it. She felt that students were expected to learn and live by the attributes, but not question their merits. Winston concludes by stating "Character Matters! does support citizenship education, but importantly, it supports undemocratic social cohesion and social initiation models of citizenship education rather than a social reformation model" (Conclusions, ¶ 9). She recommends that before embarking on character education programs which prepare students to change society, we need to identify the purpose and kind of program prior to implementation.

Methodology

Research design takes two main forms: qualitative and quantitative studies. A combination of these two methods is a mixed method research design. Creswell (2005) defines it "is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem" (p. 510). Mixed method research can be used when one requires the strengths of quantitative and qualitative data to gather information on a topic, when wanting to integrate qualitative data into a quantitative study, and when using qualitative data to obtain detailed information gathered in a quantitative format. Creswell (2005) elaborates on three types of designs. They include triangulation, explanatory, and exploratory designs. The triangulation mixed method design involves the collecting of data, qualitatively and quantitatively, simultaneously and each is given equal priority. In the explanatory design, quantitative data is initially collected and then qualitative data is used to explain or elaborate on the quantitative data. "The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture" (p. 515). Exploratory design is the reverse of explanatory, whereby qualitative data is initially collected and then quantitative data is gathered to explain the relationships. The author suggests, "one of the most difficult challenges for the mixed methods researcher is how to analyze data collected from qualitative and quantitative research" (p. 519). Triangulation design analysis can involve a discussion of emerging themes evolving from the qualitative data and how it supports or refutes the statistical

analysis, combining the data to determine areas for further research, or qualitative data can be quantified for comparison purposes. In explanatory design, data is analyzed separately looking for extremes and then providing an explanation in the qualitative phase. Exploratory analysis, "in this design, the substantial qualitative data collection becomes a means for developing or locating quantitative instruments, forming categorical information for later quantitative data collection, or developing generalizations from a few, initial qualitative cases" (p. 521).

Desimone and LeFloch (2004) discuss the importance of using cognitive interviews for the purpose of improving surveys. They note that surveys do not provide data with the same depth and understanding which can be accomplished through interviews and observations. It is therefore important when designing a survey that the questions elicit responses which can be considered valid and reliable. Cognitive interviewing involve asking the responder to describe their thought process. This information should reveal "reasons for the responses, identifying which questions on the survey may omit critical constructs or represent an incomplete or misleading view of the topic under question" (p. 5).

Surveys are a cost-effective method of collecting data, and when combined with case studies or other research methods there is an increase in the validity and quality of the responses. Researchers found that when surveys were completed anonymously respondents tended to not reply in socially desirable ways. The authors note "there is sufficient evidence to suggest that, when designed and used correctly, surveys can provide meaningful, substantive, and informative data that may enrich our understanding

of educational processes" (p. 4). Surveys were used in this research project as a form of data collection.

Web-based surveys have gained popularity as the Internet becomes more accessible according to Mertler (2002). In his article, he discusses the advantages and disadvantages to electronic survey data collection. The advantages include "a high rate of response, short time frame for the collection of responses and time and cost savings" (p. 49). Technology has allowed for easy data analysis, respondent convenience, protection from data loss, and the ability to survey a larger geographical area. The disadvantages would include: inability to select your sample group, unequal access to a computer, or willingness to complete a survey on the computer due to technological knowledge, and the difficulty identifying your population. Mertler makes some recommendations to optimize survey response by ensuring that respondents can easily access and complete the survey with minimal technology skills, as easily as a paper version, and with assurance of data protection.

Interviewing is a method used in collecting qualitative data where deeper, more elaborated data is needed. Kvale (1996) provides readers with detailed information about the techniques and philosophy of interviews. Kvale outlines the seven stages of an interview investigation. The stages are as follows: (a) thematizing; (b) designing; (c) interviewing; (d) transcribing; (e) analyzing; (f) verifying; and (g) reporting. Kvale provides an overview of the interviewing process, describing each step, providing examples, and connecting the stages of practical methods to the philosophical concepts of knowledge and truth. He identifies and explains nine types of questions which should be present in an interview to increase the quality of the responses to obtain knowledge and

truth. According to Kvale, an interview should contain: a) introducing, b) follow-up, c) probing, d) specifying, e) direct, f) indirect, g) structuring, and h) interpreting questions. Silence is also important to allow the interviewee time to reflect and gather thoughts before answering. Kvale concludes his book with a chapter on the objections to interview research. He lists 10 common objections to interviewing for research purposes and provides the reader with an acknowledgement of why people object and an explanation of defense for using interviews. For example, "interviews are not trustworthy, they are biased" (p. 286). Kvale's states that there can be a danger of bias in the interview investigation and that the bias could be on the part of the interviewer or the interviewee. These biases can influence the results of the study. They may also "come to highlight specific aspects of the phenomena investigated, bring new dimensions forward, contributing to a multiperspectival construction of knowledge" (p. 286). Kvale provides a very thorough description of the interview investigation and strategies to maximize the quality of the information researchers can obtain through this form of data collection.

The literature in this study began by reviewing some studies which introduced the stages of moral development, as defined by Kohlberg as cited in Crain (1985) and Gilligan (1982) as cited in Griffin (1991); a review of three character education programs which are recognized by the Board; and due to the nature of the this particular study, it was important to include studies on the perceptions of character education. A review of Romanowski's (2003) study of high school studies has been summarized, as well as, a look at the perceptions of administrators, Wood and Roach (1999), and preservice teachers by Henson (2001). Research regarding the perceived effectiveness of character

education by Covell and Howe (2001), Evans (2006), and Winton (2007) was also included.

The final literature reviewed took a look at some research on the methodology which was used in this study, specifically the works of Creswell (2005) on qualitative and quantitative data and how to effectively analyze. Surveys and interviews were the methods incorporated in this study; Desimone and LeFloch (2004) discuss the use of cognitive interviews to improve survey quality, prior to administering for the purpose of collecting the reliable and valid information. Kvale (1996) provides information on the techniques and philosophies behind interviews. He also outlines the various types of questions to include allowing for quality responses. The literature review should provide background information on studies relevant to this research project and information to support the reasoning for the methodology used.

Chapter 3: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Description

This study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data using a triangulation mixed method design. In this chapter, a description of the methodology and process used will be further explained.

Quantitative Method

Research Subjects

Data was collected through surveys (Appendix A & B) and interviews (Appendix C & D). I surveyed 2 schools with a total of 35 teachers. The survey was prepared and completed using SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is a secure online survey tool started in Portland, Oregon in 1999. This user friendly tool allows people to create their own surveys easily to collect information necessary for research and to make informed decisions. Prior to surveying teachers, approval from the Board's Ethics Committee was received. Human Subject Research Approval was also granted from the University of Lethbridge in accordance with the Alberta Tri-Council's guidelines for research involving human beings.

Data Collection

The survey questionnaire was emailed to all teaching certificated staff members in the two schools. In the email teachers were provided with an explanation about the purpose of the study along with an understanding that participation was voluntary. The survey was easily accessed as teachers were provided with a direct link to the survey in the initial email. The survey was used to collect specific data regarding teacher demographics, knowledge of Ends Statement, perception of level of responsibility, integration and assessment into current teaching practice, and written feedback about the

implementation of character education in their school. When creating the survey, the first three questions dealt with demographics, questions five and six required a written response in reference to their knowledge of the Ends Statement, and three Likert-type response questions addressed teachers' perception and rating of the characteristic traits as identified by the Board. The remaining two questions asked teachers to comment on the role staff should have in planning for character development within their school and how such a program might look. The survey was designed to prevent participants from returning to questions after they were answered. The rationale was to attempt to collect more authentic data of their knowledge and ability to identify the Board policy on character. The questions subsequent to the knowledge based questions provided teachers with the exact wording of the Board policy so they would be able to address the remainder of the questions given accurate information; therefore it was important they could not go back and change their responses. This also ensured that all teachers were answering the remainder of the questions given the same information and not replying based on what they believed the Board policy to be.

Data Analysis

The survey data collected was analyzed by the researcher using narrative analysis to determine: (a) what teachers' perception of character education was, (b) role they played in the development of character with students and within their school, (c) who they felt was responsible for the teaching of character, (d) to what extent is character education taught and assessed in the school, and (e) establish whether they felt there was a need for a formal program in the school. Eleven tables were created for each of the three Likert-type questions, one for each character trait, summarizing the data according

to individual responses. Each table included the respondent number, response to the question, years of experience, and gender. These tables were helpful when analyzing the data for trends between gender and years of experience as all of the information was visual, therefore making comparisons a simpler task. These tables were created for the researcher's use only and were not included in the thesis document. The data collected from the question regarding the perceived level of responsibility, in table form, were analyzed and then compared to the tables on the integration into teaching practice. This was to determine whether what was perceived to be a responsibility was actually integrated into current teaching practice. This data was then further compared to data collected on currently assessed character traits to determine whether what was perceived to be a responsibility and what was actually taught; were they indeed the traits teachers were assessing.

A summary table including the total number of responses to all of the character traits was included for the three Likert-type questions in the thesis. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using a narrative format. A true triangulation design analysis was not possible as a statistical analysis was not relevant in this study because of a lack of sufficient data collected to allow for significant statistical analysis.

Ethical Considerations: Confidentiality and Anonymity

Teachers at both schools were provided with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research study and how their voluntary participation would benefit the study. Teachers were advised that participation was voluntary and their responses would remain anonymous at all times. Surveys were sent out electronically using SurveyMonkey statistical software which allows the participant to complete the survey online. An

analysis was then performed based on the responses. SurveyMonkey allowed participants to remain anonymous and the inclusion of some demographic data questions provided information to determine whether there was a correlation between experience and perceptions. One of the survey questions was a request for an interview. Anyone willing to be interviewed was asked to submit his/her name to me and depending on the number of respondents, a cross section of teachers would be chosen.

<div align="center">Qualitative Method</div>

Research Subjects

Through the survey, eight teachers volunteered to be interviewed and six were chosen based on the criteria set. The purpose of the interviews was to further explore the implementation and evaluation of character education as it was perceived by the teachers. Based on the main research question, interview questions were developed incorporating Stanfield's (Stanfield, 2000) focused conversation and Kvale's (Kvale, 1996) interviewing techniques. The interviewees were selected based on their willingness to participate, with the hope that enough volunteers would come forth; I would be able to choose a cross section of staff using a maximum variation sampling method. Ideally, I hoped to interview based on the following: (a) junior high teacher; (b) elementary teacher; (c) 10+ years of teaching experience; (d) less than 2 years of teaching experience; (e) equal number of males and females; and (f) equal number of elementary and junior high teachers. I was hoping that teachers would base their responses on what was occurring in the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, on the playground and in the school overall. I was curious what they had to say about their perceived role and responsibility, and to what extent they felt they were integrating the Character Statement

and helping students become the best person they can be. My assumption was that there would be trends emerging from the survey with a correlation between male and female teachers, experienced versus less experienced teachers, and elementary and junior high teachers.

Data Collection

Interviewees were provided with the questions just prior to the interview. All of the interviews took place in the teachers' classrooms, in hope that it provided them with a non-threatening, familiar environment. Having the interviews in the classroom also provided the researcher with an opportunity to see the classroom and get a sense of the learning environment. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, then shared with the interviewee to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews was also analyzed using descriptive analysis to determine whether there were any trends or common themes among the interviewees. Interview comments were read for content and themes, re-read, and coded into themes.

The second part of the analysis process I grouped the interviews into elementary and junior high teachers to determine whether there was a distinction between the two groups and their responses. A comparison of the two groups was discussed in the analysis portion.

Ethical Considerations: Confidentiality and Anonymity

In the reporting of the data, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the interviewees. The schools along with the school board have remained anonymous. The

participants were not aware of other interviewees, as that was information only known to the researcher.

Limitations and bias

One of the factors to consider when selecting the candidates to interview was that they were likely to have very strong views for or against the teaching of character education in schools. By selecting teachers for interviewing based on the criteria identified above, the participant teachers would be representative of the larger system and could provide information that is useful to the effective planning and implementation of character development in the school system.

There are advantages and challenges to this project based on my position in the school. As assistant principal there may have been preconceived notions by staff that if they were asked to participate, they would feel a sense of obligation to do so. This could be viewed as an advantage in that there would be a high number of participants, ensuring a cross section of opinions and grades. The disadvantage would be the reliability of the data if teachers felt that they were required to give the "right" response. I see my position as assistant principal at School A, where I spend the majority of my time, as an advantage. The staff and I have established a relationship based on trust and honesty. They are free to share their thoughts and ideas in a non-threatening environment where their contributions are valued and respected. We have had open discussions regarding the challenges of teaching a multi-aged class and two curriculums. My concerns and suggestions are at times met with resistance and teachers would openly discuss the impossibility, in their minds, of meeting the demands of two curricula. Other discussions have included the number of field trips deemed appropriate to limit the impact on

instructional time, an area of concern given that our students consistently do not meet the acceptable standard on Provincial Achievement Tests. The discussion usually involved, the relative importance of life experiences or academics, and how we find a balance between the two. In discussions, there is a comfort in expressing our opinions and concerns and agreeing on possible solutions which everyone could live with while ensuring the needs of our students are met.

At my second school, I have not established the same type of relationships with the staff as at School A. Consequently, it is possible participants at School B did not perceive participation as obligatory. By not having the same opportunities for communication, the teachers should have felt free to base their responses on their perceptions. This staff were not as familiar with my values and beliefs because they did not experience and witness my practice on a daily basis. Therefore, data collected would also be representative of their own perceptions. With the two schools being significantly different in their enrollment, grade configuration, programs, and number of staff, the data collected may be representative of what is common within the whole school system.

Chapter 4: Summary of Findings

Demographics

The survey was sent out to 35 certificated teachers. Twenty responded to the survey; however, only 12 completed the survey. This was a response rate of 34%. The respondents ranged in age from 26 to 54 years of age with teaching experience from between one to five years to greater than 15 years. Of the 20 respondents, there were 15 females and 5 males. This is representative of the ratio of females to males on staff. Table 2 is a summary of respondents and their years of experience.

Table 2

Demographics of Total Number of Respondents

Experience	Females	Males	Response count
1-5 years	5	0	5
6-10 years	1	3	4
11-15 years	1	1	2
>15 years	9	0	9
Number of respondents	16	4	20

The completed surveys were by teachers between the ages of 28 to 54, two from each of the experience age ranges of 1 to 5, 6 to 10, and 11 to 15 years. Six of the respondents had more than 15 years of experience. There were 4 males and 8 females. The eight who did not complete the survey included 7 females and 1 male, three with 1 to 5 years experience, two with 6 to 10 years, and three with more than 15 years of

experience. Table 3 is a summary of the demographics for respondents completing the survey.

Table 3

Demographics of Respondents Completing the Survey

Respondent	Experience	Male/Female
1	>15	Female
2	>15	Female
3	6-10	Male
4	>15	Male
5	11-15	Male
6	11-15	Female
7	6-10	Male
8	>15	Female
9	>15	Female
10	>15	Female
11	1-5	Female
12	1-5	Female

Knowledge of Ends Statement

The Ends Statements are posted on the wall in three different locations in both schools and yet only 2 out of 12 were able to identify the statement. Two responded with "do not know" and the remaining eight admitted to "looking it up".

Teachers were then asked to identify the 11 characteristics of character development as set by the Board (referenced in Table 4). Imbedded in this question was the Ends Statement to ensure everyone was able to respond given accurate information. Two staff members, one with 1 to 5 years experience and the other with greater than 15 years, researched and listed all 11; one person attempted a list of 11 and was able to correctly identify 9 of the traits; another with more than 15 years experience listed six correctly identifying five; others included a list of seven with 2 correct, list of five with 1 correct, three and 0 correct, three and 2 correct; and four respondents did not list any characteristics.

Table 4

Knowledge of the 11 Identified Character Traits

Respondent	Experience	Responses	Correct Responses
1	>15	3	2
2	>15	11	11
3	6-10	3	0
4	>15	0	0
5	11-15	5	1
6	11-15	0	0
7	6-10	0	0
8	>15	7	2
9	>15	0	0
10	>15	6	5
11	1-5	11	9
12	1-5	11	11

Perception of Responsibility

Teachers were asked what level of responsibility they believed the school has in teaching the 11 identified character traits. Using a Likert-type scale, respondents could reply with: (1) primary, (2) somewhat, (3) just a bit, (4) not at all, or (5) do not know response.

Responsibility was deemed to be of primary importance to 10 of the 12 respondents. Civility, initiative, and respect were rated equally as a primary responsibility of the school by 8 out of 12 respondents. Civility was considered somewhat of a responsibility for 4 out of 6 teachers with more than 15 years of experience. Only two teachers, a female with 11 to 15 years of experience and a male with 6 to 10 years of experience, felt that courage was primary and one felt that it was not a characteristic that teachers should be responsible for. All of the teachers with more than 15 years of experience felt courage was somewhat a school's responsibility. As indicated in Table 5, Optimism for 3 out of 12 teachers was deemed as primary. These teachers were all females with one teacher from each experience range with the exception of 6 to 10 years. While 8 of 12 teachers, five with greater than 15 years of experience, felt that it was somewhat of a responsibility. There was an even split of males and females in this category.

Table 5

Level of Responsibility Schools Should Play in Teaching of Identified Character Traits

Answer Options	Primary	Somewhat	Just a bit	Not at all	Don't know	Response Count
integrity	7	5	0	0	0	12
compassion	7	5	0	0	0	12
decency	5	7	0	0	0	12
civility	8	4	0	0	0	12
fairness	6	6	0	0	0	12
courage	2	8	1	1	0	12
initiative	8	3	1	0	0	12
perseverance	7	3	2	0	0	12
respect	8	4	0	0	0	12
optimism	3	8	1	0	0	12
responsibility	10	2	0	0	0	12

Perception of Integration into Teaching

In this question teachers were asked how frequently they integrate the 11 characteristics into their teaching by responding using a Likert-type scale of always, almost always, sometimes, never, and unsure. As seen in Table 6, of the 11 characteristics identified, 11 out of 12 teachers indicated they always integrated respect into their practice with one teacher replying almost always. Responsibility was next with 10 out of 12 respondents always integrating and 2 almost always. Integrity and

compassion were tied with 9 out of 12 teachers always integrating into practice and 3 almost always. Courage was the least integrated with 3 out of 12 always, 2 almost always, 6 sometimes and 1 never integrating into teaching practice.

Table 6

Integration of Identified Character Traits into Teaching Practice

Answer Options	Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Never	Unsure	Response Count
integrity	9	3	0	0	0	12
compassion	9	2	1	0	0	12
decency	7	3	2	0	0	12
civility	7	5	0	0	0	12
fairness	8	3	1	0	0	12
courage	3	2	6	1	0	12
initiative	6	5	1	0	0	12
perseverance	5	6	1	0	0	12
respect	11	1	0	0	0	12
optimism	5	3	4	0	0	12
responsibility	10	2	0	0	0	12

When a comparison of the data based on teacher-perceived responsibility to integration into teaching, the following results were found. Of the 12 respondents, 10 felt responsibility was a primary responsibility of schools. Of equal importance for 8 of 12 respondents were civility, initiative, and respect. When comparing that information to the

number of teachers who always integrated the same character traits into their teaching, 10 out of 12 always taught respect, which is equal to the number claiming it was a primary responsibility. Seven reported teaching civility, while 8 felt it was a primary responsibility which is a difference of one. Initiative was always integrated for 6 out of 12 respondents, compared to 8 out of 12 rating it as a primary responsibility.

Perception of Assessment of Character Traits

In question nine of the survey teachers were asked to identify which character traits they were currently assessing. This question required a yes/no response. Ten out of 12 teachers stated they assessed respect and responsibility. There were 8 out of 12 teachers who assessed integrity and initiative. The lowest assessed character traits were optimism with 1 out of 12, and courage and decency each had 2 out of 12 teachers stating they assessed students on those characteristics. Table 7 is a representation of the teacher responses to assessment of the 11 identified character traits.

Teachers were provided an opportunity on the survey to make additional comments if they desired. In response to assessing character traits one respondent, a female with 1 to 5 years of experience, commented "I think that it is difficult to teach character development. How can it be assessed in a fair manner?"

Table 7

Identified Character Traits Currently Assessed

Answer Options	Yes	No	Response Count
integrity	8	4	12
compassion	4	8	12
decency	2	10	12
civility	5	7	12
fairness	7	5	12
courage	2	10	12
initiative	8	4	12
perseverance	7	5	12
respect	10	2	12
optimism	1	11	12
responsibility	10	2	12

Perception of Role Staff has on Planning for Character Development

Teachers were asked what role staff should have in planning for character development within their school. This was an open-ended question. The following were the responses given. Table 3 outlined the demographics for teachers who completed the survey for quick reference.

Respondent one felt staff should be supportive and practice character development because "we deal with children in a unique setting, the lessons are

applicable to very real life, specific situations." She also commented that "the primary responsibility for character development and education is the child's family. While schools have the setting to help students practice and hone their skills the foundation for a child's character development lies firmly in the parents' domain."

Respondent two indicated "we should have common expectations and understanding, so we use the same language with the students year after year." She also felt that "this is role of the family and we should be reinforcing what is taught at home not doing it all. We do not have the time."

Respondent three suggests students need to be shown the words "so they can understand the meaning of it."

The fourth respondent indicated the staff should play a major role. Respondent five, another male, has 6 to 10 years of experience. He felt that it was important "but we are stretched as it is. Adding and requiring character education would just take away from some other goal." He goes on to say:

> I'm not sure if I'm correct in this feeling or not. It appears to me that students are more mean to each other than what I noticed even a few years ago. I wonder if there is so much online chat and messaging that makes it easier for students to show contempt for and "write off" other students and them so little respect. There also seems to be less positive leadership in each class and appearing aloof and disengaged seems to be important to more students than in the past. And this is despite the same full program of extra-curricular and co-curricular programs that help students to feel engaged.

Respondent six commented, "I'm not sure it should be an add-on, but rather interwoven within your program and expectations of all students." The seventh respondent felt the role would "depend on how each school is addressing this." This teacher was male with 6 to 10 years of experience.

The next respondent suggested the role of staff should be "something realistic that follows the expectations of the school and policies." The ninth respondent provided suggestions of how the staff could play a role by engaging in entire staff discussions, agreeing on what traits to focus on in the school, discussions about ways to accomplish, and addressing the character traits in assemblies.

Respondent ten felt that the staff's role should be minimal and with the new timetable format, the time designated for health was minimal. The last two respondents, teaching between 1 to 5 years, made the following statements. The first comments, "staff should integrate character development in their rooms (individually) but also have the same expectations (consistently) as a team. The second one suggests, "staff should work to create a caring and compassionate environment where the students can feel comfortable enough to be themselves. Staff should also model the 11 character traits as much as possible."

In question 11, teachers were asked what a successful character education development program would look like. This was an open ended question which all but one respondent replied to. Respondent one indicated the program should "look like real life situations that allow children to make choices and then to discuss the choices and why/why not it worked." The second respondent felt it should be "something simple and easy that can easily be integrated into everyday teaching and builds as the children

progress in age/grade." The sixth respondent, who also felt that character development should be interwoven into every program, felt a successful character program included meaningful projects and tasks.

Respondent three would like to see an assessment program in place to evaluate if students attained the 11 character traits. The fourth respondent indicated it should be similar to what is currently in place. The fifth respondent felt that character development should be implemented in the Health curriculum and teachers should be provided with planned lessons using case studies which promote class discussions.

Respondent seven was unsure of what such a program would look like but suggested lots of modeling, positive reinforcement, and virtues teaching. Respondent nine also provided suggestions "the entire school would agree on a common focus and approach…it would be addressed regularly in the classroom and at assemblies…common behavioural expectations and consequences school-wide." She felt a school wide philosophy would be valuable. Respondent 11 was of the same opinion as respondent nine stating, "first and foremost, all staff must be on board and have the same, consistent expectations for a program like this to be implemented and successful."

Respondent eight indicated a successful program should be meaningful and address how students should "take care of yourself, others, and your place." The final respondent comments, "Character development needs to be implemented by people who really believe in it. It cannot be done by simply posting key words on a wall. People who are involved must practice what they preach."

The survey provided a snap shot of teachers' perceptions of character education based on what their believed level of school responsibility, integration into current

teaching practice, assessment, and what a successful character education program would look like. In the analysis, data has been compared based on trends and themes.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The data for this thesis study was collected in two formats, survey and interviews. The interview consisted of nine questions which provided an elaboration on some of the responses received from the survey respondents. In this section, results from the six interviews are shared, pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of all participants. In the survey, participants were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed. When requesting volunteers, the hope was to have more teachers volunteer than was actually necessary to incorporate the maximum variation sampling method which would afford the opportunity to select volunteers, based on the criteria set, to ensure a wide variance. There were eight volunteers of which six were interviewed based on the criteria set. Of the staff members interviewed, there were three from junior high and three from elementary, consisting of 5 females and 1 male. Three of the teachers had 15 or more years of experience, two with 6 to 10 years, and one with 11 to 15 years of experience. This was a representative sample given the demographics of the teaching staff at the two schools.

Interpretation of Ends Statement

In the first question of the interview, the purpose was to develop a better understanding of what the Character Ends meant to teachers not simply whether they knew what the Ends Statement was; which was the sole purpose of the question in the survey. The Ends Statement was read to them and they had a copy of the questions to refer to as well. The interpretation of the Ends Statement varied among the participants.

Debbie and Heather, junior high teachers, felt that as teachers they were responsible for the development of character. Debbie commented, "…regardless of what subject you are teaching, lead by example what is right, act morally and balance concerns." She believes students are "…perceptive and can see those things in teachers and school." Heather said, "I feel that it is very important to me and I think that in junior high character development is almost as important if not more important than academics because this is really a formative part of their life." She questions and defines character to the students as, "What kind of person you are, how you act and live when people aren't watching you because that is what character is. That's the person you are."

Cameron, a junior high teacher, presented a more in-depth interpretation of the Ends Statement. He commented:

> As a teacher, this statement means that part of my job is to instill morals and character into my students. However, the wording of it is open enough that I should be able to do so without imposing my own moral beliefs onto students. Rather, in my dealings with students I should model what I consider as moral and ethical behaviour and give the students opportunities to consider and develop their own moral codes. Opportunities for this should arise continuously as students engage in partner, group, class and individual work. These occasions will arise in both formal and informal situations and I believe the teacher's role should be to act as a guide in asking questions that help students to develop their own moral maps… Basically there is no prescription for teaching morality, it is allowing and enabling an ongoing discussion to take place.

Kelly, an elementary teacher, felt that we have a role in the development of character but the role is shared by many. "It is not only our role in that (character development), it is where ever the kids are and what they are doing that they learn, whether they go to day camp, swimming lessons or daycare. You learn that your whole life."

Nancy, an elementary teacher, had a different interpretation from that of the others. She stated:

Ways in where the child is, in that they would in effect follow the rules, not only in the school but the home. They would do unto others as they would have others do unto them. And they would understand that their rights only go so far as where they start to hurt others.

Another elementary teacher, Cathy, interpreted the statement to mean students would be able to make good decisions, be leaders rather than followers and not succumb to peer pressure. She felt that when balancing the individual concerns of others, "We still want to make sure that they look out for themselves. That they advocate for themselves, respect themselves and expect others to treat them with respect, but at the same time also respecting rights and needs of others."

Four of the teachers interviewed interpreted the Ends Statement to have some impact on their role as a teacher, taking some ownership for the development of character. The remaining two teachers' interpretations were more aligned to the role the child had in their character development through their actions and behaviour rather than their role as teacher.

Current Teacher Practice

Question two and four of the survey asked teachers to comment on which character traits they were currently teaching and explain why or why not, furthermore, in question four, how they taught the character traits. The questions were purposely separated by a question about which character traits were difficult to teach. This allowed teachers time to reflect on their reasons for current teaching practices before addressing the "how".

Debbie felt she taught integrity in Social Studies, Leadership class, Homeroom, and through her involvement in extra-curricular activities. Respect was evident in all of her classes as it was an expectation, but also role modeled towards the students. She commented, "Where there are instances of that not happening I try to turn it into a teachable moment and try to establish at least a culture of that in the classroom." In her opinion, compassion, diversity, decency, civility and fairness were connected and areas she felt were taught in the leadership class. Students were able to display courage through debating, running for leadership positions, organizing and facilitating activities for the elementary school children. When teaching her leadership class this meant creating activities "…around trust, getting to know each other, creating that safe environment where they feel safe, respected, where they feel the environment is fair." Resources for her included a leadership website the school subscribed to and resources from other colleagues. She also considered that creating connections with students was a resource.

Cameron and Kelly expressed the opinion that you cannot teach the character traits in isolation. Kelly commented, "They come in the kids' daily interactions." She provided an example with one of her students who was an easy target for bullying and

ridicule. But she felt that through her role modeling, other students were good to him. She stated, "I think if they see that I treat him with respect and that I am compassionate towards him, hopefully, most of them will." Kelly felt that courage and perseverance were hard to model as the students "…don't see me in situations working towards something that is difficult." With her upbeat nature she was able to role model optimism and civility. Cameron stated, "They must be taught as real situations and ideas arise, so that they have real meaning to the students."

Heather felt responsibility, perseverance, and initiative were at the forefront given her subject area of mathematics. She felt to be successful in mathematics these characteristics were a must. She notes that just in the daily routines, she reminds students of all the character traits on a regular basis. Heather commented, "There is no real teaching about anything officially but definitely there are expectations that are mentioned at the beginning of the year and enforced throughout the year."

Heather felt that at this age (junior high) students developed the character traits of courage, perseverance, and responsibility by ensuring they complete their homework. "It is the student's responsibility to stay on top of things in every single class, need to catch up. At this age we no longer chase them around. It is up to them to be proactive." Kelly, an elementary teacher, commented, "But I think you have to look at the whole kid and the Mathematics curriculum is important but so are other things." Cameron concluded, "I find that the important moments are very situational and teachers must be aware and responsive enough to use real-life situations to help children develop their own awareness and character development."

In Nancy's class, perseverance and responsibility were the two characteristics which are dealt with formally and informally at the beginning and throughout the year on a regular basis. The students in this class were quick to give up when they were challenged because academic learning had always come easily to them. For these students she had to teach them the "actual steps to persevere until they are successful." Courage was taught through direct lessons. Many of the activities and assemblies at the school lend themselves to formal discussions:

> We did direct lessons when we did the "Shave your Lid for a Kid (fund raiser)." We discussed what courage actually meant to different people and we also talked about that, when we had the speaker who came who was the runner. Our assemblies often times give us a spring board for the courage because we tend to have athletes. There was the young boy who overcame a multi-fractured leg and we talked about what kind of courage it takes to overcome different kinds of things, not necessarily physical but emotional as well.

> Compassion, decency and civility are dealt with daily as this is a special education setting in which the students feel that they are above other students. According to Nancy, "We have to teach them what that means to be compassionate about others and to treat others with respect and decency."

> Cameron, Heather, Kelly, and Nancy all identified their main resource to be teachable moments. As situations arose they would be dealt with, often times at the cost of not being able to teach the whole lesson of the day. Nancy shared an incident about a student in her class who felt like a ghost. The student wasn't being bullied or treated badly, but felt the other students looked right through her, did not hear or see her. This

situation was brought to a class meeting as were many of the character development lessons throughout the year. In this situation the character traits discussed included integrity, compassion, rights of others, inclusion, and respect. Nancy has used direct lessons to teach civility, having students role play appropriate behaviours. She asked the students questions such as: "How do you encourage your teammate? How does putting my teammate down make me play better or worse? How are you proud of yourself? How can you be proud of yourself with out putting others down?" Nancy wasn't sure if she had ever taught optimism other than through discussions of pessimism. Nancy felt she taught all the character traits both through formal and informal discussions. She did not have specific resources to draw the information from.

Cathy felt she taught all of the character traits through class discussions, teachable moments arising from incidents, discussion about characters in books being read, and informal discussions. She commented, "I think at a real basic level you have to have these things happen in a classroom to make the classroom an effective place, and in order for kids to learn and in order for kids to get along." Cathy had one rule in her class, "Treat others the way you want to be treated. I find that that encompasses everything. If that is the rule in your class, it covers everything. You do not need to have any other rules." One of her strategies of reinforcing good character was to have students self evaluate; assessing their own behaviour based on comments from her such as, "Are you your boss right now?"

Cathy, like the others, also relied on class discussions and teachable moments in the development of character. She also included role modeling and role playing. In her class the majority of the lessons were informal and impromptu. Cathy identified

resources for formal lessons could be found in teacher guide books, Health resource binders, and activities listed at the back of books she has read to students. One of the main characteristics she dealt with this year was compassion due to the special needs students in her class. Having discussions with the students to help them to understand why their peers were reacting and behaving as they did. She commented on how fairness, civility and perseverance were addressed typically with their work. Respect and responsibility were also discussed on a regular basis once again in the context of incidences as they occurred.

Other teachers were more specific about the character traits they taught. Two of the junior high teachers addressed what they felt were traits important to their subject area. The traits for the first junior high teacher include integrity, compassion, fairness, respect, courage, initiative, optimism, and trust. The second junior high teacher taught responsibility, perseverance, initiative, and courage. The special education teacher stated she addressed perseverance, responsibility, integrity, fairness, courage, compassion, decency, civility, and respect. The elementary teacher who believed you cannot teach in isolation addressed compassion and respect. When asked which character traits stood out for her, Cathy commented on compassion, fairness, civility, perseverance, respect, civility, and responsibility.

Teaching Character Traits: Difficulties and Challenges

In the third question, teachers were invited to reflect on which of the character traits they perceived as difficult to teach and what strategies and techniques they might use to teach them to their students. In teaching we always encounter challenges of some

sort. When asked whether there were challenges in teaching character development teachers expressed some of their concerns and frustrations.

Debbie indicated she found them all difficult to teach. A strategy which she felt would be effective was to get engaged with students in the extra and co-curricular activities such as dances, coaching, and volunteering to assist other teacher sponsors of these activities. The leadership option class was another nonacademic way of connecting, teaching, and working with students to develop those character traits. From Debbie's perspective, the biggest challenge was teaching one definition of the character trait. "One of the challenges I find is that you teach who you are, when you can't find a consistent set of values even amongst the teachers. There is variation in terms of integrity, compassion, civility; all of those things vary amongst the group." The other challenging factor for her was the age group, as teenagers are typically self involved.

Heather was of the same opinion as Debbie, perceiving all of the character traits as difficult to teach. She felt this was due to the fact there was no curriculum, "It's just you are teaching someone to be a good person and it is not a concrete thing." Strategies she incorporated were to use teachable moments and at times anticipating different situations they might go through and prepare them beforehand. Heather expressed frustration with the lack of consistency in expectations among staff. "People aren't always engaged which sends kids all these different messages which makes it pretty tough." Consistency was also a concern for Cathy. She summed it up by saying:

> Consistency is awesome. I think in a school if you have any kind of a program
> that can really help with consistency or even if you do not have a program, if you
> have assemblies. If there is someone always getting up talking about expectations

and how to treat one another. That sort of consistency even really helps then you can use the same language in the school. Everyone knows what is acceptable and what is not rather than things being slightly different from one classroom to the next or slightly different outside depending on what teacher is outside on supervision that day.

Cathy had a different viewpoint from all the rest stating she did not feel that any of the traits were difficult to teach. In her opinion, there were a number of strategies and techniques including discussions. She goes on the say:

There are a lot of books out there that address these types of characteristics and character development. Or sometimes you can be reading a book or storybook that is completely unrelated and you stop and discuss what the characters are doing, or how they chose to behave. I know there are lessons out there in the Health resources, teachers' binders, and role modeling.

Cathy does comment on not addressing courage to the extent other character traits were emphasized.

Kelly, in elementary, found perseverance and courage were the most difficult to teach. She had expressed this in the previous question as well, stating they were hard to role model. Kelly incorporated strategies such as:

…pushing kids to finish stuff, even if it is difficult for them or you have to change your expectations in what you want handed in or whatever. But at least you want them to finish it, ….I will keep them in day after day because once they get into that (not completing work), it becomes a slippery slope if they don't finish and life in junior high will not be fun.

Kelly found that wanting students to behave and act appropriately did not ensure they would. She commented on the number of times you may have to have the same conversations with certain students, explaining through role modeling, class and private discussions with the hope, that someday, they would understand and change the inappropriate behaviours.

Nancy commented she found the character traits dealing with fair play, such as decency and civility to be very difficult. Students in her class were quick to put someone else down to put themselves up during both academic and nonacademic activities. Strategies incorporated included role playing, discussions about how your actions make others feel, and emphasizing there is a difference between pride and gloating. For Nancy, her biggest challenge was the parents. Many of her students had the "prince syndrome". In the eyes of the parents, their child could do no wrong. In conversation with Nancy, she stated when she would discipline a child for disrespect and the child had told the parents of the incident; she would receive calls from the parents justifying their child's behaviour.

From Cameron's perspective the teaching of character traits was potentially challenging at times and yet a very natural part of teaching. He felt the character traits all had:

> to be taught in context and that morals are also part of the cognitive development
> of children. One must consider what level of cognitive development children are
> at and try to scaffold students to higher levels of understanding regarding their
> place within a social milieu. The discussion of morals with a grade one student
> would be very different than with a grade 8 student.

Teacher Assessment of Student Success

Teachers were asked to comment on their assessment practices of the character traits. The Board states that character is important, so how is this evaluated? How is that measured? In all of the interview responses, teacher observation was the main form of assessment. Kelly, Nancy, and Cathy each commented that assessment documentation took place in anecdotal and checklist format on the elementary report cards based on teacher observation.

Debbie, Cathy, and Cameron also incorporated self assessments throughout the year. Cameron stated:

> A part of all projects that my students engage in is evaluating their own work within a group including their social responsibilities. Usually, I create a rubric in conjunction with my students that identify traits they feel are important to class and group work.

Debbie felt she was able to be more objective when evaluating integrity in her French program as part of the program involves the students speaking the language 10% of the time. She found that her leadership students when self assessing were often evaluate themselves harder than she would.

Heather indicated students would get credit for the character trait responsibility positively and negatively. Students' marks were negatively affected if they did not submit assignments as it was their responsibility to ensure they were complete. Students also received a mark out of 10 for participation which included listening and speaking as well as decency and fairness.

Perception of Implementation of Character Education Program

Some teachers and schools have formal character education programs in place. Teachers are provided with training and expected to practice and teach character development using the same language with all students. I wanted teachers to reflect on what program is in place at their school, if any, and their involvement in the implementation.

In her response, Debbie comments on their homeroom structure whereby teachers have the same students for three years with a mixture of all three grades. She felt by organizing homerooms in this fashion, it developed some compassion for the different grade levels. *Lions Quest* had been incorporated into the Health program at one time in the past six years. There are service learning projects which take place: *Shave your Lid for a Kid* and adopting a family at Christmas, in which she was directly involved in the organization of through her leadership class as well as her support of other teachers and their initiatives.

Heather also commented on *Lions Quest* and how it had been implemented through the Health program when the physical education was separate from the Health program. When *Lions Quest* was implemented, Heather, felt that it was strong and character development was enforced in the curriculum. The Health teachers worked together to ensure that students in all classes received the same messages. Her feeling was that programs, character development and Health, have both suffered with the requirement of daily Physical Education. Her thoughts were character education was now the responsibility of each teacher and "in order for it to be really successful as a program, everybody needs to be on the same page and that takes a lot of work."

Kelly commented on the uniqueness of the school and students spending so much of their time together participating in activities. Through this, a character education program was implemented. She provided examples of students engaging in swimming lessons based on ability rather than age as well as the activities sponsored by leadership club which includes whole school involvement.

"I think the biggest part of the character development in the school is through the leadership program the junior high teachers do. Then it floods on down, we started a leadership group with the upper elementary students as well," was Nancy's response. She listed examples of activities the elementary students could engage in when part of the leadership group. They included: (a) responsible for helping teachers, (b) changing bulletin boards, (c) pulling out staples, (d) school patrol, (e) recycling, and (f) school techies. Two students in each of the division two classes were trained to set up the SmartBoard, LCD projectors, and connecting the CD and VCR. Students wishing to be a member of the leadership group had to apply; however, everyone who took the application process seriously was accepted. Nancy felt that by students engaging in these types of activities contributed to their character development.

Cameron commented on the expectation that students be responsible members of the community. Expectations were communicated to the students through the student handbook as well as role modeling by all teachers, students, and staff. "Everyone is expected to be an active, involved member of the community."

Impact on Student Achievement and School Environment

In schools one of the main goals is to continue to improve student achievement while creating an environment in which students feel safe and secure. Teachers were

asked to comment on whether they believed a character education program would have an impact on student achievement and school environment.

In Debbie's opinion, character development had a "huge impact." She felt if students were able to experience and feel some of the characteristics their achievement would improve "and the school environment is better for everyone." She indicated there was a correlation between school environment and achievement, and it began from the top and went down. "If people feel that from the top there is integrity, decency and fairness it filters and if it is absent it can also filter down." She was unsure how to measure the link between character qualities and achievement.

Heather felt character education had a definite impact on school environment and student achievement. She summarized it:

> It definitely has an impact on school environment. If everybody at least bought into and understood what was expected in terms of character and if everyone was consistent in their expectations…But I think it has to be fairly structured for that to be successful. And for achievement and success, definitely character is part of that. If you don't have these characteristics it is very hard to get ahead in life even if you have high marks. So achievement to me is not necessarily grades. You have to have a balance. My dad used to always say, it's all about attitude not aptitude. And I believe that.

Kelly and Cathy also agreed student achievement and school environment would be impacted positively with the teaching of character education. Kelly's comment was, "I don't know about the achievement, although, if the kids are comfortable and it is a good environment; then obviously it would make it easier to learn." Cathy went on to explain

how achievement was affected when students exhibit perseverance, optimism and confidence:

> With achievement, if you have students who have learned to persevere and have confidence in themselves, and are optimistic, and take school work seriously, are responsible; you just have kids who are more hooked into their own learning and maybe more evaluative of their own learning and will do more and will learn more. In the school environment, I think the more you can talk about these character traits, the more aware kids are of their own behavior. They're safer, more respectful, nurturing environment, the more they learn.

> In Nancy's opinion, achievement comes when students are aware of what is

expected of them and they feel safe in the school environment. She also addressed the importance of having the same expectations throughout the school. Cameron commented that if students felt recognized as equals and an "important part of the community, they are much more likely to want to attend and participate at school."

Perception of Need for a Formal Program

The survey and interview respondents both identified there was not a formal character program in place at this time at either school. The interviewees were asked to talk about formal character development programs necessary to teach these skills. They were given the names of two programs, *Lions Quest* and *Safe and Caring Schools*, as exemplars. Teachers were then asked whether they believed a formal program was necessary in their school.

Lions Quest was familiar to Debbie, Kelly and Heather. Heather felt the strengths of the program included: (a) training for all staff, (b) service learning component, (c) the

organization, and (d) activities were easy for teachers to adapt. All had received training through inservices on the *Lions Quest* program and felt it would be important to character development. Debbie felt the program had lost its integrity when it was no longer taught in the Health program. Kelly was unsure whether it should be a whole school focus due to time restrictions and commitments to curriculum requirements. When character development was implemented into the Social Studies curriculum, through the unit Family Life, teachers were able to spend time teaching character traits without feeling they were doing so at the sacrifice of something else. Kelly indicated that if character education was important time (referring to the percentages allocated by Alberta Learning for each subject) needs to be allocated specifically for that purpose.

Circles of Courage was the program Nancy was familiar with. The advantage to this program was the common language. The vocabulary in the *Circles of Courage* included words like independence and mastery. As a whole school, everyone spoke the same language and had the same expectations--staff and students. She felt if a formal program was going to be successful, every subject teacher had to be engaging to some extent and common language was a necessity. Nancy recognized character education starts in the home but has to be continued. She expressed frustration over the fact schools were now expected to teach students character, something she felt belonged in the home. She ends with, "We used to say, it takes a village to raise a child and now we are supposed to raise them but the second you start to discipline my child, I, parents, don't like it."

Cathy was also familiar with the *Circles of Courage* but felt due to poor implementation in her previous school the program was ineffective. She thought the

program had the potential to be very good with guidance and consistency. Cathy believed

for successful implementation of a program a common language had to be reinforced by

every teacher and during assemblies. In her opinion, program success would entail:

> I think if it's a program which takes a lot of extra time, I don't think it will work
>
> so well. I think there would be resistance from staff because they're stretched and
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> it is too hard to fit something new and big in like that. But if it is something that
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> fits in well to what is already happening in the school, well planned, I think it
>
> would be very good. But a really big key is talk about the stuff when the whole
>
> school is together, otherwise you have fragmentation if it is only ever addressed in
>
> classrooms; even if they are multiage classrooms, you still teach the group.

Cameron concurred, "Formal programs such as these do have a place in school.

But they must be adopted with the consensus of the community and carried out in a way

that allows all parties to develop and grow, rather than as prescriptive measures to cure

bad behaviour." Heather believed character education was extremely important for

student development from grades 6 to 9. In her opinion, we do not place enough

emphasis on character development in comparison to academia. Debbie comments:

> …I think if the character education is missing …, everything else suffers. I think it is
>
> at the core or the center of a solid education. It is part of it and obviously in the public
>
> school some people argue that that is the job of the parent; and if you want character,
>
> morality, and things like that brought in, maybe you should pursue other choices like
>
> a Catholic school where that is specifically integrated. I think that there are certain
>
> universal character traits that we want to cultivate in students.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The purpose of the research project was to establish teachers' perceptions of character education, given that the Board has Character Development as one of its mandates. As it is an expectation of teachers in schools to deliver such education, the following questions are critical: (a) Were teachers aware of the mandate? (b) What do they think of character development in schools? (c) What were their thoughts on their role? (d) And where were they currently in the development of character?

Themes emerged through the triangulation design analysis resulting in the framework used to discuss the data. The qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed once the findings had been reported in the thesis paper. Analysis of the data uncovered eight reoccurring themes: (1) meaning, (2) current practice traits, (3) challenges, (4) strategies, (5) assessment, (6) implementation, (7) impact on school environment and achievement, and (8) program knowledge, based on the interview and survey questions. The different strands were classified into categories. The framework for analysis consisted of four main categories which included knowledge, current landscape, challenges, and program necessity. There were subcategories present for each. Meaning and interpretation were present in knowledge. Current landscape incorporated responsibility for teaching, teacher role in implementation, strategies, assessment, and the impact on school achievement and environment.

Knowledge of Ends Statement

Overwhelmingly, the majority of teachers were not aware of character development as one of the mandated ends of our board. The results proved to be interesting but not surprising that teachers did not know the Ends Statement about

character development, despite the fact it is one of the goals we are mandated to address in our schools and classrooms. One of the reasons for conducting the research was to determine whether staff was aware of their role in developing character in students. As a school, time is not spent discussing or familiarizing ourselves with Alberta Education, Board, and district goals. Most teachers are not inclined to spend time perusing the Alberta Education, Board, or district websites to search for goals as mandated by the various stakeholders. Unless teachers are specifically told and work collaboratively to develop school goals, most remain unaware. Fullan (2001) suggests that for something to be considered meaningful the stakeholders must feel a sense of ownership.

Of notable interest was the fact that the eight people who did not complete the survey ended when they were asked to identify the Ends Statement. The breakdown of incomplete surveys was evenly split between the ranges of teaching experience. When first reading the surveys it was not surprising that the new teachers opted out. I surmised the younger, less experienced teachers would not be as aware of the district goals, given they were still trying to get a grasp on curricular content and the development of a strong classroom program. But it would have been reasonable to suppose veteran teachers would have been able to give a general description of what the Ends Statement on character was, given that the title of the survey was "Teacher Perception of Character Education." This may be due to not knowing the Ends Statement and not wanting to risk giving an incorrect response. It may also be that some teachers looking towards the end of their careers were less willing to implement new strategies and content into their practice or because they had not been purposely made aware of the goals of the Board. Although responses were not statistically significant, this study would suggest professional

development in this area is a necessity. Wood and Roach (1999) discussed the shift in education from academic centered to student centered which may also explain why some traditional teachers, having experienced and trained in the academic setting, were reluctant to change towards educating the whole child.

When asked to identify the 11 character traits, the majority of teachers were unsuccessful despite the Ends Statement available as reference. This was to be expected, upon analysis, given they were not even aware of the Ends Statement. Teachers who had initially researched the first answer did not do so with this question. I am not sure how to interpret this, other than maybe they did not want to continue to take extra time to complete the survey or did not want to appear as not knowing if they were unable to identify all 11 traits.

In the interviews, teachers presented a slightly different understanding of the Ends Statement depending on the grade level taught. There were some distinct commonalities present between the elementary and junior high teachers. The junior high teachers commented on character education as a responsibility of all teachers regardless of the subject area, the need to lead by example including demonstrating moral and ethical behaviours, and assisting students by providing opportunities to make good choices and develop their own moral character. They commented on the importance of character development especially for this age group. I believe teachers responses were due to their understanding of a junior high student. Junior high can be a very difficult time in a child's development. They feel they are too old to be treated as children and yet they do not have the skills or knowledge to be given the same freedom as an adult. These young teens are trying to establish an identity for themselves which is separate yet still

connected to the family beliefs and expectations. The junior high teachers interviewed were aware of these inner conflicts students are experiencing and, based on comments in the survey and interviews, teachers see their role as major in the development of character. Students spend the majority of their time at school and if we as teachers are not providing them with positive role modeling and opportunities to grow, then we would be short changing them. While junior high teachers are typically more subject orientated, these teachers felt that character education was equally if not more important than academic success.

Interestingly, for some of the junior high teachers their interpretation of the Ends Statement was contradictory to their comments later in the survey and interview regarding responsibility for teaching and integration. While it was communicated initially that everyone should be responsible, it was later identified that it should be taught in Health or at home.

Elementary teachers' interpretation of the meaning of character education was slightly different than that of their junior high colleagues. For this particular group of teachers, the statement was based more on the student's ability to cope and get along within the school, home, and any other environments they would be exposed to. Whereas, the junior high teachers interpreted the statement from the perspective of the role of the teacher, understanding the statement to mean they had a shared responsibility to ensure students gain skills to be successful. This opens the question of why it was answered in such a way that there was a distinction. In the interview, I could have taken it one direction so they all commented on the role of the teacher or the role of the student for comparison and analysis purposes. However, the intent was to determine what their

interpretation was without influencing the answer in one direction or another. A possible explanation for elementary teachers' interpretation being more student than teacher role focused could be because elementary teachers are consistently teaching all subject areas, with more of a focus on the whole child than on a specific subject.

As a system, there needs to be a clear understanding of the goals, expectations, the implications for the classroom, and a common understanding of what character education is going to look like. To achieve this, all employees need to be educated on character education and the interpretation of the traits must be shared by all stakeholders to ensure continuity. Documentation does exist with the interpretation provided by the superintendent; however, unless one is seeking the information, it is not readily available, thus creating the perception that the interpretation is based on one's beliefs. My belief is even with this education and interpretation provided; realistically, continuity will continue to elude us as every school comes with its own unique culture, demographics, staff, and administration.

An area of analysis was to determine whether trends existed between gender and years of experience when responding, however, analysis did not reveal any significant correlation between gender and experience.

The Current Landscape

Henson's (2001) research study of prospective teachers and their perceived responsibility for moral development found that most preservice teachers felt schools had a role in student moral development. Similarly in this study, the character traits which were believed to be a teaching expectation such as responsibility, civility, initiative, and respect; these were also the traits reportedly integrated into their daily teaching practice.

Respect was an interesting trait. There were more teachers integrating respect into their teaching practice than had identified it as a primary responsibility. This is perhaps due to the perceived notion by most teachers that they should be respected because of their role. Respect may have been one of those traits assumed to have already been taught in the home, therefore not a primary responsibility for the school to teach but certainly to ensure students demonstrate. With the exception of initiative; civility, respect and responsibility were deemed to be of at least somewhat a responsibility and most always or always integrated into teaching practice. When comparing the highest-ranked character traits as perceived to be of primary responsibility, teachers were fairly consistent between their perception and integration into practice. When analyzing the data, the assumption was that teachers were almost always integrating a character trait into practice, they believed that it had importance and were taking responsibility for students' development. The fact that civility, respect, responsibility, and initiative were ranked as the top four was not a surprise. When comparing the traits, civility and respect have similar character expectations as do responsibility and initiative. If you have students who demonstrated responsibility, they would be more than likely to also show initiative. The same would be true of civility and respect, both are characteristic of how one would treat another human being; thus, making assessment easier due to the extrinsic qualities these characteristics hold through the demonstration of completed work and interactions with others.

In the analysis of the male and female responses, there were some character traits which ranked as primary predominately more by females than their male counterparts. One of those traits identified was perseverance. Is this due to the roles and responsibilities of females in our society today? In many households today, the female

works a full time job while still maintaining the majority of the responsibilities for the family (child rearing, discipline, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and coordinating activities for their children). With so many roles and responsibilities to fulfill, perseverance is the character trait women rely on to meet all of the demands, which may explain why it is deemed as primary for so many of the respondents.

Compassion, like perseverance, for women was considered a primary responsibility with representation from all experience ranges. Coincidently, when asked about teaching practice, the majority of all surveyed teachers were almost always integrating compassion into their teaching. Perhaps women are more likely to admit to and display compassion more openly than men. However, as a profession, teachers are characterized as compassionate and committed to student development, and teaching and learning. This could explain why females ranked compassion as primary and as a group of respondents they were integrating this into their practice. The males who did not feel compassion was a primary responsibility may also have been considering their teaching style, as a male teacher they have to be very careful how they conduct themselves around students both male and female. Where it is acceptable for a female teacher to put her arm around the shoulder of a female or male student, it is not considered equally acceptable for a male teacher.

Fairness was identified by half of the surveyed teachers to be a primary responsibility while the remaining six felt it was somewhat of a responsibility. What is interesting about this was that only two veteran teachers ranked it as a primary responsibility, the other four teachers with equal experience felt only somewhat responsible. Given this data, I wondered whether this is due to the age of the teacher,

upbringing, school experience, and teaching experience. For some who have been teaching for more than 15 years there is a perception of change in students' attitudes towards school and teachers. Many teachers feel they have had to change the way they talk to and handle situations with students because they no longer have a class full of compliant and eager children. It is a perception that we live in a society today where many students feel entitled. This is very different from the experience of the previous generation of teachers. The majority of teachers indicated they consistently integrated fairness into their teaching practice. Again this may have been due to the need to change teaching practices to meet the characteristics of students today.

The majority of experienced teachers overwhelmingly felt that decency was only somewhat of a responsibility. Despite this feeling, they still indicated they were teaching decency as were the majority of the other teachers; however, only two assessed it as important. Based on interview responses, teachers indicated they found it difficult to assess decency, but felt it was closely related to respect and civility. Assessment of character traits such as optimism, courage, and decency were difficult as these characteristics speak to the intrinsic "character" of a student and typically not outwardly demonstrated.

Teachers had an opportunity to rate their perceived level of responsibility and integration of the character traits and commented on which traits they assessed. When analyzing the data by comparing the number of staff who believed the specific trait to be of a primary responsibility of the school to the number of staff who integrated the trait into their practice, a further comparison was then made to the number of teachers who assessed the traits. One piece of information sought in the study was whether there was a

difference between the genders and teachers with different years of experience. However, responses showed an even distribution for each of the character traits. In some instances, teachers' responses demonstrated a discrepancy between level of responsibility, integration, and assessment. Evans (2006) provided a possible explanation for the incongruity between what teachers say and do. He suggested that learning goals were too broad and teachers chose specific elements which easily met curricular requirements and the realities of the classroom.

In the majority of the traits, there was little discrepancy between the numbers of teachers who perceived the trait to be of primary responsibility, integrated into practice and assessed. Respect, decency, compassion, and civility were the exceptions. Respect rated as a primary responsibility by just over half and was integrated and assessed by all. If it is important enough to assess, one would think it would be deemed as a primary responsibility. This may be because some teachers expect children to be respectful especially to them because they are the teacher. A teacher's own personal values would come into play as they were probably the type of student who respected their teachers simply due to their role. Some teachers may have the belief that students have been taught to respect from home, the value of education, and therefore it should follow they would be respectful students when they come to class.

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of compassion, civility and decency were the opposite of respect. Decency was deemed a primary responsibility for just below half of the teachers while just over half always integrated it into their practice, but only two assessed. Only four teachers assessed compassion despite seven teachers rating it as a primary responsibility. Civility was very similar, with five assessing and eight teachers

deeming it to be primary. In the interviews it was noted that some of the character traits were difficult to assess, which may explain the discrepancy. Some teachers had commented on the need for a rubric and establishing consistent expectations for all students and teachers in the school. With a clear set of expectations, assessment of the character traits would be a simpler more defined task for teachers. At this point, in these two schools, staff has not had discussions regarding what character education looks like nor have they had the opportunity to discuss the character traits. This may also explain why teachers are not assessing some of the traits. Due to the traits having not been defined, rather they were based on the teacher's value system. Each one of us has different standards when defining character traits. Some traits are deemed more important than others, while others are just expected without consideration for where and when a child is going to learn those traits, thus making assessment difficult and inconsistent.

When asked to comment on the role staff should have on the planning for character development, teacher responses varied from major role to minimal role with the majority believing staff had to integrate character development into their classrooms and create school wide expectations. It was felt by a minority of experienced teachers that character development was the responsibility of the family and school took on the role of reinforcement. Time was a concern for some teachers as they felt character education was a subject to be taught in isolation rather than integrated into all subject areas. It was recognized that teaching character in isolation was not feasible, given time constraints and the amount of physical education students were to have on a daily basis. Those teachers who had indicated character development was to be integrated were less

concerned about the time factor because their method of teaching character was to incorporate teachable moments.

According to Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, and Smith (2006) "character education is the responsibility of adults" (p. 449). My research found teachers were divided on how much of a role they should have in this area. With so many teachers unaware about their responsibilities regarding character development, it was not surprising the responses varied with consideration to role. It was interesting that even though some of the junior high teachers commented on the impact *Lions Quest* had on the school and the need for character education to be taught in Health, the vast majority of teachers took responsibility for planning and ownership of character development within their classes. Teachers commented on character education being interwoven, integrated, and modeled in the classroom and school, Henson's (2001) third school of thought whereby teachers were responsible, but subtly through role modeling rather than direct teaching. These teachers relied on teachable moments as the most effective instructional practice and teacher observation was the main tool of assessment.

Teachers overwhelmingly agreed character education had a direct impact on the environment of a school and student achievement. Many of the teachers commented on the importance of creating a positive school environment, one in which students feel safe and willing to take risks. To create such an atmosphere, there must exist common expectations regarding acceptable behaviours; how individuals conducts themselves speaks to their character. When students feel safe and respected, the result will naturally is higher academic achievement due to the fact students are positively involved in their learning, taking responsibility for their actions and learning, and are willing to take risks

to achieve. This conclusion by teachers is supported by Britzman (2005), who comments on the identification of common character traits and attributes the development of these traits as essential in the creation of a healthy school environment, higher academic achievement, and the promotion of strong character. Vibert and Shields (2003), however, feel that educators' attention should be on student engagement and believe that if students are truly engaged there would be less time spent on behavioural concerns and decrease the need for character education and anti-bullying programs. The researchers believe that a shift of focus to student engagement is what is going to increase student achievement, promote citizenship, and create safe and caring schools. They found that educators had various interpretations of student engagement and what it looks like. Smith et al (1998) supports the importance of student engagement and comments "students, like teachers and community members are engaged in schools when schools are engaging places to be" (as cited in Vibert and Shields, 2003, p. 236). Through engagement students are demonstrating social justice by participating democratically which allows for everyone to have a voice, being empathetic and optimistic.

Challenges of Teaching Character Development

With any program there are challenges and character development is no different. Character education does not come with clear guidelines and general outcomes as teachers are accustomed to with all other subject areas. Character education involves developing the whole child, the "affective" child, not as easy to teach or assess.

Almost half of the teachers commented that school expectations, discussions, and policies should be established to ensure consistency. These teachers represented all experience levels with four being female and one male, which was representative of the

sample group. My interpretation of this is teachers are willing to take on the responsibility to teach character education, but would feel better equipped if clear expectations for teachers and students were established through staff discussions and input. The need for consistency was communicated by all of the teachers who had been interviewed.

Teachers identified a need for a standard rubric to assist in the assessment process. They felt that without some sort of standard, consistency would not be achievable. One of the teachers had commented that without some consensus around character development expectations, as teachers we end up teaching to our belief system.

Perception of Character Program Implementation

Teachers had a difference of opinion to the approach taken for the implementation of a character education program. There were some who felt character development should be a program unto itself, taught in isolation, and therefore should not be at the sacrifice of other curricular requirements.

The majority believed for a program to be successful it had to be approved of and practiced by all staff. Many were aware of the *Lions Quest* program, but felt that the success of character development was not reliant on any one particular program, but the need for consistency and training in whichever character development program was instituted. Teachers had to have consistency of definition of the character traits as well as expectations. Important to program success was training. When teachers had been trained using the *Lions Quest*, it was felt by most respondents there was consistency in the school wide use of a common language and expectations. Therefore, students were developing stronger, positive character traits.

Teachers, in this research study, did not feel a need for one specific character education program to be implemented into the school; however, they did indicate a need for a common understanding and language of character development, consistency, and commitment by all staff members. For success to occur, everyone had to contribute towards a common end. Alberta Education's research on character development supports the findings in this research study:

> All people do not necessarily have the same perspective on character and citizenship education. Some may feel that teaching values is not the role of the school; others may feel they already promote good character and citizenship, without an organized initiative. Building commitment means developing a shared vision and plan that school staff and key stakeholders including school councils, can develop together, believe in and support. It means giving the school community opportunity to reflect on how they embody core values, so that modeling becomes authentic for educators, students and parents. (Alberta Education, 2005, p.136)

Chapter 6: Thoughts and Implications

For Teachers

It was evident from this study the teachers involved in the study were unaware of the Character Ends Statement as mandated by the Board. They were unable to identify character as a goal, state the goal, and nor could they list the 11 character traits as identified by the Board. The teachers who volunteered to participate in the study now have an awareness of the Ends Statement, along with the list of character traits they are expected to address with all of their students. Hopefully, having this information heightens their awareness of character education and more conscious efforts are made to ensure they are teaching, modeling, practicing, and assessing character education. This should have significant implications because during the 2008-2009 school year the Board instituted the Ends Statement Reporting pilot where all five Ends are formally assessed each reporting period. System wide adoption of these assessment measures is expected for the 2009-2010 school year.

It is also my hope teachers begin to initiate conversations among themselves and across subject areas to discuss strategies and evaluates the progress they are making towards educating students in character development. Approximately one third of the staff is aware of the Board's requirements; some of them may initiate discussions regarding common expectations and language, as this was considered one of the challenges of teaching character education. The need for supporting one another creates an environment for professional learning communities. Professional learning communities as defined by Alberta Education "are created when teachers and administrators in a school or jurisdiction purposefully share learnings and then act on

what they learn. This process of sharing, reflection and improvement helps staff enhance effectiveness as professionals, to benefit students." (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 135).

For the teachers who participated, I hope their teaching practice will change to consciously address character education and hopefully their success will influence others.

For Students

Students were not directly involved in this research study. However, the perception of their teachers' and their role in character education will have an impact on students. Students of the teachers who chose to participate may benefit from this study as there is now an awareness of character development expectations. Students may be exposed to and taught to demonstrate the 11 character traits as identified by the Board. If they are taught, modeled and made to practice these traits, even if it is not in every class, eventually they may become a habit and not only in one or two classes but elsewhere as well.

Ideally, school leaders and teachers will engage in conversations to establish a common language and set of expectations which will allow for increased student success both academically and socially. The establishment of a common language and expectations eliminates confusion on the students' part as to what is acceptable and not acceptable, thus decreasing the number of behavioural incidents. Teachers in this study indicated they believed that students who practiced the identified character traits were more likely to succeed academically as they would be more disciplined and taking responsibility for their own learning. Students would be successful socially simply by demonstrating respect, compassion, fairness, and civility towards others.

For Leaders

This study has implications for leaders both at school and Board levels. The Board has made the Ends Statements accessible to all staff and provided posters for schools displaying the Ends. More work could be done in the explanation of the Ends by providing all staff with a list of the character traits and their interpretation the Board is mandating be incorporated into their work with students. This could take the form of a pamphlet which is specific and to the point outlining the expectations. The issue is: will teachers take the time to read the document? The goals are currently available on the website complete with explanations; however, many teachers do not take or have the time to read the information available as was revealed in the study.

That is where the role of the principal is important. The principal needs to take ownership of the document and provide staff with opportunities to work with the document by having discussions regarding what it might look like in their school. There is no discussion as to whether the staff would like to buy into the goals as they are mandated. So the question becomes: what is it going to look like at our school? The leaders concern would be the time factor. Prior to students coming in, there are not a lot of days to prepare classrooms and meet regarding the new school year. However, taking time to develop common goals and expectations at the beginning would be beneficial in setting a culture in the school for the remainder of the year.

Character education, along with the remaining goals set by the Board, is to be incorporated into a school's development plan. If we include the entire staff in the development of the school goals, we would also be ensuring staff is aware of what the district, Board and Alberta Education is expecting our schools to accomplish. Leaders

need to provide staff with the goals as mandated concerning the expectations of education, beyond subject curriculum, and not assume that there is awareness just because the information is available on a website.

For Further Research

This particular research study was limited to two schools which included elementary and junior high staff. The number of participants lacked statistical significance to be able to make generalizations about the district. However, informal discussions with colleagues from other schools, suggest the data found in this research appears to be similar to what is occurring in other schools within the Board. Also, data was not collected at the high school level to establish what the perception of staff would be. This study revealed, there were some junior high teachers who believed character education was to be taught in isolation in Health and they did not have time to teach character along with the curriculum. Research by Romanowski (2003) found high school students believed character education to be important, but at the elementary level, stating it was too late by high school. Would further research of high school staff produce the same findings?

It would be of interest to further research a group of teachers, who had been involved with the planning and implementation of a school development plan and discussed how the Character Ends should be implemented in their school, to see how or if their teaching practice and perception of character education has changed.

This was a study based on teachers' perceptions; student perception was not a factor. A further study of elementary, junior, and senior high students to gain a perspective of the impact of character education at the school level would be of value to

teachers and administrators. Few studies have been conducted with students in this area; hence there is justification for further research.

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Appendix A
Survey Questions

"Teacher Perception of Character Education" – Survey Questions

Section I
 Demographic information:

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. How many years of teaching experience do you have? 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, >15

Section II

4. What is the Board's End Statement #5?

5. What are the character traits as identified by the Board in End Statement #5?

6. What level of responsibility do you think schools should play in the teaching of the 11 identified character education traits?

Character Traits	Primary	Somewhat	Just a bit	Not at all
Integrity				
Compassion				
Decency				
Civility				
Fairness				
Courage				
Initiative				
Perseverance				
Respect				
Optimism				

Responsibility				

7. From the list of character traits identified by the Board which do you integrate into your teaching practice?

Character Traits	Always	Almost always	Sometimes	Never	Unsure
Integrity					
Compassion					
Decency					
Civility					
Fairness					
Courage					
Initiative					
Perseverance					
Respect					
Optimism					
Responsibility					

8. From the list of character traits identified, which traits are you currently assessing?

Character Traits	Yes	No
Integrity		
Compassion		
Decency		
Civility		

Fairness		
Courage		
Initiative		
Perseverance		
Respect		
Optimism		
Responsibility		

9. What role should staff have in planning for character development within their school?

10. What would a successful character development program look like?

11. Would you like to add any further comments about character development and education?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. If you would be willing to be interviewed for this research project please let me know via email.

Appendix B
Survey Questions Blueprint

Questions	Relevance	Survey Question
Objective	To identify trends between age and perception of character development	1. What is your age?
Objective	To identify trends between gender and perception of character development	2. What is your gender?
Objective	To identify trends between teaching experience and perception of character development	3. How many years of teaching experience do you have? 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, >15
Objective (knowledge)	To determine teacher's knowledge of the End Statements	4. What is Board's End Statement #5?
Objective (knowledge)	To determine if teachers know the 11 character traits identified by the Board	5. What are the character traits as identified by the Board in End Statement #5?
Reflective (value)	To determine which characteristics teachers feel are the most important from a teaching perspective	6. What level of responsibility do you think schools should play in the teaching of the 11 identified character education traits? (Each trait is listed requiring a response of: primary, somewhat, just a bit, not at all)
Reflective (practice)	To determine which characteristics teachers are integrating into their daily teaching and classroom practices	7. From the list of character traits identified by the Board which do you integrate into your teaching practice?
Decisional (practice)	To determine whether teachers are currently in the practice of assessing character development	8. From the list of character traits identified, which traits are you currently assessing?
Decisional (value)	To establish whether teachers feel a need to have a school wide focus and consensus on how or which character development traits to teach	9. What role should staff have in planning for character development within their school?
Decisional (practice)	To determine what teachers would consider to be necessary for a successful character development program in their school	10. What would a successful character development program look like?

Appendix C
Interview Questions

"Teacher Perception of Character Education" – Interview Questions

1. The Board has given us a statement, "Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others." As a teacher, what does this statement mean to you?

2. From the list of characteristics a) integrity, b) compassion, c) decency, d) civility, e) fairness, f) courage, g) initiative, h) perseverance, i) respect, j) optimism, and k) responsibility; which of these characteristics are you currently teaching about? Why or why not?

3. Are any of these characteristics difficult to teach? What strategies and techniques might you use to teach them to your students?

4. Please identify which characteristics you teach and what activities, resources, or methods you use to teach these characteristics to your students.

5. What forms of assessment do you have in place to evaluate the character traits?

6. Please talk about how character development is implemented in your school and your involvement in the implementation.

7. Please explain what challenges you face in teaching character education.

8. What impact, if any do you think teaching character education has on student achievement or the school environment? How do you know?

9. What can you tell me about formal character development programs necessary to teach these skills? For example Lions Quest, Safe and Caring Schools. Do you feel there is a need for such a program in your school?

10. Would you like to add any comments about character education and development?

Appendix D
Interview Questions Blueprint

Questions	Relevance	Interview Question
Objective (knowledge)	To establish whether or not teachers know about the End Statement E-5	1. The Board has given us a statement, "Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others." As a teacher, what does this statement mean to you?
Reflective (value and practice)	To determine which characteristics teachers feel are the easiest to teach	2. From the list of characteristics a)integrity, b)compassion, c)decency, d)civility, e)fairness, f)courage, g)initiative, h)perseverance, i)respect, j)optimism, and k)responsibility; which of these characteristics are you currently teaching about? Why or why not?
Reflective (practice)	To determine which of the characteristics teachers are apprehensive about teaching and have teachers think about how they might go about teaching the characteristic	3. Are any of these characteristics difficult to teach? What strategies and techniques might you use to teach them to your students?
Reflective (practice)	To determine what teachers are currently doing in their classrooms to teach character development	4. Please identify which characteristics you teach and what activities, resources, or methods you use to teach these characteristics to your students.
Reflective (practice)	To determine how teachers interpret student success in character development	5. What forms of assessment do you have in place to evaluate the character traits?
Reflective (knowledge and practice)	To determine what teachers perceive as character development activities and what role they play in the identified activities to build student character	6. Please talk about how character development is implemented in your school and your involvement in the implementation.
Reflective (practice)	To determine what the perceived challenges are in the teaching of character education and how can we as a school or leaders be of assistance	7. Please explain what challenges you face in teaching character education.
Reflective (value)	To determine whether teachers feel that by teaching students to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and be concerned about the rights of others; does this have an impact on student achievement or school environment	8. What impact, if any do you think teaching character education has on student achievement or the school environment? How do you know?
Decisional (knowledge)	To determine whether teachers feel that there is a need for the teaching of a formal character education program	9. What can you tell me about formal character development programs available to teach these skills? For example Lions Quest, Safe and Caring Schools. Do you feel there is a need for such a program in your school?
Reflective	Opportunity for the interviewee to add additional comments, feelings, interpretations of what character education means to them	10. Would you like to add any comments about character education and development?

Appendix E: Sample Participant Consent Letter

University of
Lethbridge

Faculty of Education

PARTICIPANT (ADULT) CONSENT FORM

Character Education: Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of character

development.

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled "Character Education: Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of character development"**,** that is being conducted by Lone Tuff. Lone Tuff is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge and you may contact her if you have further questions by calling_____, or email to **lone.tuff@uleth.ca**.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Masters of Education in Educational Leadership. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Leah Fowler. You may contact my supervisor at 403-329-2457.

The purpose of this research project is to determine how teachers perceive their effectiveness at teaching character education; given that one of the mandates set by our school board trustees is to develop character within our students. The Board has identified 11 character traits which are to be taught and assessed at the end of each year to determine growth. My main thesis question is: What are teachers' perceptions of what character education looks like, and how successful do they feel they are in developing the character traits as outlined by the Trustees?

Research of this type is important because it is my hope that through this research, teachers will become more aware of the curriculum of character development as mandated in the End statement of the Board's Three Year Education Plan 2006-2009. Teachers need to be aware of the School Board End Statements which includes knowledge of the 11 character traits we are supposed to be addressing. Teachers need to begin to have discussions at the school level as to what it will look like in their building. The contribution I hope it will make is to create an awareness both by the board and its teachers of how to better communicate and support staff in the achievement of End Statement. The statement as defined in the Three Year Plan states, "Each student will possess the character to do what is right, act morally with wisdom, and balance individual concerns with the rights and needs of others."

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a certified teacher at one of the two schools I am assigned to.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include completion of a survey and 6 teachers will be selected for an interview.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including a time commitment- for 6 of the participants, 1-1 ½ hours. For most of the participants the commitment is only 10-15 minutes.

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include social and emotional risks. Social – teachers may perceive a change in relationship or a loss of respect if they feel a "right" answer is required or feel that they must participate. Emotional – teachers may feel that they are inadequate or doubt their ability to teach character curriculum. To prevent or to deal with these risks the following steps will be taken If teachers have further questions or concerns they can contact Dr. Rick Mzarek, Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and Research in Education, University of Lethbridge; Dr. Leah Fowler, Thesis Supervisor, University of Lethbridge; or further conversation with myself.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include: 1) more of an awareness of character curriculum; 2) important conversation amongst teachers about character development; 3) learn about curriculum directive; 4) extending teaching; 5) more involvement by teachers in character development; 6) students benefit from learning about character development; 7) reap the benefits in teaching by working with students who are respectful, honest…; 8) overall improved school atmosphere; 9) increased involvement to school environment by students thus causing a ripple effect into the community and society.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data from the interview will be destroyed. Due to the anonymity of the questionnaire, it is not possible to remove that data.

The researcher has a relationship to potential participants as Assistant Principal. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken; in my position as assistant principal at School A, where I spend most of my time, the staff and I have established a relationship based on integrity. They are free to share their thoughts and ideas in a non-threatening environment where their contributions are valid and reasonable. At my second campus, I have not had the opportunity to establish the same type of relationships with the staff. By not having the same opportunities for communication, the teachers should feel free to base their responses on their perceptions. Therefore data collected should be reflective of their perceptions. With the two campuses being significantly different in their enrollment, grade configuration, programs, and number of staff; the data collected should be reflective of what is common within the system as a whole.

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will inform you that the questionnaire is a one time occurrence as is the interview process. The interviewees will be required to go over their transcript to ensure accuracy. At any time you may decide to discontinue your participation.

In terms of protecting your anonymity the surveys will be completed in such a way that identifying the teachers will not be possible. The interviews, for obvious reasons, their perceptions will not be anonymous to myself; however data collected will not be shared with others in such a way as to identify you. Care will also be taken to remove all identifying details (i.e. names, names of places, companies, streets, other people) and replace them pseudonyms.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by having staff print off completed surveys and submitting in an envelope in the staffroom. Survey may done using "Survey Monkey", a software program available for use by the Board which will also ensure anonymity. The interviewees will be identifiable by me; however, data shared will not be reported in such a way as to identify the participants.

Other planned uses of this data include depending on funding and need, there may be professional curriculum developed around character curriculum.

Data will be kept off of the school premises, in my home, in a locked filing cabinet. Data from this study will be disposed of after 5 years.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: directly to participants, published article, thesis/class presentation and Professional development.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher [and, if applicable, the supervisor] at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subjects Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge (403-329-2425).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.