

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
ScholarWorks@UARK

Theses and Dissertations

12-2013

Perceived Impact of Character Education Program at a Midwest Rural Middle School: A Case Study

Sandra Jean Goss

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching Commons](#), and
the [Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Goss, Sandra Jean, "Perceived Impact of Character Education Program at a Midwest Rural Middle School: A Case Study" (2013).
Theses and Dissertations. 944.

<http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/944>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu, ccmiddle@uark.edu.

Perceived Impact of Character Education Program At A Midwest Rural Middle School:
A Case Study

Perceived Impact of Character Education Program At A Midwest Rural Middle School:
A Case Study

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Administration

by

Sandra Jean Goss
Missouri Southern State College
Bachelor of Science in Education, 1997
Pittsburgh State University
Master of Science in Education, 2000
Missouri State University
Education Specialist in Administration, 2007

December 2013
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Dr. Carleton R. Holt
Dissertation Director

Dr. Barbara C. Gartin
Committee Member

Dr. Wen-Juo Lo
Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Today there exist a concern for the safety and success of students in the public education system. Families, educators, and community members are concerned with the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of students in an environment where incidents of violence are growing. Events like the school shootings at Jonesboro, Arkansas, and at Columbine High School left our nation concerned with the problems within the school system. Many believe that character education can be an effective solution. The purposes of this study are to describe key elements of one school's character education program, and to determine the impact that this program had on academics, attendance, and discipline incidents within that school.

The data in the study will be a result of document analysis in a single rural middle school consisting of students in grades 5-8, in a school where the teachers and community members perceived that discipline issues were out of control. The study is centered on the belief that character education will have a positive impact on attendance, academics, and the number of discipline incidents.

© by Sandra Jean Goss
All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the committee members who helped and encouraged me through the dissertation process. Mr. Holt, my dissertation chair, who reminded me to remain focused and keep pushing forward. Dr. Wen-Juo Lo provided insight and encouragement to conduct qualitative data research. I am especially grateful for the support and encouragement of Dr. Gartin. Throughout the process she inspired me to take pride in my research and remain motivated to finish my project. Her guidance and positive feedback provided the confidence and support I needed to succeed. I also want to express appreciation to my husband, Wendell. He was a constant support and took on added responsibilities to allow me time to work on my dissertation. My parents repeated question, "Are you almost done?" provided me with the drive to continue working when I was unmotivated. I would like to thank them for continuing to encourage me as well as my entire family for being flexible and understanding. My colleagues deserve recognition and thanks for listening to my complaints and serving as listening boards throughout the research and writing of my dissertation. I am grateful to all those who helped me complete this project and want to recognize their contributions to its completion.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my loving husband, my parents, my mother-in-law and my late father-in-law. My husband was unconditional in his love, support, and patience while I completed my work. My parents taught me to persevere and always believed in my ability. Lastly, I want to include my father-in-law and mother-in-law who prayed and encouraged me to complete my dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Background of the Study	3
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	6
Research Questions	9
Research design	9
Research Setting	10
Conceptual Framework	11
Theoretical Framework	12
Delimitations of the Study	14
Limitations of the Study.....	14
Definition of Terms.....	14
Conclusion.....	16
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature	17
Historical Perspectives	17
Authors and Theorists in Character Education	22
Theoretical Framework	24
Character Education and Moral Development	34

Implementation of character education research and theories	37
Common components of character education	39
Impact of Character Education Programs	45
Decrease the numbers of discipline referrals	45
Improve school attendance	46
Increases in academics	46
Changes within the school culture	47
Improvement in mental health.....	48
Research Findings and Issues	50
Summary of Review of Literature and Conclusion.....	52
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	53
Research Design	53
Research Questions	54
Researcher’s Role	55
Researcher’s Theoretical Lens	55
Researcher’s Background	56
Character Education Program Implementation Process	56
Communication	62
Visibility	63
Student recognition	64
School District Demographics	65
Area Description.....	68
Middle school demographics	69

Background of the Middle School	69
Middle school faculty	70
Administrative and support staff	70
Data Sources.....	71
Data Analysis.....	73
Reliability and Validity.....	74
Summary	74
Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis	76
Introduction	76
Description of Documents Examined.....	76
Pre-Implementation Survey	77
Strengths of Greyson Middle School	77
Budget.....	77
Teacher expertise	77
Class size.....	78
Building and grounds	78
Teacher compassion toward students and each other	78
Open door policy of the administration	78
Weaknesses of Greyson Middle School	79
Communication	79
Discipline.....	79
Academics.....	80
Expectations of teacher professionalism	80

Lack of support from administration	81
Lack of mutual support among teachers	81
Suggested Improvements at Greyson Middle School	82
Consistency of discipline	82
Academics.....	82
Administrative leadership and teacher expectations	83
Communication	83
Teacher morale	83
Character building	84
Summary of the Survey Findings	84
Findings from the Faculty Newsletter	84
Academics.....	84
Incentives for students and teachers	85
Discipline.....	86
Character education	86
Collaboration and communication	87
Professional development	87
Summary of the Faculty Newsletter	87
Findings from the Faculty Agenda	88
Academics.....	88
Incentives for students and teachers	88
Discipline.....	88
Character education	89

Collaboration and communication	89
Professional development	89
Evaluations and expectations	89
Summary of the Faculty Agenda	89
Findings from the Parent Newsletter	90
Student expectations and discipline program	90
Incentives.....	90
Character education	90
Academics.....	91
Attendance.....	91
School activities and programs	91
Summary of the Parent Newsletter	92
Findings from the Board Report	92
Student attendance and enrollment	92
Student and teacher recognition	92
Character education	93
Academics.....	93
Professional development	93
School activities and programs	94
Celebrations.....	94
Summary of the Board Report	94
Findings from the Character Education Power Points and Brochures	94
Brochure.....	94

Power points.....	95
Summary of Power Points and Brochures	95
Findings from the Character Education Community Committee Meetings	95
Communication	96
Visibility.....	96
Student recognition	97
Summary of the Character Education Committee Minutes	97
Findings from the Character Education School Committee Meetings	98
Awareness.....	98
Visibility.....	98
Student recognition	98
Student behavior	99
Summary of the Character Education School Committee Minutes	99
Findings from the Character Education Training.....	99
Character education history	99
Character traits	100
Integrating character into curriculum	100
Staff development	100
Student leadership	101
Implementation process	101
Evaluation.....	101
Summary of the Character Education Training	102
Findings from Student Lessons	102

Student academics	102
Student discipline	103
Citizenship.....	103
Summary of the Student Lessons	103
Findings from the Newspaper	103
Academics.....	103
Discipline.....	103
Character trait	104
Student recognition	104
Summary of the Newspaper	104
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	104
Data Analysis... ..	104
Summary of the Findings	117
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations	118
Summary.....	118
Interpretation of the Data	119
Program Recommendations	120
Recommendations for Further Research	122
Conclusions... ..	123
References	126
Appendix	133

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1 <i>Sample Documents</i>	54
Table 2 <i>Stages of Implementation Process</i>	57
Table 3 <i>2005-2006 Middle School Enrollments</i>	66
Table 4 <i>2006-2007 Middle School Enrollments</i>	66
Table 5 <i>2007-2008 Middle School Enrollments</i>	67
Table 6 <i>2008-2009 Middle School Enrollments</i>	67
Table 7 <i>2009-2010 Middle School Enrollments</i>	68
Table 8 <i>DESE Discipline Data for the Building</i>	106
Table 9 <i>2005-2010 Attendance Data Grades 5-8</i>	107
Table 10 <i>5th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data</i>	108
Table 11 <i>6th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data</i>	109
Table 12 <i>7th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data</i>	110
Table 13 <i>8th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data</i>	111
Table 14 <i>5th Grade Math MAP Academic Data</i>	113
Table 15 <i>6th Grade Math MAP Academic Data</i>	114
Table 16 <i>7th Grade Math MAP Academic Data</i>	115
Table 17 <i>8th Grade Math MAP Academic Data</i>	116

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
<i>Figure 1.</i> Kohlberg’s theory of moral development	13
<i>Figure 2.</i> Visual representation of the 5 th grade communication arts map data	108
<i>Figure 3.</i> Visual representation of the 6 th grade communication arts map data	110
<i>Figure 4.</i> Visual representation of the 7 th grade communication arts map data	111
<i>Figure 5.</i> Visual representation of the 8 th grade communication arts map data	112
<i>Figure 6.</i> Visual representation of the 5 th grade math map data	113
<i>Figure 7.</i> Visual representation of the 6 th grade math map data	115
<i>Figure 8.</i> Visual representation of the 7 th grade math map data	116
<i>Figure 9.</i> Visual representation of the 8 th grade math map data	117

Chapter One

Introduction

March 24, 1998, was a day that gained both local and national recognition for Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Unfortunately, it was not the recognition that school stakeholders dreamed of achieving. This recognition was because of a massacre that two middle school boys created. Two students in Jonesboro, Arkansas, killed 5 people (1 teacher and 4 students) and wounded 10 others in an ambush-style school shooting.

On April 20, 1999, the Columbine High School Massacre occurred. Two seniors killed 12 students and 1 teacher, injured 21 other students and an additional 3 people who were trying to escape. Although Columbine was not the first incident of school violence, it is the one that caught the attention of the American public. *Pulling a Columbine* is a phrase that didn't exist 30 years, or even 20 years ago. Now, almost every student and adult knows the implications or intention of that phrase.

One is able to review timelines of school shootings and it reveals that school shootings have happened every year since the 1990's. Not all school shootings are listed on the timeline. On October 9, 2006, a 13 year-old student walked into a Joplin, Missouri middle school carrying an assault rifle and fired one shot. Luckily this situation was handled quickly and no one was injured. However, the site of the Joplin shooting was approximately one hour from the school where I, the researcher, was employed. Likewise, the impact of the 1998 Jonesboro incident is important because Jonesboro, Arkansas, is approximately 200 miles from my school district within the geographical area where this study was conducted and is less than a 4-hour drive. The shootings in schools continue throughout America. On Feb. 10, 2012, a 14-year-old student shot himself in front of 70 fellow students. As recently as February 27, 2012 at a high school, a 17

year old student shot and killed three students and injured six others (U.S. News, 2008). The violence being displayed in schools has been linked to long-term bullying and social ostracism. Bullying in schools is escalating and becoming a key concern throughout the nation. “No school is free from the pervasive problem of peer aggression and bullying” (Cornell & Mayer, 2010, p. 10). Schools are recognizing how widespread bullying is and how serious the consequences for those who are the victims and those who victimize others (Espelage, Swearer, Hymel, & Vaillancourt, 2010). In addition to school bullying another concern was cyber-bullying among school-age children. Technology and social media have given both victims and perpetrators an additional way to interact (Willard, 2007). My concerns over the possibility of school violence and bullying occurring in my school district escalated after the school shooting incidents in neighboring districts. I wondered if my new students and their families would have similar feelings. As I made inquiries of the teachers I would be working with in the Fall of 2005, my unease grew when I received confirmation from the teachers that, in their opinion, discipline was out of control. Because of my concerns and the expressed concerns of the teachers, we began to search for strategies to reduce the potential of school violence within the school where I would be serving as principal.

In the fall of 2005, I became the principal of Greyson Middle School and, immediately, the staff and I discussed the need to find a program that would be a positive influence on the attitudes and behavior of our students. The faculty and I, as educators, loosely defined *character education* as educational experiences that helps students to develop behaviors that the local community would consider moral, well-mannered, non-bullying, and typical of a good citizen. As we reviewed character education programs we were astonished to find the quantity of programs available. During the 2005-2006 school year, the teachers and I, as a committee,

reviewed many of these commercial character education programs. The committee reviewed 15 different character education programs and narrowed the field down to four. Of the final four, we identified the program that we hoped would be most beneficial for our school and prepared to implement it within the next school year. During the second year, 2006-2007, the staff participated in four trainings to learn strategies for implementation of the character education program. We began publicizing the character education program within the local community in an attempt to build awareness among students, parents, and community members. As principal, I met with three community groups in order to present our rationale for a character education program. We sought support from local organizations to help publicize the character education program we chose. The three groups I met with were: Ministerial Alliance, Rotary Club, and Chamber of Commerce. The local newspaper representatives attended the Chamber of Commerce meeting. Internally, I met with our school district administration team, including our assistant superintendent and superintendent, in order to incorporate the program district-wide as well as community-wide. The character education program was fully implemented in the third year, 2007-2008, within the school. In the fourth year 2008-2009 of the program, I transferred to another school and a new principal, my assistant principal was appointed to the principalship I held for three years.

Background of the Study

School procedures have changed as a result of school shootings. Now schools must have a crisis procedure in place in case of school shootings or other forms of violence occur. Likewise, schools are looking for ways to improve school climate and ways to educate students in character traits that help ensure fewer incidents of violence. Researchers say attitude and character can have a great impact on the school environment (Lunenburg & Bulach, 2005;

Murphy, 1998; Ryan, Bohlin, & Thayer, 1996; Shriver & Weissberg, 2005; Tatman, Edmondson, & Slate, 2009). Negative attitudes can become contagious among students because “contagious youth culture of academic negativism and misconduct can thwart learning and disrupt the school routine” (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999, p. 99). In the school environment, those attitudes can spread throughout the student population so quickly that it becomes difficult to correct them before they result in heinous behavior. Research has shown that school climate improves when character education programs are implemented (Murphy, 1998). Implementing a character education program that is carefully organized can have positive results on student behavior as Bennett (1991) indicated that, “If we want our children to possess the traits of character we most admire, we need to teach them what those traits are” (p. 133). Character can have a positive effect individually and on the student population as a whole.

Participants in a study conducted by the Character Education Partnership identified desirable outcomes related to implementation of character programs. These outcomes include:

- “... Increasing socio-moral cognitive development, problem solving skills, and emotional competency
- Improving academic achievement
- Increasing attachment to school and coping skills
- Reducing violence/aggression and drug use...” (Character Education

Partnership, 2003, para. 6). The improved student attitudes begin to permeate the school setting. There is a decrease in negative student behaviors. This same attitude improvement affects the culture and is infused in curriculum and is reflected by improved student achievement, interactions, and parental involvement (Character Education Partnership, 2003).

“Most Americans will tell you that character education is a good idea. According to pollsters, 90% of us want schools to teach core moral values” (Matera, 2001, p. 191). This study is important because the educators teach to reach the whole child and part of meeting the needs of the whole child is incorporating universal character education traits within the curriculum. Adults serve as role models for students with whom they interact (Tatman, et al., 2009). Teaching these traits is an integral part of education because not all students are exposed to the same behaviors at home that are expected in public schools. “While the development of a child’s character is clearly not the sole responsibility of the school, historically and legally schools have been major players in this arena” (Ryan, 1993, p. 16). “Teachers, administrators, and even parents resonate to the idea of teaching the students the core values deemed essential for cultural survival” (Lasley, 1997, p. 654). Violence that once seemed to be nonexistent within the educational system has appeared more frequently during middle school age children than in the past. “The dramatic increase in the prevalence of problem behaviors during adolescence is a national concern” (Simons-Morton, et al., 1999, p. 99). Schools are not seen as the *safe* places they were in the past.

The statistics gathered by Tatman et al. in 2009 regarding violent student behaviors such as “...attacks, shakedowns, robberies, attempted suicides and gun related crimes...” (Tatman, et al., para. 3) demonstrates a real need to improve student attitudes and character. Education is impacted daily by tardiness, lack of respect, defiant behaviors, and the stress these impose on the teaching staff. Violence in the school setting requires additional security measures and personnel to ensure safety and protect instructional time (Tatman et al., 2009). Through the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) survey revealed 68% of teachers saying pupil behavior had worsened in the last two years (Taylor, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

I traced the developments of the character education program through the stages pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages as well as the two years after the transfer of leadership of the school. I examined whether or not there was evidence that the building was infusing character education in the classroom from 2005 to 2010. I sought evidence to determine if character education impacted academic progress, attendance, and discipline of students. I analyzed the evidence that was available that showed character education continued after transfer of leadership. This review determined how character education activities evolved after the change of leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover how character education impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline at a designated middle school. I utilized document analysis to study the impact of the character education program implemented into the school. The research plan that guided this study analyzed data over a five year period including pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages as well as the, two years after the transfer of leadership of the school.

Significance of the Study

Schools across the country have used character education programs to improve the climate for their learning organizations. Federally funded grants were made available through No Child Left Behind Act (Kirby, Levine, & Elrod, 2006). Administrators and other school personnel were encouraged to incorporate character education into the educational curriculum and culture (Kirby et al., 2006).

Research supports the implementation of character education as part of school culture instead of as a separate component to curriculum. Several studies have shown that effective programs can reduce the number of student discipline referrals and improve student attendance in schools (Schaeffer, 2003; Simons-Morton et al., 1999; Tatman et al., 2009). As a result, many schools have turned to character education to help alleviate negative trends in students' behaviors. The relationship between students' academic success and disruptive school behavior has not been fully reviewed (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). Programs have been implemented to improve school safety that have not been evaluated or measured even though they have been in place for several years (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). As schools add more technology devices into classrooms new problems arise. The issue of cyber-bullying through electronic communication devices has become an added factor to bullying others (Beale & Hall, 2007). Children have taken their lives due to messages, images, and other social media that harasses or exposes them to personal humiliation. This is the new face of bullying (Diamanduros & Downs, 2011). In the past a bully was usually bigger or stronger than the victims. However, technology has given bullies anonymity and the freedom to harass 24 hours a day from any location. There is no escape for the victim (Diamanduros & Downs, 2011). Today's culture is more technological and more violent than the culture of ten years ago. Video games, music and television programs present violence and explicit conversations about drugs, alcohol, and suicide. The level of hostility is much higher partially due to the increased exposure but also due to the ability to be cruel and remain anonymous (Underwood, 2011).

According to Nichols and Wade (2008), character education has a physical mission as well as a mental mission. Its mission is to provide safe learning environments so that children and youth can focus on academic and behavioral achievement. Schools that rely on threats and

fear as evidenced in *zero tolerance* policies create climates that do not improve or change behaviors, instead they remove the students (Kohn, 2004). Schools with embedded character education programs focus on building a caring, respectful climate (Kohn, 2004). Therefore, punishment for poor behavior must reflect what is considered appropriate within character education boundaries. The reaction/correction of the misbehavior must be considered socially correct. However, the system of school wide positive behavioral supports (SWPBS) has a focus on teaching and rewarding behaviors which directly relates to character education. There must be significant importance assigned to positive behaviors to model the intrinsic rewards of good character (Nichols & Wade, 2008).

Recognizing these concerns and issues to be valid is even more vital to the current educational climate, in which safety for students must come from intrinsic value of peers. Positive relationships in the school setting are imperative to character development. Current research indicates that a quality character education program will feature classroom meetings to promote caring communities and build relationships of trust and support. The school, as a whole, needs a focus on character by example, and through explicit character lessons (Damon & Berkowitz, 2002).

This study analyzed both the historical and trend data of a school prior to pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages as well as the two years after the transfer of leadership of the school in order to determine the impact the program had within the school. This study has shown the process of these stages in implementing an effective character education program. Although some conclusions can be based on existing research, there is need for research that will deepen understanding of effective practices in character education (Damon & Berkowitz, 2002). This research provides organizations the

information of all the planning stages of a character education initiative from start to finish and provides information of how the program sustained after change in staffing. This study has shown the importance of these stages in implementing an effective character education program. This study augmented the current program and policies for character education.

Research Questions

1. How did the character education program develop, evolve and continue after the transfer of leadership?
2. Did character education program impact academics at said middle school? If so, how?
3. Did character education program impact attendance at said middle school? If so, how?
4. Did character education impact discipline at said middle school? If so, how?

Research design. When determining a projects research method, consideration must be given to the match between the research problem, approach, researcher's training and personal experiences, and audience for whom the report will be written and shared (Creswell, 2003). I conducted a qualitative study, specifically a case study. "The focus of all qualitative research needs to be on understanding the phenomenon being explored rather than solely on the reader, the researcher, or the participants being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 3). I conducted a qualitative study reviewing data analysis of historical and trend data through this case study. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and

documents and reports), and reports a case description and case –based themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

Document analysis was the methodology applied in this qualitative study. The goal of document analysis was to produce an understanding or find an explanation from the documents studied. The documents were examined to determine if character education impacted academic progress, attendance, and discipline at this middle school. The use of document analysis was appropriate as I analyzed documents collected prior to pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages as well as the two years after the transfer of leadership of the school in order to chronicle the history and impact of the character education program.

I have analyzed the data for common themes to determine if the program impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline at the designated middle school. I analyzed the data collected by utilizing open coding strategies and identified the themes that emerged from the different documents. Results from the study were used to determine if character education impacted academic progress, attendance, and discipline in its current capacity. If the results of the study do not show improvement, then the information will be valuable to character education participants and partners in order to re-evaluate and make changes to the existing program based on research results concerning the program's impact.

Research Setting

The following description was of a rural middle school character education program in Southwest Missouri. The middle school consisted of grades fifth through eighth and over 90% of the staff and students were Caucasian. The majority of the students were on free or reduced lunch. Several students at this middle school were considered at-risk students. This character

education program was embedded in the school and community to educate students on specific character traits. The words were visible in the community, businesses, churches, and throughout the middle school building. Monthly assemblies were held to explain and provide examples of the trait of the month. Teachers incorporated the word of the month in their lessons.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study is a single case study involving analysis of documents of a character education program at a selected rural middle school. I assessed the impact of the character education program to see if it improved academics, attendance, and discipline during a five year span. Creswell (2009) defines a framework as “an organizing model for the research questions or hypotheses and for the data collection procedure” (p. 55) that guides the study. It shows where character education and moral development has come from, where it currently is, and where it is going. It can show the paths, distance and destinations others have been. My background consists of seventeen years in education; four as a teacher and thirteen as an administrator, all at the middle school level. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have standards that Missouri school leaders are to follow and incorporate into the school buildings. DESE uses the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards to evaluate the school leaders’ performance. Within those expectations, school leaders must provide a safe environment conducive to learning with standards to guide leaders with discipline issues such as bullying, violence, and disrespect (DESE, 2012). I have been guided by a national character education certified instructor to learn the steps and processes of how to effectively implement a character education program into a school and community. By researching how moral development and character education has evolved, this study has used the experience and knowledge of experts such as Kohlberg, Lickona, and Berkowitz, to build on

the foundations they have constructed. Utilizing the knowledge of experts in this field, this study has built on their foundations and show that character education can have a positive effect beyond just trying to decrease the events of school violence; it is possible to have a positive impact on academics, attendance, and discipline.

Theoretical Framework

As a middle school principal preparing to work at a new district, I wanted to see how teachers and staff perceived the climate and culture of the building they worked in. The faculty and staff felt that discipline was out of control, and that attendance was a problem as well. This motivated me to research possible solutions for the problem. Beginning with Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development, the work of Lickona, Berkowitz, and Bier on character education, I saw that implementing a character education program was a solution that was yielding positive results. I also saw character education as an effective tool to yield not only positive results in culture and discipline, but attendance and academic achievement as well. I started my study by researching moral development theories to serve as a foundation for the implementation of a character education program.

Lawrence Kohlberg approached psychological and philosophical assumptions to develop his Theory of Moral Judgment. He worked with Anne Colby to create the Moral Dilemma test to measure and recognize how moral development changes and progresses as people progress through life (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987). This became a definite foundation to build character development. Utilizing Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development for a foundation to refer to gives researchers a guide to develop a character education program that coincides with the stages as student's progress through the stages on Kohlberg's theory (*Figure 1*).

Level One: Pre-conventional Morality	Stage 1: Punishment-Obedience Orientation
	Stage 2: Instrumental Relativist Orientation
Level Two: Conventional Morality	Stage 3: Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation
	Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation
Level Three: Post-Conventional Morality	Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation
	Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

Figure 1. Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Wong, 2000, para. 2)

Working from an educational stand point, many utilized Kohlberg's theory to research and study to see how moral development should be incorporated and utilized within the education system for an effective character education program. Lickona laid the early foundation of character education's impact. Berkowitz, Bier, Tatman, Edmondson, and Slate began the dynamic study of character education. Their research has shown that character education, when implemented effectively, does produce results with moral development (Lickona, 2003; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Tatman, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009).

Working with all of the research and studies mentioned here, my study has shown that character education not only impacts school culture and security, but can also have a positive impact on attendance, academic achievement, and discipline referrals. This study is important to the field of character education to reflect that character education has benefits beyond creating an environment that improves the well-being, both physically and mentally, of the students involved. It has shown that character education was an important part of the education system. This study starts from the implementation stage and provides a guide through each step of the implementation process of a character education program. This study is both significant and relevant to educators, the community, and the parents. It can serve as an effective tool for

making positive changes through character education. This study has advanced understanding of character education's importance to student success and adds to previous studies by providing knowledge useful to the implementation of character education programs.

Delimitations of the Study

1. Since the research was based in a small, rural town, the results can be somewhat limited geographically.
2. Historically, the majority in this school were eligible for free and reduced lunches.
3. Within the school district, there were very limited employment opportunities available. Families worked in local agricultural industries or drove to larger towns outside of the district for employment.
4. The location of the school is in the conservative Midwest with many community events emanating from religious and similar influences.

Limitations of the Study

1. Individual teachers implement the program inconsistently in their classrooms.
2. Teachers, administrators, and staff members change.
3. Individuals perceptions vary when completing surveys.
4. There are different degrees of concerns about effectiveness of the program.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, some terms were operationally defined, and some are researcher-developed definitions:

Bully: "Intimidation or harassment that causes a reasonable student to fear for his or her physical safety or property" (NSBA, 2012).

Bus Driver: For the sake of this study, bus drivers will be defined as any member who transports students to and from school. Bus drivers are considered district employees.

Character Education:

Character education is a national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring behaviors in young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share. It is the intentional, proactive effort by schools, districts, and states to instill in their students important core, ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others. (Damon & Berkowitz, 2002, p. 151)

Cyberbullying: “Harassing another person through electronic communication on at least two separate occasions or creating and maintain web site or page that includes a threat of immediate or future bodily harm, sexual assault, confinement or restraint” (Boerema, 2008, para. 5).

Faculty: For the sake of this study, faculty will be defined as any member that is a certified teacher, counselor, or principal in a school building.

Middle School: Middle school is an intermediate school between primary elementary school and high school. For the sake of this study the middle school is grades fifth through eighth.

School Personnel: For the sake of this study, school personnel will be defined as any member that works in that school building.

Staff: For the sake of this study, staff will be defined as any member that works in a classroom in that school building.

The following words are defined by the Character Education program:

Accountable: To consider the consequences of your actions, and to recognize that you are held liable for your choices.

Attitude: To be positive when dealing with others, to believe in yourself, and to approach challenges with optimism.

Caring: To be interested and concerned about others, and to treat them with understanding and compassion.

Cooperation: To be helpful, to work with others for the common good, and to be a willing and productive team player.

Courtesy: To be polite and considerate, to act with manners, and to be generous and helpful with others.

Dependable: To be consistent in your actions and behavior, and to be steadfast in doing what is needed or expected of you.

Honesty: To tell the truth, to be fair and straightforward, and to lead a life of honor and dignity.

Integrity: To behave in accordance with your values, to be sincere, and to be faithful to what you believe is important.

Respect: To show consideration for the feelings and rights of yourself, others and the world around you.

Responsible: To follow through with your commitments, to be reliable, and to use good judgment in making decisions.

Self-Discipline: To work hard, to control your emotions, actions and impulses, and to give your best in every situation.

Trustworthy: To be reliable, to follow through with your responsibilities, and to inspire others to believe in you. (Springfield Public Schools, 2012, p.1 - Brochure)

Conclusion

Chapter one explained the introduction, importance of the study, statement of problem, theoretical framework, and significance of the study. It also addressed the research questions, design, and setting. Definitions of terms and the conclusions were also addressed in chapter one. Chapter two reviewed the literature relevant to this study. This chapter provides a more in depth look at the search strategy, background, historical perspectives, theoretical framework, significance, and the effectiveness of character education programs. Chapter three included an overview of communication, visibility, school demographics and description of the area, data sources, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Chapter four presented the data analysis, introduction, research questions, description of documents examined, and the major themes identified. Chapter five presented the introduction, summary, research questions, interpretation of data, program recommendations, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Historical Perspectives

In the early years as a nation, the idea that students need to learn more than just knowledge was accepted in the ideals of public education. It was thought that students needed to learn how to be effective and responsible members of our democratic society. In *Character Education: A Historical Overview*, the authors create a timeline of emphasis of character within the education system (Tatman, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009). In common schools in the 1800's in Colonial America, the schools were brought together for a primarily moral purpose. The health of America's new democracy would depend on the morals and virtues of its citizens. As a new nation, failure was possible if its citizens weren't educated with common morals and virtues (Ryan, 2003). Civic virtues were prominent in early textbooks. Among these virtues were hard work, respect for parents, love for God and Country, and honesty. By teaching these virtues, schools attempted to develop responsible citizens (Levy, 2000). "Schoolbooks were meant to train the child's character" (Levy, 2000, p. M2).

In 1963, Madalyn Murray O'Hair challenged prayer in schools, not by challenging freedom of religion, but challenging freedom *from* religion in the education system. A devout atheist, O'Hair wanted prayer in school completely eliminated. The court case *Murray v. Curlett* eventually made its way to the United States Supreme court and was another challenge to the education system (All About History, 2012). It is interesting to note that not a single Christian organization filed against O'Hair, possibly because they thought the idea of the abolition of school prayer was absurd and would never make it through the judicial system. *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* was tried at the Supreme Court at the same time.

This case was about the state law in Pennsylvania that required the reading of 10 Bible verses every day. It is interesting to note that in this case, the law stated that “The readings were without comment and any student could request to be excused” (All About History, 2012, para. 1). Combining the cases together with one ruling, the Supreme Court ruled that school prayer and bible reading were unconstitutional (All About History, 2012). This decision was another important moment and effectively changed the public education system. With this ruling, the emphasis of moral or values education began to fade due to the concerns that morals or values could cross into the grey area of the separation of church and state.

The 1960s brought about controversy over establishing a *values-free* classroom. Since in a pluralistic society, no one was able to establish a common set of character traits for teachers to reinforce, the goal became a values-free classroom. Teachers no longer had the authority to teach morality education (Tatman, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009). In order to stay away from charges that character education was somehow affiliated with religious education, lessons about character focused on universal, nonreligious traits (Tatman, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009).

In 1998, Annette Kusgen McDaniel states, “...the conduct of United States youth during the last 20-30 years has been marked by two trends: (a) a rise in destructive behavior, and (b) a rise in self-destructive behavior” (p. 1). As violence increased among students and young adults, people began to re-evaluate the need for values education. Research was beginning to focus more on character education, and character education began to return to America’s school system. During the 1970s, research began to try to effectively understand moral development. Working from Piaget’s foundation in the study of cognitive and social-cognitive development theories, Lawrence Kohlberg and Anne Colby have expanded the study of moral development. James Rest also contributed to cognitive development/moral judgment theories. Kohlberg’s

Moral Dilemma and Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) were created as ways to measure moral development. Albert Bandura, Augusto Blasi, and William Damon made progress as well when referencing moral judgment and development and bring new ideas to the surface. The contributions of the works listed above are incredibly important to the field of moral and character education.

During the 1980's and 1990's *values education* experienced a name change becoming *character education*. Often educational leaders define values as personal convictions emerging from personal beliefs. However, they theorized that the general public would agree upon the traits essential to *good character*. Educators believed that students need schooling to learn how to make good decisions, demonstrate respect, and be empathetic toward others. The public began to think about the necessity of such programs because of the increase of acts of defiance and violence within the public school system and a growing perceptions of the decline of acceptable character traits in public education (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). Then, in 2007, Berkowitz and Haynes wrote, "Today, character education is making a comeback. Thirty-one states mandate or encourage character education by statute. While pronouncements by legislatures don't necessarily translate into quality character education programs, it's a start" (p. 13A).

Dr. Thomas Lickona (1994) posits that a *crisis of character* (1994, p. 1) is manifesting itself nationally in acts of violence by youth. Lickona recognizes that today's society is facing a serious problem and he emphasizes his point with some stunning statistics about youth violence. Violence among males in the range of 15 to 24 years of age have a crime rate that is statistically seven times higher than in Canada and forty times higher than in Japan. In the years since 1965, youth violence has increased by more than 300 percent. The rate of violence by girls has tripled

(1994). Using more recent statistics from the United States, youth violence continues to be a public health crisis. For example, the second leading cause of death for America's youth is homicide with an average 16 young people murdered daily (CDC, 2012). Berkowitz and Haynes also refer to a *crisis of character* in their 2007 article showing that Lickona wasn't alone in his concern over the crisis of character. Berkowitz and Haynes explain that the legislation No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has often forced teachers to place character education on to the back burner while focusing on standardized test scores. While the focus in schools has been on standardized test results the lack of character development for our youth has been virtually ignored (Berkowitz & Haynes, 2007).

The statement, *a crisis of character*, is still valid, and possibly even more relevant due to events that started a new trend in youth violence. Lickona may have called it *a crisis of character* in 1994, but his words only foreshadowed the tragic events that were to take place only a few years after his statement was made. There had been school shootings prior to his statement in 1994, but those shootings were not frequent events. Prior to 1995 school shootings were rare. These shootings did not typically result in multiple deaths (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2012). School shootings have continued since Columbine. Those events brought attention to the need for character education within the public school setting.

Founded in 2000, the Foundation for a Better Life (FBL) promotes values and good character for all ages. The FBL has recognized that the need for good character and good values goes beyond the public education system and school age children. The organization also has programs available to colleges to continue the character education to continue through the next stages of life. The Foundation for a Better Life has funded an aggressive campaign, designated as Pass it On, which utilizes print ads, billboards, television commercials, public service

announcements, movie theater ads, internet ads, as well as an internet website known as Values.com. They also have a sister organization, Random Acts of Kindness, that also supports people being good and doing good things. These types of organizations help students see that values and good character is important to society in general, that society expects and needs these character traits as well. They also are able to see that adults can model good values as well (Lumpkin, 2008).

Since the conception, public education addressed teaching morals, values and character. The need for this type of education has almost always been recognized. Thus, moral education is not a new idea, but is, in fact, as old as education itself. “Throughout history and in cultures around the world, education rightly conceived has had two great goals: helping students become smart and helping them become good citizens. They need character for both” (Davidson, Lickona, & Khmelkov, 2007, p. 24). Today, character education is one option to consider when schools are looking for something to decrease discipline problems, increase student’s attendance rates, and improve academic achievement. Built on the foundation of values education, character education programs began to be developed. The Character Education Partnership further explains why character education is re-emerging:

Although character education has always been of vital importance, schools strayed from proactive efforts to incorporate character development into their teaching in past decades. Ironically, this neglect came at a time when the need became greater due to increased challenges in raising ethical children. A number of factors such as a weakening in guidance by some families and communities brought on widespread reflection toward the end of the 20th century. The tragedy at Columbine and other fatal shootings at a number of schools punctuated these concerns across the country. Now character education is

becoming a priority in our nation's education reform as we are increasingly realizing that character development must be an intentional part of education rather than a process that happens naturally. (Character Education Partnership, 2012, para. 1)

Authors and Theorists in Character Education

Dr. Thomas Lickona was an early leader in establishing a program for character education. Dr. Lickona attended State University of New York at Albany where he received his Ph.D. in psychology. He has done extensive research on children's moral reasoning. He has written many books, one of which, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Teach Respect and Responsibility* has become a hallmark for educators considering the implementation of a character education program. He is on the Board of Directors on the Character Education Partnership. In the Center for the Fourth and Fifth R's, he serves as director. He is author, consultant, and keynote speaker. When researching character education, Dr. Lickona's name often appears, and his work is often referenced. His work has scholarly significance because his research relates character education and the importance of embedding it into school curriculum (Damon & Berkowitz, 2002).

Dr. Phillip Fitch Vincent is another well-known name in the field of character education. Dr. Vincent received his B.A. in Philosophy/Religion with a minor in Psychology in 1976. In 1980, he received his M.A. in Gifted Education. In 1991, he received his Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction/Middle Grades Education. He has 20 years of experience in education. He has worked with educators in more than 33 districts within North Carolina. He also does consulting for school districts across the United States. He currently serves as director of the Character Development Group. Dr. Vincent is the author of many books and articles within the education community. He is also available as a keynote speaker for character education programs. He is

highly regarded by his peers within the character education theories. Dr. Vincent's research and work is significant because of his experience in the public school system and his knowledge of curriculum and instruction (Character Development Group, 2008).

Dr. Marvin W. Berkowitz and Dr. Melinda Bier are Co-Directors of the Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Dr. Berkowitz is an author, consultant, and keynote speaker. He is also the co-editor of the *Journal of Research in Character Education* and serves as an advisor on the Project Wisdom as an advisor. He is a recipient of the Sanford N. McDonnell Lifetime Achievement Award from the Character Education Partnership. His work is significant not only for his research, but for the fact that he has experience in Missouri's public school system (CEP, 2012). Dr. Melinda Bier co-authored *What Works in Character Education* with Berkowitz. She is the Associate Director for the Center for Character and Citizenship, College of Education, University of Missouri, St. Louis. She has worked alongside Berkowitz and Sanford N. McDonnell for projects for the Character Education Partnership.

Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg studied under Jean Piaget researching moral development. He taught at University of Chicago and Harvard University. He is most recognized for his work on moral judgment and development. He wrote many books, including *The Philosophy of Moral Development and Lawrence Kohlberg's Approach to Moral Education*. He is also responsible for creating the Moral Dilemma, an interview-style test that was based on his stages and levels within cognitive development and was used to measure a person's moral development. The test is still used today in researching moral development (Crain, 1985).

Damon, Blasi, and Bandura are among others that realize that this approach has effectively changed thinking, but not all evidence supports that changing thinking doesn't always

change behavior (Bandura, 1999; Blasi, 1999; Damon & Colby, 1996). Each of these has made their own mark on the study of moral development, what affects moral development and development and behavior.

The people that are often associated with character education are educators, parents, psychologists, researchers and various religious associations. There are vast resources available on the Internet. Some of the websites dedicated to character education are: Character Education Partnership (<http://www.character.org>), Character Counts! (<http://www.charactercounts.org>), Project Wisdom (<http://www.projectwisdom.com>), and CHARACTERplus (<http://www.characterplus.org>), just to name a few. Just typing *character education* in to a web browser will bring up about 285,000 possibilities to explore.

Theoretical Framework

Lawrence Kohlberg approached psychological and philosophical assumptions about moral development to develop Kohlberg's *Theory of Moral Judgment*. He worked with Anne Colby and created the Moral Dilemma test to attempt to measure and recognize how moral development changes as people progress through life:

A phenomenological approach to moral psychology assumes that moral judgments and rational argumentation are central to moral psychology. It assumes that such judgments must be seen as meaningful in their own terms, in some sense at face value, rather than treated as mere reflections or expressions of irrational unconscious motives or external forces. That is, subject's moral judgments are taken seriously and interpreted as referring to moral reality as they perceive it. What this implies for the assessment of moral development is that the researcher must operate phenomenologically by looking at morality from the subject's viewpoint, understanding what the subject is saying in his or

her own terms. That is the researcher is seeking to understand what the subject means when making moral judgments rather than attributing meaning to the judgments from some outside system of interpretation not shared by the subject. (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987, p. 1)

Kohlberg looks at character and morals from a developmental standpoint. Kohlberg took the popular work of Jean Piaget and expanded it to further explain the development of morals and values as a developmental process. There are six stages, according to Kohlberg, and each stage is divided into three levels. Kohlberg explains the stages and levels of moral development:

The six moral stages are grouped into three levels: pre-conventional level (Stages 1 & 2), conventional level (Stages 3 & 4), and principled or post-conventional level (Stages 5 & 6)...To understand the stages, it is helpful to begin with the three moral levels. The pre-conventional level is the level of most children under age 9, some adolescents, and many adolescent and adult criminal offenders. The conventional level is the level of most adolescents and adults in American society and in most other societies. The post-conventional level is reached by a minority of adults and usually only after the age of 20-25... Within each of the three moral levels, there are two stages. The second stage is a more advanced and organized form of the general perspective of each level. (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987, p. 16)

Kohlberg and Colby gave examples of the different moral levels by asking a ten-year-old boy a moral question then asking the same boy the same question at age seventeen. “Why shouldn’t you steal from a store” (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987, p. 17)? At age 10, the boy’s answer was, “It’s not good to steal from the store. It’s against the law. Someone could see you and call the police” (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987, p. 17). The same boy at 17 answered, “It’s a matter of law.

It's one of our rules that were trying to help protect everyone, protect property, not just to protect a store. It's something that's needed in our society. If we didn't have these laws, people would steal, they wouldn't have to work for a living and our whole society would get out of kilter" (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987, p. 17). Kohlberg explains the difference in the two answers. "Being against the law, then, means something very different at the two levels. At level 2, the law is made by and for everyone as Joe indicates at age 17. At level 1 it is just something enforced by police and, accordingly, the reason for obeying the law is to avoid punishment" (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987, p. 17).

Kohlberg and Colby explain how the Moral Judgment interviews should be approached. There were standard questions within the moral judgment interview. The person conducting the interview would not have to ask follow-up question on many of the subjects discussed. If the person interviewed was unable to articulate their thoughts and was giving opinions instead of clear reasons, then more precise questioning and clarification might have had to be given by the person conducting the interview (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987).

The moral dilemma consisted of the researcher who introduced a scenario and interviewed the participant about what they think should be done, or how the scenario should be handled. This can be a long process, with one scoring guide created by Kohlberg and Colby has 977 pages (Kohlberg & Colby, 1987). Kohlberg's work is integral to moral development and is often the foundation of character education, and that is why his work is included in this study.

James Rest took Kohlberg's theory and created a form of measurement called the Defining Issues Test (DIT). Rest created "another method of identifying a person's developmental progress in moral judgment (that) has been devised that is derived from

Kohlberg's basic theory of six stages but which uses a multiple-choice format and therefore can be objectively and easily scored" (Rest, 1980, p. 602). Rest explained how his test works:

The new method, called the Defining Issues Test (or DIT), is based on the assumption that people at different developmental stages perceive moral dilemmas differently.

Therefore if you present people with different statements about the crucial issue of a dilemma, people at different developmental stages will choose different statements as representing the most important issue...Of the two methods of assessment, Kohlberg's test produces more interesting responses but the DIT is easier to use and better documented. (Rest, 1980, p. 602)

Rest also considered the possibility of test-takers who might purposely distort or fake their responses (Rest, 1980). The test was created with questions that are essentially meaningless in order to signal to the person assessing the test that the test-taker was either not paying close attention to the test, or the test-taker was just choosing random answers (Rest, 1980). There are different types of studies that Rest discusses:

The studies cited so far all cross-sectional studies in that they make comparisons between different samples at various ages. A more powerful kind of evidence about development is a longitudinal study, which tests the same sample over a period of time. At least six longitudinal studies have been reported using Kohlberg's test and as many using the DIT. (Rest, 1980, p. 603)

Rest discussed the conclusions that he was able to draw from the studies, and he addressed its limitations. These findings favor a conclusion somewhere between two extremes. On the one hand, some psychologists have argued that there is no evidence that development takes place in moral judgment. With the evidence now in hand (which was not available to these

critics when they wrote their statements), I can't imagine them accepting any claim in psychology if they don't accept this one. On the other hand, the evidence has not been strong or clear enough to support the claim that all individuals move step by step through the sequence of stages without a single reversal. The limits of our methods of assessment have to be acknowledged as involving a certain degree of error, and also there are many factors that affect performance on a test that we have not fully accounted for as yet. The conclusion that does seem warranted, however, is that over the years, young people's moral judgments tend to shift from low stage thinking to higher stage thinking. Therefore, there is a natural order of change in the way moral thinking progresses. The educational implication of this is that programs that are designed to foster development are changing people in ways which occur naturally, and need not involve indoctrination (Rest, 1980). Rest also addresses moral development and its use as an intervention within the education system:

Currently there is much effort in devising richer curriculum materials and in exploring various educational settings and formats. Although these efforts as yet have not fully demonstrated their effectiveness and usefulness, the enterprise is grounded on a psychological variable, moral judgment that has demonstrated empirical reality. In fact it is my view that currently in the whole field of personality and social development, there is no psychological construct that is in better shape than moral judgment in theoretical richness, practical implications, and validated findings. Preliminary results of program evaluations indicate that educational intervention in the area is possible. Furthermore, by being grounded in a research base, various ideas and innovations can be tested – they need not depend solely on their surface plausibility or the salesmanship of their proponents. I hope new program ideas will keep pace with ideas about how to gather

information on program effectiveness, such that successive rounds of decisions will be self-correcting and make optimal use of intuition as well as empirical data. (Rest, 1980, p. 605)

In 1999, Rest created the DIT2 to further the research moral development. He felt that the data and dilemmas needed to be updated. This was also a way to make sure that the topics were relevant and applicable to an ever-changing society. The test is still given to participants across all age groups and across all educational levels. Just as society changes, the ways of examining society needs to change. That is what keeps these studies relevant (Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 1999). Kohlberg and Rest both have created tests to measure how people move from one stage of moral development, so it is important to include them when trying to better understand how moral or character develops. It is possible to move forward and backward through the stages of moral development. They have offered great insight and theories to use when researching the foundations of character education. That is why it is important to include their work in this field.

To be more effective in learning about moral development, it is important to include things that might have an effect on moral development. Emotion and experience may affect the process of moral development. Augusto Blasi (1999) discusses that emotions and personal experience could have an impact on moral development. On its own, moral understanding doesn't always motivate moral decisions in individuals or differences in moral behaviors. The cognitive developmental approach dominated the research on morality for two or three decades. Piaget and Kohlberg's set of theories are not without doubt. There are conceptual considerations that cannot be measured. Everyday experience could affect behavior. An individual can have the knowledge and comprehension of morality and still not use that knowledge to influence

individual choice of actions (Blasi, 1999). It is important to consider that a person can have an understanding of character and morals and still make poor action choices.

Motivation and emotions can change an action concerning morals not only practically, but theoretically, and empirically as well. Emotions can operate more as causes and not necessarily as reasons for most psychological theories. Natural forces can cause individuals to act blindly and possibly automatically when faced with alternative actions. This supports theories that actions are genetically prewired and not just a result of conditioning (Blasi, 1999). Blasi addresses that emotions might have a significant effect on moral development. Personal experience, and even watching the experiences of the people around, can also have a significant effect on moral development. Blasi explains how he feels about emotion and moral development:

In conclusion, a very general description of emotional phenomena can be drawn, that would gather widespread agreement among psychologists and could be considered as they psychological view of emotion. This view holds that emotions are psychological processes connected to bodily events, particularly physiological activation and arousal, and to evolutionary genetic sources. They arise spontaneously and unintentionally from the perception of certain situations, automatically and unintentionally produce a readiness to act, and are regulated internally and externally by automatic, unconscious, and unintentional processes. Emotions acquire functional meaning from a more basic motivational structure, ranging in scope from biological needs to desires, interests, and values. (Blasi, 1999, p. 5)

Blasi has a relevant discussion regarding the roles emotions play in moral development. It is plausible to consider that a person's wants, needs, desires, interests and values could have an

effect over their moral judgments and development. “However, concepts, explanations, and norms are hardly irrelevant to a psychological understanding of emotional behavior, determining, at least in part, the way people respond to emotions” (Blasi, 1999, p. 6). It is important to consider emotions when approaching moral judgment and development.

Damon and Colby also discuss that action choices don’t always match moral judgment. They explain their views on how someone’s actions might not reflect that person’s moral or character development:

Action choices based directly upon self-conscious moral reflections are relatively rare. Habitual responses, on the other hand, generate moral actions frequently, in way so common that they usually go unnoticed. All the acts of commission and omission that we normally take for granted—a mother watching over her child, a conscientious teacher helping her student, a customer dealing honestly with a blind fruit seller—represent moral acts commonly conducted through habitual processes. Whereas moral reflection is closely tied to intellectual competence, moral habits are embedded in emotional and behavioral reflex systems that are bolstered by the cultural context and years of practice. Reflection grows on the plane of consciousness, whereas habit grows on the plane of action. Reflection is subject to decision (and indecision), whereas habit is automatic. Reflection draws on notions that are distant in time and place from the situation that one finds oneself in, whereas habit is spontaneous and embedded in one’s immediate experience. Both habit and reflection can be sources of moral action, with habit governing the vast territories of moral behavior that most of us assume. (Damon & Colby, 1996, p. 33)

Damon and Colby suggest that research in moral development should consider that emotions, habits, reflections and experience could affect development. When one experiences an event, immediate action choices may cause one to react prior to considering the moral implications or consequences of the actions. This does not mean that every action is made without moral consideration, but it is relevant to consider that one doesn't always have the chance to consider morals before making action choices (Damon & Colby, 1996).

Albert Bandura has discussed his own theory about moral judgment and cognitive development. He discussed two areas. "Moral agency is manifested in both the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely and the proactive power to behave humanely," (Bandura, 1999, p. 193). He also explains his thoughts that moral behavior doesn't happen unless it is accessed. "The self-regulatory mechanisms governing moral conduct do not come into play unless they are activated, and there are many psychosocial maneuvers by which moral self-sanctions are selectively disengaged from inhumane conduct," (Bandura, 1999, p. 193).

Bandura further suggests that moral thought doesn't always result in moral behavior: Psychological theories of morality focus heavily on moral thought to the neglect of moral conduct. People suffer from the wrongs done to them regardless of how perpetrators might justify their inhumane actions. The regulation of humane conduct involves much more than moral reasoning. A complete theory of moral agency must link moral knowledge and reasoning to moral action. (...) In social cognitive theory, moral reasoning is translated into actions through self-regulatory mechanisms rooted in moral standards and self-sanctions by which moral agency is exercised. (...) In this self-regulatory process, people monitor their conduct and the conditions under which it occurs, judge it in relation to their moral standards and perceived circumstances, and

regulate their actions by the consequences they apply to themselves. They do things that give them satisfaction and build their self-worth. They refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards, because such conduct will bring self-condemnation. (...) It is through the on-going exercise of self-influence that moral conduct is motivated and regulated. (Bandura, 1999, p. 193-194)

Bandura also addresses what he calls the “displacement of responsibility” (Bandura, 1999, p. 196):

Moral control operates most strongly when people acknowledge that they cause harm by their detrimental actions. (...) Under displaced responsibility, they view their actions as stemming from the dictates of authorities; they do not feel personally responsible for the actions. Because they are not the actual agent of their actions, they are spared self-condemning reactions. (Bandura, 1999, p. 196)

The social conventions show that even though moral reasoning would say that something is morally wrong, people are able to displace responsibility when they could blame their actions on someone else to avoid accepting personal responsibility for their actions (Bandura, 1999).

Bandura discusses another consideration for moral thinking and moral action; people making moral decisions as a group. Another way people are able to avoid taking personal responsibility is through group decisions, in which responsibility on a personal level is relinquished to the choices and behaviors of the group. Under these circumstances people can act with more dehumanizing and inhumane as a group than they could ever on their own based on their personal morals (Bandura, 1999). This becomes a displacement of personal responsibility. As Bandura says, “When everyone is responsible, no one really feels responsible” (1999, p. 198).

When applied to the education system, group membership has very relevant applications. Peer pressure often has great influence on the behavior of students. Students might consider doing something that would be against the moral reasoning of their actions if it appears that a group of their peers are acting in that manner. For example, students who know that teasing someone is wrong, might participate in the action because everyone else is doing it and also in an attempt to avoid being teased as well. Bandura's displacement of responsibility is very relevant to moral judgment and moral action when applied to the application of character within the education setting.

Kohlberg, Rest, Blasi, Bandura, Damon and Colby have left their mark in the field of moral development. Their foundations enable many character education researchers and programs to have a better understanding of how moral and character develop. The studies also suggest that there are a number of things that could affect moral judgment. Emotions and experience can have an effect on how people approach and experience the stages of moral development. Bandura referenced displacement of responsibility and group decisions as possible applications that could interfere with moral development. Through this understanding, it enables the character education community to relate what works in character education more effectively.

Character Education and Moral Development

Having addressed the foundations for character, we need to discuss character and its use in the educational setting. How does someone measure character? What does good character look like, and how can we recognize which students have it? Kohlberg and Rest both created ways to measure moral judgment and character, and their work is a great foundation to start. Is it plausible to use those methods to measure every student's character? Teachers would have to spend hours recording the data from those tests. Character education can be a solution, if

thoroughly researched and effectively implemented. One way to measure character in the education setting is to look at attendance, academics, and discipline. Students who exhibit good character could be students who choose to work hard in academics, have good attendance and do not have disciplinary problems. They would exhibit these behaviors by choice, because their moral development tells them it is the right things to do. This could be an effective way to see if character education is having an impact on character if attendance goes up, academic achievement rises and a decrease in disciplinary problems is evident. Character education has a rich foundation in moral development and is a much more effective way to review and reflect to see just what areas and traits students need to understand.

Many people wonder what character actually means. There are so many different ways that society looks at character. Berkowitz and Bier explain why there might be misunderstandings when the word character is involved:

Character can be defined in various ways and is indeed used in different ways in common speech. We consider someone “a character” if they act atypically. We also commonly refer to “having character,” but sometimes that character is “good” or “bad.” It is unlikely that a school that proposes a character-education initiative is interested in either generating a “bunch of characters” or promoting the development of “bad character” in students. What we really mean in the field when we invoke *character* is sociomoral competency. Character is the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent. In other words, character is multifaceted. It is psychological. It relates to moral functioning. (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004, p. 73)

There are many character education programs to review, and it is not an unpopular option for schools to create their own programs based on values or virtues chosen by the stakeholders.

When all the participants, such as teachers, parents and/or community members, participate in deciding the traits to focus on, it might help to eliminate confusion of the definition of character and of the virtues they have chosen to focus on. Lickona does address this approach.

When a school decides to develop a character education program, the content must be chosen first. The school will have to define character and the virtues it intends to target. The way the school defines character and the targeted traits will shape the initiative. These will be what the backbone of the schools character initiative becomes (Lickona, 2003). Berkowitz and Bier address various definitions of character in “stage one: defining the domain” (2005, p. 2) of character education. They realized that they must have a “conceptual model to guide us” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 2).

- Character is a psychological construct. That is, the outcome of effective character education is the psychological development of students.
- Character education targets a particular subset of child development, which we call character. Character is the composite of those psychological characteristics that impact the child’s capacity and tendency to be an effective moral agent, i.e. to be socially and personally responsible, ethical, and self-managed.
- Character education then ought to be most effective if it relies predominantly on those social, education and contextual processes that are known to significantly impact the psychological development of such characteristics. (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 2)

The Character Education Partnership, based on the work of Kevin Ryan and Dr. Lickona, chose to define character into categories for their program. These categories are; “Understanding (the “head”), Caring about (the “heart”), and Acting upon core ethical values

(the “hand”) (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 18). Using these three categories, they implemented programs that focused on these areas. There are many ways to look at character education, and its defining traits.

The different character education programs attempt to state what character is and how it affects thinking, actions and behavior. For their work, Berkowitz and Bier researched over one-hundred different character education programs to see if they saw any trends and to see what seems to work, and what doesn't. They were able to narrow it down to 30 to 35 programs which met their criteria. From that data, they were able to judge the effectiveness of character education programs and conclude that character education does seem to have an effect on moral development. Berkowitz and Bier made some valid statements that help to show that character education does work, that is why their work is included in this study.

Implementation of Character Education Research and Theories

Many of the experts agree that focusing on character, as a part of any curriculum, is necessary for student growth and development. Dr. Thomas Lickona, author of *Educating for Character*, states that moral education is not a new idea. It is, in fact, as old as education itself (Davidson, Lickona, & Khmelkov, 2007). Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people gain important knowledge and to help them use that knowledge to become good citizens (Davidson, Lickona, & Khmelkov, 2007). “If students do not know how to function in society, what good are academics” (Lickona, Schaps & Lewis, 2003, p. 11)?

Within Dr. Lickona's view of character education, there are ten essential virtues that he feels are universal and can easily be focused on without crossing the lines of culture, philosophy, and religion. Wisdom, fortitude, love, justice, gratitude, positive attitude, hard work, self-

control, integrity, and humility are the ten that Dr. Lickona speaks about. His article in the Fall 2003 edition of *The Fourth and Fifth Rs* addresses not only essential virtues, it also talks about strategies to promote the virtues. The following list is Dr. Lickona's "Ten Strategies For Promoting the Virtues" from the same article:

1. A virtue a month
2. A virtue a week, related to the monthly theme
3. A 3-or 4-year cycle of virtues
4. A yearly theme
5. Assigning developmentally appropriate virtues to each grade level
6. A common set of character expectations
7. A character education curriculum framework
8. A published character education curriculum
9. A character education process model
10. A school culture approach. (Lickona, 2003, para. 1)

According to Lickona, there are two very important parts to implementing a character education program. His program is virtue-centered and focused on character traits, their definition and application. Therefore, Part One is to have the staff create a comprehensive list of essential values. The Part Two is to expand the ownership of the program. The ownership needs to be within the school as well as owned by the parents and community members in order to be effective. The staff must believe in it in order to create surveys to gain student, parent, and community involvement. In return input from parents, community and students' ideas can be heard and incorporated for ownership by them as well (Lickona, 2003). Even Aristotle, over 2000 years ago, realized that the part that adults play in the growth and development of children

and adolescents is very important. Children's growth and development can be made or broken by all the adults that interact with that child (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. ii). With character education it is important for the desirable traits to be recognizable and modeled in society so that the students can easily recognize the *real life* applications of these traits.

Common Components of Character Education

In 1987, the United States Department of Education was approached with a project called *Building Character in the Public Schools* by the National School Boards Association. School boards came together with over 15,000 participants across the nation (Huitt, 2004). There are two goals. One goal is to increase awareness of the importance of developing a character initiative that addresses character within the public school system. The other goal would be to create and improve the development of character education within the schools system (Huitt, 2004).

In 1996, Dr. Vincent describes what types of programs appeared to be ineffectively or did not work:

From my travels and work with school districts around the country, I have observed several practices which seem to be apparent in all successful or emerging character education programs. Individuals involved in character education neither see this as a fad nor an "add-on" program, unless a school or community has decided to "character lite." This is represented by practices such as the purchase of a packaged program which is used once or twice a week or the reading of "inspiring" stories over the intercom for five minutes each day. It is apparent to serious practitioners that developing character is not easy. A character education worthy of its name reflects the ethos or life of the school. It occurs throughout the entire day. Character education two times a week or five minutes a

day requires minimal buy-in and effort on the part of the community and the school. It will produce, at the best, minimal results. Programs such as these are doomed to fail.

(Vincent, 1996, p. xiv)

So, it is important that a program is carried across the curriculum, not in *now you see it, now you don't* spurts. Once again, the saying, *practice makes perfect* comes to mind. If there isn't adequate time allowed to process and learn the chosen traits, the program probably isn't going to be effective.

How should the topics be approached? Is there a way that research shows is not effective? There is research that addresses this question as well. According to Annette Kusgen McDaniel, author of *Character Education: Developing Effective Programs*, there are ways to approach a program that are not effective. "The following methods have been found to be ineffective in promoting character in youth. Lecturing and moralizing, authoritative teaching styles, externally derived codes of ethic, and setting the ethics agenda without involving students in the process" (McDaniel, 1998, p. 4). McDaniel addresses the thought of the quick fix, the character trait Band-Aid; there is not a quick fix, or an easy solution for promoting character education. The process requires the hard work and dedication of all of the parties involved to become an effective, successful program (McDaniel, 1998).

Alfie Kohn is one of the loudest voices heard speaking out against character education initiatives. Good character is more than good behavior, and good behavior can be mistaken for good character by teachers and schools. It is easy to attribute character when a child follows the rules without being told repeatedly. This is a contradiction between what adults and children value as important. Kohn suggests that character education fails since children aren't able to

automatically recognize character, and know the differences between character and behavior when they see it (Kohn, 1997).

By beginning his article with this quote, Alfie Kohn is assuming the worst about the education system. This tone continues throughout his article. Kohn's opinion is that the education system is trying to hide a way to teach children to work harder and do what they are told under the title of character education. Kohn offers his opinion on the two meanings of character education:

The phrase character education also has two meanings. In the broad sense, it refers to almost anything that schools might try to provide outside of academics, especially when the purpose is to help children grow into good people. In a narrow sense, it denotes a particular style of moral training, one that reflects particular values as well as particular assumptions about the nature of children and how they learn. (Kohn, 1997, para. 2)

In the same article, Kohn goes on to state that the point of character education is to indoctrinate students to behave a certain way instead of having meaningful conversations and reflections about the appropriate ways to think and act (Kohn, 1997). Kohn spoke out concerning the use of extrinsic rewards and motivations as the only focus and reason for the students to participate in a character education program. He speaks out against the conservative values that he believes are part of character education programs. As with any opponent to policy, it is important to look at both sides of the issue, and Kohn has value to his opposition. It is important to note that there probably isn't a perfect solution to the problem of student behaviors and attitudes, but is it better to do nothing than to try to find a reasonable solution? When considering adopting a character education program, or any other program within the

education system, the responsible thing to do is to investigate both the pros and cons involved so that an informed decision can be made.

In an article by Kenneth A. Strike, he quotes a scene witnessed between a teacher and students discussing a student incident:

Consider, for example, the following discussion with a class of high school sophomores concerning an incident in which a student had stolen a tape recorder from an unlocked locker and later bragged about it to his friends.

Leader: Should his (the thief's) friends express their disapproval?

Mary: I'd say that you better not brag about it. You better shut your mouth or you'll get caught.

Sally: If somebody is going to be dumb enough to bring something like that into the school, they deserve to get it stolen. If you aren't together enough to lock your locker, then what do you expect. If someone is going to steal, then more power to them.

Leader: Is that what people think? It's okay if you can get away with it?

Mary: No stealing is wrong.

Leader: Well then, do you have a responsibility in a situation like this to try to talk the thief into returning the stolen goods?

Mary: You can't put pressure on students like that.

Bill: You can't ask that.

Mary: This school is responsible for enforcing the rules. We are teenagers. We have our own responsibility, but we can't be responsible for totally everything. It's totally ridiculous to put it on the students.

Bill: Yeah, the kids come here to learn, not to patrol the hallways. They come here to go to school.

Mary: We are the ones who are teenagers. The teachers are grown up. They are the big people. They are supposed to control the school. We are here to learn.

Todd: You shouldn't steal. But the way society is, everybody does it...[Expressing disapproval] depends on a lot of things – [like] who is whose friend.

This discussion reveals a disturbing gap between the students' acknowledgement that stealing is wrong and their willingness to accept responsibility to stop it. On a personal level, the students oppose stealing; on a cultural level, however, they are resigned to the inevitability of theft and tacitly support it. Mary, for example, warns the thief to be more discreet, while Sally blames victims who are "dumb enough" to bring valuables to school or leave their lockers unlocked. Mary and Sally are not hardened street kids in a ghetto school; but are leaders in an affluent, high profile, semi-urban high school. They and their peers have come to take stealing for granted; school is just like anywhere else in society... (Strike, 1993, p. 2)

This example shows how students compare their school environment to society; where things like theft happen every day, and the participants rarely get caught, and when they do it is because they were dumb enough to get caught (Strike, 1993). Students mirror their behaviors to what they see in society. Unfortunately, society is not always moral. This brings the argument that schools are not going to be successful with character programs until society itself changes and becomes a better model for our youth (Strike, 1993). As educators we have to think about what is done now, and how it will affect the future. Even though character education programs

aren't going to make an immediate change within society, the hope is that they will positively impact the future.

In Character Education, no universal list of traits has been established because of the diversity inherent in cultural, ethical, religion or even regional differences. What one culture considers extremely important may be a trait that is not so important to another. Although there are many similarities in the lists of important traits, no master list has been established.

However, all agree that the person who is teaching traits of good character and acceptable behavior that embodies the trait. A negative example is when Sara values honesty in others, but does not practice being honest herself. To each trait there is both a value and application. In order to be successful with any character program, students need to be able to recognize both the definition and the application. With this in mind, many character programs have focused on principles that can easily be learned, recognized, modeled and practiced by everyone within the program. In developing character education programs, research revealed eleven areas of ideals that could be focused on without trampling on personal or religious values. These eleven principles are the foundation of character education programs:

- 1) Promotes core ethical values,
- 2) Teaches students to understand, care about, and act upon these core ethical values,
- 3) Encompasses all aspects of the school culture,
- 4) Fosters a caring school community,
- 5) Offers opportunities for moral action,
- 6) Supports academic achievement,
- 7) Develops intrinsic motivation,

- 8) Includes whole-staff involvement,
- 9) Requires positive leadership to staff and students,
- 10) Involves parents and community members, and
- 11) Assesses results and strives to improve. (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2003, p. 12)

Impact of Character Education Programs

There are many ways to research and evaluate the impact of character education. In this section, the focus will be on how character education effects attendance, academics, and discipline referrals.

Decrease the numbers of discipline referrals. A discipline referral is a situation that requires immediate consequence resulting in a student immediately being sent to the principal's office. However, "By moral communities we mean school cultures with justice, caring and developmental discipline, all of which are interrelated and central to a modern theory of civic and moral education" (Lee, 2009, p. 167). Many programs address discipline referrals. Huitt agrees with theorists like Damon and Bandura, that changing someone's ways of thinking doesn't always change the way that person behaves (Huitt, 2004). The Character Education Partnership discusses the successes of the CEP's National Schools of Character. "They see dramatic transformations; prosocial behaviors such as cooperation, respect, and compassion are replacing negative behaviors such as violence, disrespect, apathy and underachievement" (Character Education Partnership, 2012, para. 1).

The Center for the Fourth and Fifth R's addresses *character-based discipline* this discipline by the students with sound values are skillful at resolving conflict without resorting to physical violence. If we teach students not only to solve problems on paper but also to solve

problems with peers, then we are giving them the tools to be successful (Lickona, 2003). At an intermediate school in the southwest region, discipline referrals decreased by fifty percent. At another middle school in the northwest area, discipline referrals were reduced from one hundred to thirty-five per month (Devine, Ho Seuk, & Wilson, 2000).

Improve school attendance. “School attendance increases, sometimes drastically in schools where character education was part of the curriculum” (DeRoche & Williams, 1998, p. 23). At one intermediate school in the Southwest, in one of the poorest communities in the state, a five-year character education initiative was responsible not only for a decline in the number of student absences but also for that of the teachers. There was an approximate drop of 50% in staff absences that went over 10 days (Devine, Ho Seuk, & Wilson, 2000).

Increases in academics. “A growing body of research supports the notion that high-quality character education can promote academic achievement,” (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006, p. 449). There are a number of programs that claim an increase in academic performance when character education is part of the curriculum. Child Development Project, Peaceful Schools Project and the Seattle Social Development all claim to link character education to an increase in academics (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006). Berkowitz and Haynes give examples that show that character education is having a positive effect on academic success (Berkowitz & Haynes, 2007). They relate the success of a small middle school in the Midwest where new administration brought a character education program into the school and had an increase in academic performance (Berkowitz & Haynes, 2007). “Academic performance is up, disciplinary referrals are down by more than 70%, and the students failure rate has dropped to zero” (Berkowitz & Haynes, 2007, p. 13A).

Changes within the school culture. Dr. Berkowitz believes that character education is more than just a program; it is a change in the culture and the life within a school. Most character education programs recommend a holistic approach to character education. The Good Character website refers to how to approach a holistic model of character education:

- Everything in the school is organized around the development of relationships between and among students, staff, and community.
- The school is a caring community of learners in which there is a palpable bond connecting the students, the staff, and the school.
- Social and emotional learning is emphasized as much as academic learning.
- Cooperation and collaboration among students are emphasized over competition.
- Values such as fairness, respect, and honesty are part of everyday lessons in and out of the classroom.
- Students are given ample opportunities to practice moral behavior through activities such as service learning.
- Discipline and classroom management concentrate on problem solving rather than rewards and punishments.
- The old model of the teacher-centered classroom is abandoned in favor of democratic classrooms where teachers and students hold class meetings to build unity, establish norms, and solve problems. (Elkind & Sweet, 2004, para. 6)

A holistic approach involves everyday aspects of school, as well as support from parents and community. Within this approach, character education is considered part of the curriculum, everyday lessons, and part of every activity within the school system. It is important that values are taught in every subject so that the students can recognize the expectations of good character,

and how those expectations are recognized and implemented (Elkind & Sweet, 2004). Taking a holistic approach helps to make the students aware of the importance of character attributes, and it allows them to gain ownership of the program since they are able to see that good character is expected in every aspect of life (Elkind & Sweet, 2004).

Many character education programs embrace this sentiment and promote a character education word of the month for each month (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Elkind & Sweet, 2004; Stirling, McKay, Archibald, & Berg, 2002). Each word directly deals with one's character. These words, when incorporated into the daily lessons, teach students how to treat others, how to have a positive outlook, and how to be responsible. "Character traits that are defined, discussed and modeled become internalized when students put them into practice" (Stirling, McKay, Archibald, & Berg, 2002, p. 259). Utilizing the word throughout the month as often as possible in lessons allows students to internalize and familiarize themselves to the concepts by hearing them throughout the school on a consistent basis. The entire school staff models this behavior for students as well as encourages the behavior in students.

Improvement in mental health. So many children today feel as if they have no control over their lives because they do not know how to deal with people or issues. This often leads to students accepting whatever happens to them. Both parents and educators realize the importance and understand that there are other aspects of our children's school experience that matter (Cohen, 2006). It is important to educate students and focus on student's mental health, social emotional learning, and character education. It can play a vital part in helping children learn and develop in healthy ways. "There are over 300 empirical studies that support the notion that when schools make these core processes integral facets of school life, student achievement increases and school violence decreases" (Cohen, 2006, p. 7). "President Bush's act No Child Left Behind

(NCLB), which drives today's educational policy and practice, is filled with rhetoric about the importance of character education and school climate" (Cohen, 2006, p. 2).

According to a study conducted by several institutions, including Stanford Research Institute and Harvard University, "One's attitude, degree of motivation, and people skills constitute eighty-five percent of the reasons people get ahead and stay ahead. One's skills or expertise constitute only fifteen percent of the reasons" (McElmeel, 2002, p. 170). If students believe in themselves, they are much more likely to achieve success. When a student comes to class with a positive outlook and an attitude that he can accomplish anything, then anything can be accomplished (McElmeel, 2002). McElmeel's work took 17 character traits and linked them to books and stories that re-enforced the meaning and application of each trait (McElmeel, 2002).

Berkowitz and Bier, writing for the Character Education Partnership, share the results of their research. They created a 3-stage process to research the effectiveness of character education programs:

Stage one: Defining the Domain. Recognizing that terminology would be a problem because many different labels are applied to similar endeavors, we examined an extensive list of definitions of character education...Stage Two: Collecting and Reviewing the Research. Many different strategies were employed here, including electronic searches and referrals from our expert panel...Stage Three: Drawing Conclusions. We identified 109 research studies concerning character education outcomes and evaluated each study for the scientific rigor of its research design. (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 3)

The research shows, as follows, that character education programs can be successful. There were many programs that were researched by Berkowitz and Bier, where they looked for

common practices and common outcomes from the programs and research available. These are some of the results (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Research Findings and Issues

According to Madonna M. Murphy, children reflect what they see in society, and through their reflections, we see the reflections of ourselves (Murphy, 2003). That disturbing image has caused schools in increasing numbers to unite in order to return to the ideals that education should also form good character (Murphy, 2003). While teachers have been teaching an informal type of character education since public education was introduced, today it has become even more necessary to make it a formal part of the curriculum. Thus, character education is a relevant topic on the forefront within journals and academic research. Research shows that character education programs do have a significant effect on student's behavior, when implemented effectively (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). One school reportedly experienced success in helping students and staffs possess a more positive outlook (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2003). After noticing an ever-increasing decline and pessimism in the attitudes of its students, this school decided to implement a character education program. For two years, this school implemented many changes with the hopes that it would see a more positive attitude from students and faculty (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2003). Likewise, a 2000 report on South Carolina's four year Character Education initiative, which is a pilot program funded by the United States Department of Education, related that school attitudes improved ninety-one percent (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2003).

There are many questions concerning the impact of character education programs. For example, what guidelines are available to judge whether a character education program works? Is there a standard that has to be reached before a program is deemed successful? However, the

question most frequently asked is, “Does Character Education work” (Berkowitz & Bier 2004, p. 74). That is in and of itself is not the correct question to ask. That question will be hard to answer until more research addresses the topic. There are so many programs that label themselves character education that such a generic answer is difficult to give. The effectiveness of the initiative to incorporate character will have to reflect how the initiative impacts students as they become global citizens (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). “Character education can work, but its effectiveness hinges upon certain characteristics” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004, p. 74). Dr. Berkowitz suggests some important questions to ask when determining the effectiveness of character education programs. Following is some questions provided by Berkowitz and Bier from research studies on character education.

- One way is to look at which programs have research that demonstrates their effectiveness. In other words, *which programs can we conclude actually work, based on existing sound research?*
- A second way is to identify characteristics of effective character education programs. *What elements of practice do effective programs tend to share?*
- A third way is to look at character education that is generic (home-grown, not based on a commercially available program) and examine if such programs are effective. *What do schools generally do that is effective in promoting character development?*
- Yet a fourth way is to look at research into specific practices, rather than as parts of full character education programs. *What are the effects of specific character education practices?* (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 3)

Summary of Review of Literature and Conclusion

Daily Lickona's statement concerning "a crisis of character" is seen to be true (Lickona, 1994, p. 1). Moral development theorists, educational researchers, and educators agree that character education is an important part of the development and education process. This has led to research studies, such as this one, to see how character education was an integral part of development and the education process. This study was based on work previously done to see how character education impacts attendance, academics and discipline incidents. As stated, character education was one part of the original curriculum present in the colonial and American schools until the beginning of the twentieth century. Today education is focused on content curriculum only. However, teachers are finding that they need to help young people gain important knowledge concerning important character traits and their use to assist students in becoming good citizens (Davidson, Lickona, & Khmelkov, 2007).

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design

The research design in this study was a case study. According to Creswell (2007), “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 73). The organization of this study was a single school building’s character education program representing a bounded system comprising the case.

This single case study involved an analysis of documents of a character education program at a selected middle school in the Midwest. The purpose of this research study was to develop understanding of how the character education program impacts academic progress, attendance, and discipline, by utilizing documents and trend data from pre-implementation stages, planning stages, implementation stages, post-implementation stages, and transfer of leadership stages. The case study approach was selected because I identified a case and desired to develop an in-depth analysis of this program using multiple sources of information.

I believe that the information gained from this case study is beneficial to others who want to incorporate character education programs in their building. Multiple sources of information were analyzed to reveal the impact this program had at the selected middle school. I provided detailed description of the case by sharing the process of developing the program through the different planning stages, history of the case and the chronology of events. Analysis of documents from the case allowed me to report the impact of the case as reported by others.

Since the research was primarily based on using multiple sources of documents including, archival records, and physical artifacts, I had to guard against over interpreting the documents.

See Table 1 for sample documents I analyzed.

Table 1

Sample Documents

Documents for Character Education Analysis

1. Survey Results
 2. Journals
 3. Power Point Presentations
 4. State Agency Data
 5. Teacher Newsletters
 6. Parent Newsletters
 7. Memos
 8. Emails
 9. Board Reports
 10. Faculty Agendas
-

Research Questions

1. How did the character education program develop, evolve and continue after the transfer of leadership?
2. Did character education program impact academics at said middle school?
How?
3. Did character education program impact attendance at said middle school?
How?
4. Did character education impact discipline at said middle school? How?

Researcher's Role

I chose document analysis to assist me in guarding against inappropriate use of personal knowledge and data concerning the case. I avoided interviews with students, teachers, and community members at the selected school where I previously held the position of principal. The perceived status of former principal, and now researcher, could result in the manipulation or coercion of subjects. I maintained an audit trail of activities related to the document analysis including all steps from obtaining, reviewing, coding, and analyzing the documents. I further participated in peer debriefings as a process of managing the document collection and data analysis processes.

The criterion for a single instrumental case study is when the researchers “focuses on issue or concern and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). I wanted to know if the character education program impacted academic progress, attendance, and discipline of students at a selected middle school. I planned to create an in-depth understanding of the case.

Researcher's Theoretical Lens

This research study is best described as a “paradigmatic” case study (Creswell, 2007). This study was shaped by my inquiry paradigm or worldviews because I brought a set of beliefs, or “philosophical assumptions” that guide the qualitative research (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). I would consider my worldview as a researcher to be that of a pragmatist. I was focused more on the problem being studied than the questions being asked about the problem. I was the key instrument to collecting the data as the researcher and must recognize the importance of the subjectivity of my own views when interpreting the data. I used an interpretive lens that is subjective to the documents that will be analyzed.

Researcher's Background

My employment background in education has been exclusively at the middle school level. The first teaching position held (1997-2001) was in a middle school building, which consisted of grades sixth through eighth. I taught science and math to all three grades my first year. During my second year of teaching I taught science and math to grades sixth and seventh. During the third and fourth years of my teaching experience at that school, I taught math to sixth grade. The next four years (2001-2005), I was principal of a middle school that consisted of fifth through eighth grades in a Midwest state. I then relocated and commuted 30-minutes to work. It was in this school that the study was conducted. At this school I was the middle school principal for three years (2005-2008) and this building consisted of fifth through eighth grades. I then moved to the middle school (2008 to present) where I currently am principal. This school consists of fifth through eighth grades. All the schools have been in rural agricultural areas located in a conservative, Midwest state. My personal background, (where I grew up and attended K-12), is the same geographical area and consists of a rural background. My passion is working with middle school children, and my background helps me relate to students growing up in similar circumstances.

Character Education Program Implementation Process

As principal, I developed a survey in the spring prior to August 1, 2005, that the school personnel would have the opportunity to take anonymously. The original purpose for this survey was created for the principal to understand the climate of that building. This survey was designed to evaluate, measure, and record the climate and the positive and negatives of the school. This allowed me, as the principal, to gather information prior to my arrival and develop an idea of the perception the school personnel had regarding the setting of the middle school.

From the surveys, it was evident that changes were needed in discipline policies, school climate, and lack of student scholastic achievement. I met with faculty members from May 2005 through the first day of school in August 2005 on a voluntary basis. The faculty discussed the information gathered from the surveys and presented several ideas of how we could work on improving the areas of largest concern from the school personnel. The faculty decided the implementation of a character education program could positively affect the school climate, attitude of students, teachers, and parents toward the school and could possibly decrease discipline incidents. The character education process was divided into stages as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Stages of the Implementation Process

Stages for Character Education Program

1. Pre-Implementation Stage
 2. Planning Stage
 3. Implementation Stage
 4. Post Implementation Stage
 5. Transfer of Leadership
-

At least one faculty member from each grade level (some grade levels had two volunteers) volunteered for a committee to review character education programs. The committee spent many hours together in a short number of weeks reviewing several character education programs. The committee narrowed the program search to four character education programs.

The committee shared the four programs with the staff. Included in the information was the cost of each program, details of each program, the character words of each program,

resources available, local training opportunities, ideas of how other districts are implementing the program, and local districts participating in the programs.

After reviewing the four programs, the staff selected a character education program to implement. They decided to make the first year an awareness year, since few staff members had received any formal training in character education. The awareness year would allow time for the students, teachers, parents and the community to become familiar with, and educated about, the program. The staff decided to partner with a local area Chamber of Commerce character education program. This allowed for use of the resources and free materials they offer. This principal developed a flyer explaining character education, words of the month with their definitions, and how the Middle School was going to build awareness in our school and community during the first year, 2005-2006. I, as principal, provided this information at open house, which was prior to the first day of school.

In the first year, the faculty goal was to build awareness in our school personnel and with the parents. I, as principal, created a parent newsletter that would be used to share information with parents monthly. Student groups such as student council members, a sixth grade home room, science club members, etc., created signs for the word of the month. Students also created skits and rap songs that would incorporate the word of the month and presented these at the monthly assembly. The goal was to introduce the words and develop student familiarity with the words and their definitions. Faculty members would discuss the meaning of the word of the month after the student presentation at the monthly assembly.

In the spring of 2006, I, as principal, attended the local cities Chamber of Commerce annual meeting to train local business personnel on the character education program and to recruit their support. I also shared the information at a district-wide administrators meeting to

see if the other administrators in the district were interested in implementing the same program in their building. The principal presented the same information to the board in April 2006 to gain approval to continue moving forward within the district and community.

I, as principal, developed a building committee of teachers who were interested in character education and who wanted to learn more and help expand the program. The one high school in our district, expressed interest in beginning a program at the high school so a team of members joined with the middle school team. Again, we reviewed several programs and, through several meetings, we discussed how we would like to have a community wide character education program similar to a neighboring city but tailored to our schools and community. The committee agreed to continue with the character education program selected in year one. I contacted the character education trainer for the large city and who also implemented the character education program in the building where she worked. The trainer and this principal set up a meeting with our committee members. The faculty met with her five times and corresponded through email to help develop a plan for how we could implement a program of character education into our school for the 2006-2007 school year.

I, as principal, attended the school districts back to school meeting for bus drivers in 2006 to share with them the character education program. Since bus drivers are the first people most students encounter each day, I asked each of the bus drivers to post the character education word of the month on their bus and to incorporate the character word of the month. The bus drivers agreed to post the character education word of the month at the front of the school bus. They would also incorporate the word of the month, when appropriate, in conversations with the students. One example is when the word of the month was respect the bus driver might say to

students, *Please remember to respect your neighbor's rights while on the bus and use respectful language.*

In August of 2006, the trainer provided professional development to the school staff on implementing character education. All staff was trained in the back to school professional development days. During the second year, teachers on the building committee started incorporating the character education word of the month into lessons. Volunteers would share how they were incorporating the words into their lessons at each month's faculty meeting. Soon other faculty in the school began incorporating the word of the month in their lessons. To create high visibility of the word of the month, all staff displayed the word of the month and its definition in their room.

The faculty created a positive office referral that focused on catching students demonstrating the word of the month. Each month all students receiving a positive office referral were recognized and names placed in a drawing for a free lunch each month. The drawing was by grade level and sponsored by the PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization). The student council created a unique Veteran's Day assembly and all English classes had a writing project, in which students wrote what it meant to them individually that Veterans fought for our freedom. Students who had a relative or friend serving in the armed forces or knew the name of a veteran who had served could write a name on the brick and provide information about the person and in which branch of service he or she served. A wall was created from the bricks the students completed. The student council implemented a service project to demonstrate the word of the month (caring) by holding a building-wide competition on which classroom could bring in the most cans of food to be donated to the local shelter.

The high school principal and the middle school principal developed a power point presentation that was presented to various organizations within the community explaining the character education program. We also distributed brochures explaining character education and our vision for implementation of the program in December of 2006. The reason for presenting this information to the different community organizations was to develop a character council committee and to advise the community of the character education initiative. The character council committee consisted of one representative from each major organization in the community, one teacher, one parent, one administrator and student from each building who was interested in volunteering to serve on the committee. The committee consisted of representatives from banks, the chamber of commerce, rotary club, local newspaper, teachers, principals, students, the ministerial alliance and a parent. The character council committee met on a monthly basis, so it became routine. The information discussed in the character council meetings was shared with the building committees and staff in order to keep everyone on the same page.

In preparing for the third year (2007-2008 school year), a group of teachers and one administrator attended a statewide training about character education. The statewide character education training required three teachers, one administrator, one special education teacher, and one community member attend. The training consisted of a two-day workshop at a nearby city and one day training on-site at our campus. The opportunity to attend the workshop was opened to teachers already on the building committee and to the community members on the character council committee. The training provided a framework of regional and national character education: history, goals/outcomes, resource books, State Standards, and Ten Essentials of character education. The regional training was structured similarly to the national character education initiative.

Throughout our trainings they recommended that we focus on two or three goals to accomplish in one year and to do them well. The training information was shared with the character council committee. Together, the character council committee discussed how to incorporate character education into the community and developed three foci: 1) *Communication* regarding character education to the community, 2) *Word Visibility* throughout the community, 3) *Student Recognition*. The method for implementation is explained in the preceding sections.

Communication. The local newspaper featured a different trait each month. Each week, the newspaper printed information about character education. Each committee member was responsible for one month (August-May) and wrote a letter to the editor regarding how he/she would implement character education into his/her place of employment. Letters to the editor were read frequently. Student quotes and classroom letters to the editors, as well as anything else the school felt was appropriate, were published in the newspaper. The school feature story appeared in August which shared the character education goals for the year. The article focused on the meaning of character education and the character education activities planned for the upcoming school year.

Faculty began incorporating character education words more frequently in the classroom. Staff members shared at faculty meetings how they were incorporating the word of the month in their lessons. The principal created a monthly parent newsletter that shared the character education word of the month as well as character assembly information. The Ministerial Alliance incorporated the character word in sermons each Sunday. The Chamber of Commerce put the definition of the character word of the month in their monthly newsletter which was emailed to all businesses in the community. The Chamber of Commerce also added the character word to their website and linked to resources of the character education program. The

school district provided a link on their website that provided access to the character education resources and information on the character education highlights of the school. The announcer at the sporting events at all district events in middle school and high school announced the character education word of the month as well as a quote related to the word.

Visibility. The Chamber of Commerce put the character word of the month on the community sign. There were three ways the Chamber of Commerce participated: (1) added information about character education each month in the monthly newsletter to area businesses, (2) added a character education spot on the chambers website, and (3) added a link that goes back to the character education site. The Chamber of Commerce also added Character Education as an organization to the Community Directory. The Chamber of Commerce encouraged businesses to display the word of the month inside and outside their businesses. The Chamber of Commerce also added an attachment of the monthly Character Education flyer (with the word and definition) for businesses to hang up for visibility. The Ministerial Alliance placed the monthly word on the signs in front of the churches. The middle school principal submitted a grant for banners to hang on light poles throughout the community similar to those on the streets of a local community. If the grant was not received, the next step was to check with Pepsi or Kraft to sponsor the banners on light poles on the main square. A local bank agreed to begin placing the word of the month on bank statements. The art teacher created projects that incorporated the character words in the project and those projects were hung throughout the building and in businesses throughout the community. The career center in the district created magnets with the character words for each month. Bulletin boards in each hallway of the building displayed character words and student character accomplishments. Some businesses displayed the word of the month on marquee and inside. The busses in the district hung the word

of the month at the front of the bus. The student council members created a float for the Veteran's Day Parade of the character words used throughout the year.

Student recognition. Students had the opportunity to enter an art contest promoting the word of the month. The entries would hang in area businesses in order for the community to view the student's work. A recognition luncheon for the students and parents will be combined with the essay contest. The art contest was for grades 7-12. A recognition lunch for the top three students of each grade from grades 5-12 on the Laws of Life essay contest and their parents would be recognized. The top winner from each grade would receive a copy of the newspaper with the essay published in it, a \$50 bond and a medal or trophy. The newspaper would run a special section and publish the first place winner's essay from each grade level in the newspaper. We were fortunate to have a keynote speaker for this event. The speaker was former state commissioner and originally from this community. Businesses donated \$10 dollars each to go toward the meal, medal, and bond. All of the businesses that made donations were listed on the back of the program. The school art department and various students created a banner that was displayed at the ceremony. The ceremony was on school grounds because the goal was to invite the public into the school and see the positive direction in which we are heading. The top winners from each building read the essays they wrote.

Positive office referrals were created to recognize students at the middle school. Any staff member could fill out a positive referral about a student who was displaying good character. The student was called to the office and the principal shared the positive office referral with the student. The student received a copy of the referral and coupon for a snack at the monthly super social. The super social was a special social gathering for students during the school day. The

positive office referral was displayed on a bulletin board by the entryway of the building and one was mailed home to the parents.

School District Demographics

During the 2005-2010 timeframe, the following data was retrieved from the state education agency regarding the school district where this case study was conducted. All statistics for the district were averaged from the school years 2005 to 2009. The district had an average of 1,856 students K-12 with an overall attendance rate of 93.96%. This district had two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one career center. Free and reduced lunch population totaled 54.56%. The enrollment consisted of 97% Caucasian students. The two elementary schools and the middle school qualified as a school wide Title I School, however, at the time of the researcher's employment the district chose not to be a part of Title I. However, the two elementary schools eventually became a Title I building because of the funding incentives. The middle school building qualified for Title I but continued not to participate as a Title I building. The ratio of students to classroom teachers was 1:17, slightly under the state average. The average years of professional staff experience was 11.54 years. The average teacher with a master degree or higher was 37.05%. Teacher's salaries for the district averaged \$35,749 and administrators were at \$61,656.40. Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 highlight the designated middle school enrollment for the school years 2005-2009.

Table 3

2005-2006 Middle School Enrollments

Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Subsidized Meals
5 th Grade 131	White 604	Reduced &
6 th Grade 154	Black 1	Free Lunch 351
7 th Grade 172	Hispanic 8	
8 th Grade 165	Asian/ 0	
Total 622	Indian 9	

(DESE, 2012)

Table 4

2006-2007 Middle School Enrollments

Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Subsidized Meals
5 th Grade 138	White 602	Reduced &
6 th Grade 161	Black 5	Free Lunch 348
7 th Grade 157	Hispanic 10	
8 th Grade 168	Asian/ 2	
Total 624	Indian 5	

(DESE, 2012)

Table 5

2007-2008 Middle School Enrollments

Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Subsidized Meals
5 th Grade 126	White 589	Reduced &
6 th Grade 154	Black 8	Free Lunch 328
7 th Grade 161	Hispanic 6	
8 th Grade 166	Asian 3	
Total 607	Indian 1	

(DESE, 2012)

Table 6

2008-2009 Middle School Enrollments

Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Subsidized Meals
5 th Grade 110	White 545	Reduced &
6 th Grade 134	Black 6	Free Lunch 321
7 th Grade 160	Hispanic 6	
8 th Grade 158	Asian/ 4	
Total 562	Indian 1	

(DESE, 2012)

Table 7

2009-2010 Middle School Enrollments

Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Subsidized Meals
5 th Grade 123	White 530	Reduced &
6 th Grade 122	Black 4	Free Lunch 350
7 th Grade 141	Hispanic 3	
8 th Grade 157	Asian/ 4	
Total 543	Indian 2	

(DESE, 2012)

Area Description

The school district is located in a small town with a population of less than 3,000. The racial makeup of the community was 98% Caucasian. It is a rural area where farming is an important part of the economy. The county was home to 59 churches, and is generally considered to be a conservative area. It is within a half hour of the third largest city in the state. Many people who live in the district travel there to work or enjoy the restaurants and shopping.

Those who visit the area find it to be peaceful and filled with nature's beauty. The town's lifestyle is less hectic than that of the city. The community is thought to be a safe environment for raising children. The area also attracts numerous retirees who enjoy the access to the outdoors and quality health care in the nearby city attractive. The area is a short commute to several lakes and a variety of recreation activities are available within 30-60 miles.

Middle school demographics. During the 2005-2010 timeframe, the following data was retrieved from the state education agency regarding the middle school where this case study was conducted. All statistics for the middle school building were averaged from the school years 2005 to 2009. The middle school had 592 students in grades fifth through eighth, with an overall attendance rate of 94.48%. The free and reduced lunch rate was 57.4%. The enrollment consisted of 97% Caucasian students and 100% of the building staff population was Caucasian. The years of experience of professional staff that taught in this building was at 11.48%. The average of professional staff with advanced degrees was at 41.66%. The average teacher salaries at this building were at \$35,047 and administrator salaries were \$58,962. All teachers who worked in this building and taught classes were highly qualified from the 2005-2007 school years. In 2008, 99.4% and in 2009, 97.9% of classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. Per federal regulations, a highly qualified teacher is an individual who has the appropriate certification for his/her teaching assignment. The average of students per classroom teacher was 1:17 and the average student per administrator was 1:316.

Background of the Middle School

Prior to my arrival at this building there had not been a principal in the last ten years, remain in that position for more than two years. The majority of the staff was supportive of change; however, there were five vocal seventh and eighth grade veteran teachers who enjoyed keeping the building in turmoil. Two of the school board members taught in that building within the last five years of my arrival and were good friends with these five teachers. The directive given to me by central office was to assess the building staff members and clean house if needed. The board supported this statement at one of the first board meetings I attended. During my first

year, the assistant principal was removed from my building before the Thanksgiving break. His position was not replaced until the start of the next school year.

Middle school faculty. The middle school teachers were departmentalized in grades fifth through eighth. The grade levels were separated into two long hallways. The fifth and sixth grade classes were on one hallway and the seventh and eighth grade classes were in a separate hallway. Students of one hallway rarely mingled with the other hallway. The fifth and sixth grade students were almost always separated from the seventh and eighth grade students. The electives for fifth and sixth grade were automatically selected for students since there were only four electives they rotated each quarter to a new elective. Seventh and eighth grade students were able to select their electives and they had six choices. There were four lunch periods, one for each grade level.

Administrative and support staff. There were two counselors who worked in this building. One was designated for seventh and eighth and the other for fifth and sixth. We also had a full-time resource officer (police officer) who worked in the district and his office was located at the middle school and majority of the time he was in the middle school and high school campuses. He would walk the hallways and be visible between classes and at lunch in the two buildings. We also had a social worker for the district and she was housed at the middle school. She would call on students who had extreme attendance problems and handled the majority of Division of Family Service (DFS) cases. We had one school nurse for our building. There were two administrators for the building, one principal, and one assistant principal with two full-time secretaries and one secretary that worked part-time three days a week. While she was in our building she was shared by the principal and the two counselors. There was one full-time in-school suspension (ISS) teacher who worked with students academically when they were

placed in her classroom for inappropriate behavior. This building also had an alternative classroom for students who were behaviorally unsuccessful in the classroom. This program was only available for seventh and eighth grade students. The teacher worked with the students to get them back into the regular school setting. Due to the size of the building and number of students there were five trailers outside the building. Special education teachers, one of the computer labs, resource officer office, special education director office, health teacher, and alternative educator used these trailers for their classroom or office.

Data Sources

Multiple sources of data was used for the document analysis of this case study, including document review of survey results, newspaper articles, journals, Power Point presentations, state agency data, teacher and parent newsletters, memos, and emails. The data collected was analyzed utilizing open coding. According to Creswell open coding is used to scrutinize and divide data into segments (Creswell, 2007). Document analysis approach allowed me to compare data trends over several years. Documents were available to me from the following stages of the program:

1. Prior to program implementation.
2. Planning stages of program.
3. Implementation.
4. Post implementation.
5. After transfer of leadership.

As I reviewed documents, I looked for information that related to the character education program at the middle school. One of the procedures for data management was to develop a chronological timeline to place the documents in the order in which they were created. This

assisted me later when analyzing the data and chronicling the impact of the program. The initial data sources for the document analysis are identified below with a brief description.

- State education agency data for the middle school which was hosted on the agency's website and available to the public to view. The data available includes: attendance rates, discipline incidents, and state assessment program results.
- Community newspaper articles from a weekly paper that was delivered to community members.
- Personal notes were information the researcher took while attending meetings or workshop trainings regarding character education. Personal notes could include: meeting minutes, training notes, communication between teachers, character education trainer and committee members.
- Staff surveys which were given to every employee who worked at the middle school building (janitors, cooks, teachers, support staff, secretaries) prior to the researcher, then principal's first day on the job. The surveys sought input on the strengths, weakness, climate, and what needed to change or stay the same. The survey was anonymous and the secretaries collected them.
- Power Point presentations which were created for staff, parents, students, community organizations, committee, and training dates. Some of the Power Points were similar as we were educating the stakeholders about the character education program and the need in our community for the program.
- Chamber of Commerce newsletter which was published monthly and emailed to area businesses. Character council committee agenda and minutes were emailed to all committee members. Board reports were created monthly and given to all

board members, principals in the district, the superintendent and assistant superintendent.

- Parent newsletter which were created by the building principal and mailed monthly to parents. The newsletter was given to teachers, parents, board members, and assistant superintendent.
- Faculty agendas were created monthly and given to teachers.
- Assembly agendas were created monthly and given to teachers and administrators of the building.
- Faculty newsletter was created weekly and emailed to all staff in the building. The faculty newsletter would include character word of the month or character quote.

Data Analysis

This study was designed to conduct a document analysis. Using Creswell's definition of framework, "an organizing model for the research questions or hypothesis and for the data collection procedure" (p. 55) the document analysis added to the framework already available. The first step was the creation of a chronological listing of all documents. This listing process sorted documents according to the five stages. The second step I began the process of reviewing documents thoroughly for evidence related to the character education program. The third step in the data analysis process was to utilize open coding strategies to identify evidence related to academics, attendance, and discipline. The fourth step utilized the categorizing strategies approach by "Rossman & Rallis," (2003) where codes were grouped according to similarities and differences among the data. The fifth step was to sort the categories by each phase of

implementation of the program so that the impact of the character education program on academics, attendance and discipline could be assessed.

I analyzed the data for common themes to determine if the program impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline at the designated middle school. I have analyzed the data collected by utilizing open coding strategies and identified the themes that emerged from the different documents. Results from the study were used to determine if character education impacted academic progress, attendance, and discipline in its current capacity. If the results of the study do not show improvement, then the information will be valuable to character education participants and partners in order to re-evaluate and make changes to the existing program based on research results concerning the program's impact.

Reliability and Validity

The following methods were used to ensure the reliability and validity of the study:

1. Maintenance of audit trail to document all research activities including obtaining, reviewing, coding, and analyzing data.
2. Participate in peer debriefings with colleagues and experts throughout the data analysis process.
3. Utilization of source triangulation through the use of documents from multiple sources including the school, school district, and state agency.
4. Disclosure of the researcher's role as a stakeholder in theoretical lens in the design of the study as previously stated.

Summary

An extensive and comprehensive process of data collection has been provided by this qualitative research study. There was a triangulation of surveys, documents related to

attendance, academics, and discipline, and data from the state department. The data collection identified trends and major themes within the study. The theoretical framework and data collection provided the progress of chapter four. The research design and analysis have provided a foundation for the study.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to use document analysis to discover how character education impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline at a designated middle school. It covered a five-year period during which the school chose a character education program and followed the school during the pre-implementation planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages and including the two years following a transfer of leadership when the principalship was changed. Chapter 4 summarizes these findings.

The following research questions were addressed:

1. How did the character education program develop, evolve and endure after the transfer of leadership?
2. How did the character education program impact academics at the middle school?
3. How did the character education program impact attendance at said middle school?
4. How did the character education impact discipline at said middle school?

Description of Documents Examined

I reviewed data over a period of five years to be able to obtain a comprehensive look at the middle school character education program. The data contained information from all the stages of implementation: pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages as well as the two years after the transfer of leadership of the school. Documents analyzed include: surveys, journals, power point presentations, state agency data,

teacher newsletters, parent newsletters, memos to teachers, emails, board reports, and faculty agendas.

Pre-Implementation Survey

The pre-implementation survey was provided to all staff at Greyson Middle School (GMS) in April 2005, prior to the new principal's first day of work in August of 2005. The surveys were anonymous and once the survey was completed staff members placed the completed survey into a manila envelope. The survey had four open-ended questions:

1. What are the strengths of Greyson Middle School?
2. What are the weaknesses of Greyson Middle School?
3. What would you like to see stay the same at Greyson Middle School?
4. What would you like to improve at Greyson Middle School?

Strengths of Greyson Middle School

After analyzing the surveys, the first survey question concerning strengths of the school revealed six themes. The six themes that emerged were: (1) budget, (2) teacher expertise, (3) class size, (4) building and grounds, (5) teacher compassion toward students and (6) the open door policy of the administration.

Budget. The majority of teachers at Greyson Middle School felt that they were provided an adequate budget to purchase the necessary materials to provide academic success in the classroom.

Teacher expertise. Teachers also felt they were highly qualified because of the number of years they had in education, the number of teachers who had a master's degree in their content area, or because of the professional development training they have completed.

Class size. Several teachers commented that class size was important to the success of their classes academically and wanted to see the size of classes remain intact.

Building and grounds. It was apparent through the surveys that the staff was proud of the building and grounds. Many teachers commented on how nice the building and grounds were because it was one of the newer buildings in the district.

Teacher compassion toward students and each other. A majority of teachers commented how teachers in this building care about the kids and support one another. The teachers want to see this continue. Many teachers in the survey stated that one of the strengths of the Greyson Middle School is how the staff members throughout the building are caring and supportive of each other. This section was contradicting since lack of support among teachers was reported as a weakness under question two. A larger number of teachers commented that one of the weaknesses was that staff members were not supportive and there was a lack of teamwork among the teachers, especially from one end of the building to the other. The building grade levels were split by fifth and sixth grade at one end of the hallway, and seventh and eighth grade at the other end of the hallway.

Open door policy of the administration. Lastly, many of the teachers reported they would like to continue to have an open door policy with the principal. They reported that they felt that administrators supported the teachers. In the responses to this part of the survey, random comments about various things throughout the school that did not directly reflect or relate to the topic of this section were included. There seemed to be many random comments about various things throughout the school on this part of the survey. The only themes that emerged were related to (1) caring and supportive teachers and (2) administrative support. However, the

response about administrative support was less significant and the more common statements were concerning caring teachers.

Weaknesses of Greyson Middle School

The second question concerning weaknesses revealed six themes of perceived weaknesses. The themes consisted of: (1) communication, (2) discipline, (3) academics, (4) expectations of teacher professionalism, (5) lack of support from administration, and (6) lack of mutual support among teachers.

Communication. The teachers felt like communication between administration and teachers needed to be improved. Some teachers expressed they are not always aware of what was happening in the building because of the lack of communication, and that some students were left out of events as a result of the lack of communication. Teachers also stated there was a lack of communication from administration to parents. Teachers stated that up to date information should be sent home frequently to inform parents of their students' academic progress and behavior (positive or negative), or that a phone call home to parents should be made. Teachers also said there is a lack of communication among grade level teams and across the building from teacher to teacher.

Discipline. Teachers were most concerned over the lack of, and inconsistency of, discipline. Teachers were concerned because they did not feel supported by administration when they followed the handbook and when they referred a student to the principal's office for discipline. Several teachers commented how they felt there was low, or nonexistent, behavioral expectations for the students. Teachers felt that administration softened the situation which in turn gave students mixed messages. Teachers also felt that students were not treated equally. Several teachers explained that based on the handling of discipline by administration, that the

discipline varied based on the students name and the position their family held in the community. Consistency of discipline appeared to be the biggest concern of the staff. It was perceived that some teachers are too lax and some are overly strict. Discipline varied from teacher to teacher. Sometimes discipline for behavior and academic infractions was never enforced by some teachers or the administrator.

Academics. Academics were another area several teachers perceived as a weakness. Many teachers expressed that the academic expectations for students are low. Several teachers responded they felt they were encouraged to give little to no homework to students. Many teachers commented there was no surprise concerning low MAP scores. They felt it was because the burden of preparing students for the MAP tests rests solely on the grade level/core subject teachers that administer the MAP test. Many teachers did not feel parents were informed of failing grades until the end of a quarter when it was too late for any interventions to occur. Several teachers felt the lack of collaboration among vertical and horizontal teams was detrimental to students' academic progress. Furthermore, teachers were not working toward common goals within the building. One teacher stated, "It can be described as every man/woman for yourself atmosphere." Many teachers were unwilling to try new approaches. The majority of teachers reported there was simply a lack of academic rigor throughout the middle school. Many believed administration did not have clear academic expectations, it resulted in expectations that could not be enforced.

Expectations of teacher professionalism. Throughout the survey many staff members commented that administration held inconsistent expectations for teachers concerning their responsibilities in the classroom and within the building. Many teachers arrived late to school, didn't show up for assigned duties, and were not required to share the same tasks within the

classroom or in the building. Many teachers provided details of situations that demonstrated the lack of teacher professionalism. Many teachers commented on how they personally chose not to follow the Grade Level Expectations (GLE's) in their classroom. Many teachers openly commented that how they taught their subject matter was based upon material they wanted to teach. Many teachers admitted they should be held accountable for working together with their colleagues to teach the GLE's. Some of the teachers commented on how they had "watered down" their courses so students would do better and pass their class to show they had high academic achievement. However, teachers reported the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores reflect a different outcome than high academic achievement. The MAP scores reflected low academic achievement. However, when confronted with low or failing MAP scores, many teachers stated that the low scores were a result of discipline problems that were not addressed. Therefore, teachers thought that they were unable to teach effectively in their classrooms.

Lack of support from administration. The lack of support from administrators was a concern from half of the staff members who submitted a survey. Specifically, the teachers reported a lack of support when it related to student discipline. The other theme that emerged within this section was that teachers were not able to work together and it resulted in inappropriate and unprofessional behavior between colleagues. The teachers also reported the need for administration to step in and help resolve the problems when faculty were unable to work together or when inappropriate and unprofessional conduct occurred among teachers.

Lack of mutual support among teachers. The majority of teachers reported that there was no teamwork among teachers. Many teachers commented on how they do not work together collaboratively among grade level teams or in vertical groups. Many teachers commented that there were teachers that did not follow policy, or did follow policy but were not doing what was

best for students. They also commented on how the two ends of the building are separated and acted as two separate buildings. The majority stated their concern regarding how many staff members complain about everything, which creates problems throughout the building.

Communication was reported as a huge problem among teachers.

Suggested Improvements at Greyson Middle School

This section of the survey had more specific responses and majority of responses were the same when compared to the other survey responses. There were six themes that emerged from this section of the survey. The staff wanted improvement in these areas in this order: (1) discipline, (2) academics, (3) administration leadership and teacher expectations, (4) communication, (5) teacher morale, and (6) character building.

Consistency of discipline. It is evident from the surveys the staff feels there was inconsistent discipline. Indeed sometimes, no consequences were given to students for inappropriate or rule-breaking behaviors. Many teachers commented on how the students were disrespectful and lacking honor and integrity. The desire for a consistent discipline program that treated all students equally was frequently mentioned in all surveys. Also, respondents requested clear procedures that outlined behavior expectations and discipline consequences so that all staff, students, and administrators could understand and consistently follow.

Academics. Many teachers commented that academic expectations needed to be improved. Many felt that it was hard to maintain classroom structure needed to teach because the discipline in the school was out of control. The teachers expressed the need for collaboration on academic matters. Teachers also indicated the need for administrators to conduct classroom walkthroughs on a weekly basis to ensure teachers were teaching what the district and state goals require. Basically, the teachers wanted someone to hold them accountable for good teaching

practices and for the delivery of the state-required curriculum. A large number of the responses of the surveys stated that they wanted to have regular meetings with grade level teams and vertical teams and that all teachers would be held accountable for both meeting attendance and for implementation of the curricular decisions within the individual classrooms.

Administrative leadership and teacher expectations. Staff members wanted the administrators to provide leadership by articulating clear expectations for teachers and to hold them all accountable for those expectations. At the time, staff members felt there was no direction or goals to direct their work and that there was no one willing to hold them accountable for working toward or meeting those goals. In general, teachers could discern no system of accountability in the school.

Communication. Communication emerged as a concern from the surveys. Many staff members did not feel informed regarding what was occurring throughout the building. They reported that there were few staff meetings. Unfortunately, their students would miss out on events because no one knew when some events might occur. Many teachers wrote on the surveys that they would like timely information and feedback from administrators.

Teacher morale. Overall teachers reported that morale was low. Many teachers commented on how angry and upset they were because of the lack of leadership they were experiencing. The teachers wanted to be heard and not ignored. Many teachers were upset with other teachers who were attempting to teach on grade level or in the assigned content area. Many reported being up-set because other teachers didn't put in extra work to meet requirements since they weren't being held accountable. Little recognition or rewards were given for those doing a good or excellent job.

Character building. Lastly, teachers commented on how the students needed character building activities at Greyson Middle School. Many teachers commented on how the students did not demonstrate respect, responsibility, or kindness within the school environment and recommended that the students have instruction in these areas.

Summary of the Survey Findings

The survey provided staff the opportunity to speak out concerning the strengths and weaknesses of Greyson Middle School (GMS). The results suggested there were six themes apparent in the strengths of the school. There were also six themes that were considered weaknesses at GMS. Later the results from this survey were used to guide the pre-implementation stages of the character education program chosen by the school.

Findings from the Faculty Newsletter

After analyzing the weekly faculty newsletters it was evident the following themes consisted in the newsletter on a regular basis: (1) academics, (2) incentives for students and teachers, (3) discipline, (4) character education, (5) collaboration and communication, and (6) professional development.

Academics. Throughout the weekly faculty newsletter academics consistently emerged. The newsletter provided a weekly MAP word for every teacher in the building to focus on and incorporate into their lessons for that week. The newsletter also provided the upcoming words for the next week for teachers who liked to plan ahead. The definitions were provided to teachers in advance as well so they knew what was expected. The newsletter explained to teachers that during principal walk-throughs of classroom, there would be one expectation they would be looking for within the classroom. The newsletter constantly reminded teachers of progress and quarter grades and encouraged teachers to discuss grades with students and parents

on a regular basis. The newsletter also discussed the importance of time on task for students in every classroom. Simply meaning, students were expected to be on-task the majority of every class period. Classroom assessments were required to be submitted to the principal on a regular basis in order to make sure the questions were in the format of the MAP assessment. Tutoring was always mentioned in the newsletter to remind teachers to encourage parents to have their students attend before or after school tutoring.

Incentives for students and teachers. Incentives for students were always mentioned in the monthly newsletters. There were many incentives for positive student behavior. During monthly school assemblies, students who demonstrated outstanding citizenship were recognized. There was a super social for students who did not have any discipline referrals for that month. Positive office referrals could be written as often as a teacher observed a student demonstrating the character trait of the month. Perfect attendance field trips were offered to students who had missed zero time from school. Honor Roll field trips were offered to students who were on the A/B honor roll. There were also quarter drawings for students who were on the honor roll and had perfect attendance. Student's names were placed in a drawing for items such as iPods, t-shirts, and other numerous prizes. Throughout the year and at various times there would be spirit week for the students. The staff were encouraged to participate in the spirit week activities as well. The last incentive of the year was called the end of year bash. Every student was able to attend this event and it was on the last day of school. Students earned play money that they were able to spend at the bash on carnival games and concession stand items. There were incentives for teachers as well and the incentives were mentioned regularly in the newsletters. Monthly there would be a pot-luck lunch for all teachers and they would also receive an extended lunch break once a month. There was a climate committee created to focus on incentives for teachers.

The committee would put notes of encouragement with candy in mailboxes of all staff. They would also create celebration videos of staff with students and it would be played continuously during the monthly lunches. There were two special gatherings each year for the staff and their families. One event occurred prior to school starting in the local park and the second was prior to Christmas break.

Discipline. Discipline procedures were mentioned in each newsletter. The importance of all teachers being consistent and following the same guidelines was mentioned several times in each newsletter. A common discipline program was established and used by the entire staff in order to create an environment that provided consistent discipline. Examples were provided in the newsletter of what behaviors should result in a student being sent immediately to the principal's office and suggestions provided on how to handle small incidents that occurred in the classroom.

Character education. The weekly faculty newsletter focused on the trait of the month and reminded teachers to incorporate that trait into daily lessons. Every adult in the middle school was encouraged to fill out a positive office referral if they observed a student demonstrating the trait of the month. The staff wanted to recognize a student monthly from every grade level who demonstrated outstanding citizenship. These students were recognized at the monthly character education assembly. The newsletter always stated the date and time of the monthly character assembly, the trait of the month, and the guest speaker. In 2007, students began introducing the character trait of the month. They would create a skit, rap song, or some other method to present the trait of the month. In 2009, students no longer led the monthly assemblies.

Collaboration and communication. Constant collaboration and communication was another theme that emerged throughout the newsletters. The newsletters clearly expressed that it was expected of all staff to collaborate and communicate on a regular basis. There were mandatory meetings weekly among common grade level teams and minutes were submitted to the principal. The meetings consisted of numerous items and the agendas might be different at each grade level. Some of the agenda items were academics, discipline, motivating students, and ways to work together to do what was in the best interest of every student. Teachers were encouraged to communicate with parents on a regular basis. If a student fell two letter grades or the student has several missing assignments teachers were expected to call that parent. Teachers were also expected to call parents for positive information if they saw a positive change in a student's behavior or academics.

Professional development. Another theme that emerged was professional development of staff. After analyzing the documents, the professional development focused on academics, classroom management, character education, trust and relationships, and changing the culture of the school. The professional development was completed through book studies, faculty meetings, early out days, conferences, and committee meetings.

Summary of the Faculty Newsletter

The faculty newsletter was used as a tool to address the themes from the staff survey. The newsletters were used to guide the character education program. The newsletter addressed academics, student and teacher incentives, discipline, character education, collaboration and communication, and professional development. Through the faculty newsletters the staff could see that their concerns were being expressed from the survey and that progress was being made in eliminating those concerns.

Findings from the Faculty Agenda

The faculty agenda had similar emergent themes as to the faculty newsletter. The emergent themes for the faculty agenda include: (1) academics, (2) incentives for students and teachers, (3) discipline, (4) character education, (5) collaboration and communication, (6) professional development, and (7) evaluations and expectations.

Academics. A theme that emerged the most throughout the faculty agendas was a focus on academics. It ranged from teachers knowing the curriculum objectives they were teaching, incorporating MAP strategies into everyday teaching with examples provided, writing assessment questions that were in the format of the MAP assessment, keeping students engaged, creating assessments, conducting grade checks on a regular basis and conferencing with students regarding grades, encouraging before/after school tutoring sessions, and focusing on MAP and classroom assessment data. This was a few of the items that were mentioned regarding academics throughout the agendas.

Incentives for students and teachers. Incentives provided for students and teachers were listed on every monthly agenda. Incentives for students consisted of field trips, positive office referrals, quarter drawings, monthly super socials, monthly recognition at character education assemblies, and monthly super socials. Teacher incentives listed on the agendas consisted of monthly lunches with extended time for lunch, special gatherings outside the school day, and drawings for extra plan period.

Discipline. Another emergent theme was discipline. The agendas listed consistent discipline and provided examples, addressed classroom management, and emphasized the discipline program of the middle school. The agendas also had expectations listed for teachers to implement and make sure students follow the discipline program.

Character education. The faculty agenda always had the character education word of the month on the agenda along with encouragement to fill out positive office referral forms. The date and time of the monthly assembly was always listed on the monthly faculty agenda. The agenda also encouraged incorporating the trait of the month into lessons and sample lessons were provided and shared at the monthly meetings. Time was available during the meetings for teachers to share how they were incorporating the character trait into their classrooms both academically and behaviorally.

Collaboration and communication. Another theme that emerged throughout the agenda was collaboration and communication with each other, parents, and students. Teachers were encouraged to contact parents on a regular basis for both positive behavior and any concerns related to their students. Teachers were required to meet weekly in their grade level teams and minutes were required to be submitted to the building principal.

Professional development. Professional Development was another theme that emerged in this document analysis. On every agenda there was professional development that focused on one of the following topics; academics, classroom management, character education, trust and relationships, and changing the culture of the school.

Evaluations and expectations. This theme emerged on every faculty agenda. Every agenda focused on expectations of teachers and students. Evaluation expectations were listed on every agenda as well as principal walk-throughs. The principal shared with the staff the expectations of what administrators were looking for during walk-throughs and evaluations.

Summary of the Faculty Agenda

The faculty agenda addressed themes similar to those addressed in faculty newsletter. In addition to the themes in the newsletter, the agendas also addressed teacher evaluations and

expectations. The agenda also explained the importance of the themes derived from the pre-implementation survey. As evidenced by the faculty agenda, the continuing focus on themes and expectations were important components in the integration of the character education program within the school culture and the continuing reflection of how those themes reminded the teachers of the importance of the program.

Findings from the Parent Newsletter

After analyzing the parent newsletters they revealed six themes. Those six themes were mentioned in every edition of the parent newsletter. The parent newsletter went home to parents monthly. The six themes were: (1) student expectations and discipline program, (2) incentives, (3) character education, (4) academics, (5) attendance, and (6) school activities and programs.

Student expectations and discipline program. Each month the parent newsletter focused on student expectations and the discipline program at the middle school. Since the program was new to the school, the discipline program was explained in the first few parent newsletters of each year. Each month thereafter the program continued to be mentioned. Student expectations were mentioned each month to remind parents what was expected at school in hopes those expectations would be reinforced at home.

Incentives. Student incentives were mentioned in every parent newsletter. Specific students were mentioned and recognized for the awards they had received that month. The monthly newsletter also shared information regarding the perfect attendance field trip, honor roll field trip, and information about the monthly super social. Parents were invited to attend assemblies and field trips and the dates and times were provided for all events.

Character education. The parent newsletter once a month focused on the trait of the month and invited parents and community members to attend the monthly assembly. The

assembly was to kick off the character trait of the month. Each monthly parent newsletter shared who the guest speaker would be at the assembly and highlighted students who had been recognized during that month for demonstrating the trait of the month. The parent newsletter also shared how teachers randomly wrote positive office referrals for students when they observed students behavior that related to the trait of the month. The parent newsletter also shared how the trait of the month was incorporated throughout the district and opportunities for students to participate in academic contest that incorporated character traits.

Academics. The parent newsletter highlighted student academic achievements and explained the opportunities available if students needed additional academic help. The newsletter provided dates of when progress and quarter grades were available. It also explained what the MAP assessment was, when the testing dates were, and provided strategies to ensure the students were prepared to do their best on the test. A pyramid of intervention program was created to help students succeed who were failing. This program was explained in the parent newsletter.

Attendance. Perfect attendance was a focus because students can't learn if they are not in attendance. Making sure parents understood the importance of student attendance was a priority of administration and faculty. Students with perfect attendance were recognized in the parent newsletters and offered a quarterly field trip as a reward for their perfect attendance.

School activities and programs. Various school activities and programs were mentioned to inform parents of upcoming events. Dates and times were provided as well as sharing the past months events and results. Some of the various events that were shared include; school dances, ballgames, band and music concerts, academic competitions, and food drives.

Summary of the Parent Newsletter

There were six themes found in the parent newsletters: (1) student expectations and discipline program, (2) incentives, (3) character education, (4) academics, (5) attendance, and (6) school activities and programs. The parent newsletter helped communicate the character education program to the parents. It shared important information to the parents and often invited parents to participate in the activities so they could be involved in the character education program. The themes were important to the parent newsletter.

Findings from the Board Report

After analyzing the board reports they revealed seven themes. Those seven themes were mentioned in every addition of the board reports. The board reports occurred monthly. The seven themes that emerged were: (1) student attendance and enrollment, (2) student and teacher recognition, (3) character education, (4) academics, (5) professional development, (6) school activities and programs, and (7) celebrations in the middle school.

Student attendance and enrollment. Each month enrollment numbers and Average Daily Attendance (ADA) were shared with board members along with strategies to increase monthly attendance.

Student and teacher recognition. After analyzing the board report documents it was found at each meeting students and teachers were recognized for their achievements. The praise for teachers ranged from academics, building climate, collaborating, classroom projects, competition, implementing new strategies into the classroom, being involved, and doing what is best for students. The praise for students included the awards received, recognition at assemblies, behavioral or academic recognition, and attending field trips.

Character education. The monthly middle school board report included information on the shared trait of the month, information about the character education assemblies and the student receiving recognition for a positive office referral. Some months the report provided examples of how the middle school teachers were incorporating the character trait into the classroom lessons. Often it contained updates about the community character education meeting and it invited board members to attend the next community character education meeting and provided the date of that meeting. Some of the information shared with the board in regards to the vision and mission of the character education program were: (1) how businesses and the community were involved with the initiative, (2) celebrations of the program, (3) academic contests related to the monthly traits, and (4) how the local newspaper devoted space each week for the character trait of the month.

Academics. The board reports shared where the students were academically as a grade level using test scores from the MAP data and comparing the students data to the state MAP assessments and what the teachers were doing to help close that gap. It also shared the names of students who received academic awards, students on the honor roll, and teachers who were making academic gains in their classroom based upon classroom assessments that were based on the format used in the MAP assessment. Board reports also contained information on the professional development activities that were occurring on a regular basis to improve instruction and the specific academic skills teachers needed to implement the strategies in their classroom.

Professional development. Each report shared the professional development the staff was working on that month and the purpose of the professional development. It was shared with the board who was presenting the professional development along with the research of why

learning those strategies were important for teachers. Board members were invited into the building to see those strategies put into practice.

School activities and programs. Various school activities and programs were mentioned to inform board members of upcoming events. Dates and times were provided as well as sharing the past months events and results. Students and teachers who were involved in those events were praised before the board. Some of the various events that were shared include; school dances, ballgames, band and music concerts, academic competitions, monthly assemblies, classroom projects, and food drives.

Celebrations. Monthly celebrations were shared with board members reflecting the positive gains the middle school students were making. Some months the recognition would be discipline, attendance, academics, character education, building climate, parent participation at an event, and other such events.

Summary of the Board Report

The board report revealed seven themes: (1) student attendance and enrollment, (2) student and teacher recognition, (3) character education, (4) academics, (5) professional development, (6) school activities and programs, and (7) celebrations in the middle school. These reports were used to help bring focus to these seven areas each month.

Findings from the Character Education Power Points and Brochures

In reviewing many documents, the character education brochure and Power Point's shared the monthly traits and definitions of each trait.

Brochure. The brochure provided research based information that supported the need of character education and then explained how it would work within the school and community.

The brochure included information such as how to partner with the program, how to get involved, and contact information if they had additional questions.

Power points. The Power Points always began with the day's objectives for the meeting. The Power Point's provided information about character education and the purpose for character education with area clubs and organizations. It also provided goals and background information so that everyone understood the need to begin a character education initiative and why it is a community-wide effort. A sample of the character traits with the definition were provided and explained so that everyone had a common understanding. Thus, the program didn't teach values per se, but addressed universal traits that all might follow throughout life. Power Points provided examples of how to incorporate the character trait into lessons, community service, club activities, assemblies, businesses, and how to incorporate throughout the community. Lastly, the Power Points provided implementation steps and resources available.

Summary of Power Points and Brochures

The Character Education Power Points and Brochures were used to share the definitions of the character traits and the months they were to be taught. The brochure explained the character education program, how to implement it, and how to get the community involved. The Power Points were used with groups to explain the Character Education initiative, information about the program and how to implement it effectively.

Findings from the Character Education Community Committee Meetings

After analyzing the character education community committee meeting minutes they revealed three themes. The character education committee meetings occurred as needed but no more than once a month. The three themes that emerged were: (1) communication, (2) visibility, and (3) student recognition.

Communication. The committee each meeting discussed ways in which they could best communicate with the public the character education trait of the month. It was agreed that each committee member would take one month and write a letter to the editor regarding how he/she was implementing character education into his/her place of employment. The newspaper editor, who was on the character education community committee, shared that in his opinion the letters to the editor were highly read. After each committee member took a month to share how they were implementing character education into their place of employment, the next step was to add student quotes and classroom letters to the letter to the editor. The local newspaper also agreed to write a feature story about character education that appeared in the August newspaper. The article focused about character education and what was planned for the upcoming school year.

Visibility. The committee agreed the character trait of the month should be visible throughout the community. The Chamber of Commerce put the character trait of the month on the community sign, added something about character education each month in a monthly newsletter the local businesses, added a character education spot on the chambers website, and added a link that goes back to the character education site the committee and school agreed to use for their character education program. They also added character education as an organization to the community directory. The Chamber of Commerce encouraged local businesses to put the word of the month inside and outside their businesses. The Chamber of Commerce also added an attachment to their email each month that included the trait of the month with definition for businesses to hang up to increase visibility. The Ministerial Alliance would incorporate the character word in their sermon every Sunday and place the monthly trait on the signs in front of the churches. The biggest bank in town agreed that they would begin placing the character trait on the bank statements. The committee recommended to the schools

that we incorporate the trait of the month on programs, scoreboards, and to have announcer at ballgames announce the trait of the month numerous times throughout the game. The middle and high school faculty did include this suggestion at their events.

Student recognition. The committee agreed to sponsor a yearly contest to recognize students. The committee agreed to sponsor an art contest as well as an essay contest that was a part of character education. The essay contest was called, *The Laws of Life Essay* and the details to the contest were found online. Entries to the art contest would hang in area businesses in order for the community to view the student's work. A recognition lunch for the top three students of each grade from grades 3-12 for the art contest and grades 5-12 on the essay contest and their parents would be recognized. The newspaper would run a special section and publish the first place winner's essay and art from each grade level in the newspaper. The top winner from each grade would receive a copy of the newspaper with the essay published in it, a \$50 savings bond, and a medal.

Summary of the Character Education Committee Minutes

The character education community meeting minutes revealed three themes: (1) communication, (2) visibility, and (3) student recognition. These themes helped the community participate with the program to implement it and to effectively support it within the community. Involvement from the local newspaper allowed for further communication, visibility and student recognition within the community. A yearly essay contest was implemented and further supported the findings of the key themes within the community meetings. These three themes were discussed at every character education committee meeting.

Findings from the Character Education School Committee Meetings

After analyzing the character education teacher committee meeting minutes they revealed four themes. The character education teacher committee meetings occurred as needed. The four themes that emerged were: (1) awareness, (2) visibility, (3) student recognition, and (4) student behavior.

Awareness. The teacher committee felt it was important to raise awareness among students and the community regarding character education. It was important to share with the stakeholders the purpose and need of a character education program. The teacher committee decided it was important to create a Power Point and brochure to share with the stakeholders in the community so they could better understand the purpose of a character education program. The principal would share this information with the community leaders. The members of the teacher committee would share this information with parents at our first open house and share with students throughout the school year the first year of implementation.

Visibility. The committee wanted to make the word visible throughout the school and community. Signs were created and hung throughout the school and in all classrooms prior to the first day of school. Teachers were encouraged to incorporate the character trait into daily language in the classroom and into lesson plans.

Student recognition. The teacher committee developed a form called positive office referrals. Students could be written up when a staff member observed a student displaying the character trait of the month. The student would be called to the office and the principal would commend the student on the behavior. The referral would also be mailed home and hung up on a bulletin board near the center of the school for everyone to see. The students who received a positive office referral in that month were also recognized at the monthly assembly. The

committee recommended recognizing students at assemblies for academics, behavior, attendance, awards, and any other reason that would seem to be worthy of recognition.

Student behavior. The committee was concerned with past behavior issues and wanted a program to support and help with discipline. The committee researched several programs and chose a character education program to help with behavior. Behavior was a topic that appeared in almost all the committee minutes. The committee realized that it would be a shift in building culture and wanted to implement this program to improve the behavior skills for students entering the middle school.

Summary of the Character Education School Committee Minutes

There were four themes revealed in the character education school committee meetings. Those themes were: (1) awareness, (2) visibility, (3) student recognition, and (4) student behavior. These themes guided the meetings to utilize the program effectively.

Findings from the Character Education Training

After analyzing the character education training agenda, minutes, and training material they revealed seven themes. There were two days dedicated to character education training. The seven themes that emerged were: (1) character education history, (2) character traits, (3) integrating character into curriculum, (4) staff development, (5) student leadership, (6) implementation process, and (7) evaluation process.

Character education history. The first day of training began with the history of character education and the research that supported the program. The history also included how the Character program follows the Missouri Show-Me Standards. Three of the standards the program follow: (1) creating a positive climate for learning, (2) establishes a focus on academic achievement, and (3) students and staff indicate they feel safe at school.

Character traits. For long term success, it was important to obtain community participation in identifying and defining the traits that the school planned to use in the character education program. The Character Plus Ten Essentials Team training recommended creating a committee and asking key leaders of the community and school to work together to identify and define the character traits. It also recommended that the school communicate their efforts and purpose of why they want to begin the character education program. Once the information was shared with the community, the next step was to check the community perspective. The training recommended that the committee identify five traits most important to each individual. Each member then shared their trait and similar traits were combined. If anyone had a trait that they felt was particularly important, they could campaign for that trait. The group then discussed how the traits were valuable and if anyone could identify any concerns to be aware of related to each trait. Once the finalization of the traits and definitions the next step was making the traits highly visible throughout the school and community.

Integrating character into curriculum. The training shared that character education was an integral part of the curriculum and the traits should be a part of the instruction in every class and every subject. It also encouraged that the school not only integrate the traits in the classroom curriculum, but throughout the entire school. It emphasized that the traits should be integrated in every aspect school-wide and integrated throughout the community as well.

Staff development. The training provided insight about the importance of all adults who come in contact with children. These adults model the character traits identified as having a positive influence during all interactions. Time for reflection, staff development activities and access to resources must also be provided to successfully implement character education. Teachers must have time to discuss and understand the process of the program and have time to

research and/or create lessons. Some examples the trainer shared for staff development ideas were; staff in-service, state and national conferences, faculty meetings, job embedded, one-on-one, and email sharing of ideas.

Student leadership. Another key point of the training is to involve students in the creation of the character education program. It empowered students and gave them opportunities to voice their ideas of how to implement the program. The training also suggested to empower the students to lead the program and provide them ownership throughout the entire process. However, an adult would monitor students during this process.

Implementation process. Involving everyone throughout the process is seen as the key to sustaining the program. There must be a high level of commitment from the top, adequate funding, support for district and community coordination, high-quality and ongoing professional development, and a networking and support system for teachers who are implementing the program. It is important to reinforce staff and community commitment to character education on a regular basis. It is important to continue to connect character education to the curriculum and other program and initiatives as much as possible.

Evaluation. A character education program needs consistent monitoring through the gathering of data. The data will help determine if the desired outcomes are becoming evident in the school and community. The results will also guide changes to improve implementation. Monitoring and reflecting on the program should occur frequently. Examples of evidence if the program is working could be to review office referrals, attendance, examine student essays on character education, interviewing staff, students, parents, community members, and surveys.

Summary of the Character Education Training

Analysis of the materials from character education training revealed seven themes. Those themes were: (1) character education history, (2) character traits, (3) integrating character into the curriculum, (4) staff development, (5) student leadership, (6) implementation process and (7) evaluation process. Each of these themes repeat throughout the training, thus, revealing how important they were to every aspect of the character education program.

Findings from Student Lessons

After analyzing the student lessons they revealed three themes. The three themes that emerged were: (1) academics, (2) discipline, and (3) citizenship.

Student academics. Each monthly trait has a definition and an example of a quick lesson related to the trait. Teachers were provided one sample lesson monthly and encouraged to incorporate the monthly trait into their classroom and lesson on a daily basis. In looking through the sample lessons, the majority were from the language arts and social studies teachers. However, there were sample lessons from math and science as well. Many of the lessons teachers submitted were related to journaling or essays. One of the building-wide activities that all communication arts teachers incorporated was on the “Laws of Life”, which was an essay that the community committee incorporated in the district. Students who wrote a Laws of Life essay wrote about how character education has taught the children to be successful leaders in the community and how they value this education. The art teacher also did a class project and encouraged every student to enter their project into the art contest as well. There were a few that incorporated activities where students worked together in pairs or groups but still focused on the course curriculum.

Student discipline. Several of the documents were related to citizenship or discipline. Specifically, lessons were centered on self-discipline, giving advice, doing the right thing when no-one is looking, responsibility lessons, self-discipline related to homework, as well as many other topics.

Citizenship. Citizenship was another trait frequently taught. In reviewing the sample lessons, many had activities for students addressing the topic of how to be a productive citizen in the community and in the school.

Summary of the Student Lessons

Analyzing student lessons revealed three repeated themes: (1) citizenship, (2) discipline, and (3) academic. The Laws of Life essay was utilized to incorporate character education through student lessons. The lessons were primarily from the social studies and language arts content teachers; although, math and science content teachers provided some lessons.

Findings from the Newspaper

After analyzing the student lessons they revealed four themes. The four themes that emerged were: (1) academics, (2) discipline, (3) student recognition, and (4) character trait.

Academics. Every week the local newspaper recognized students as an academic achiever of the week. The paper published students who were on the honor roll each quarter and recognized students for various academic achievements throughout the year. The paper shared information about special academic projects that were occurring in the classrooms.

Discipline. The paper would recognize students monthly who had received a positive office referral in that month. Students were able to receive a positive office referral when they were observed displaying the character trait of the month.

Character trait. In 2006, students from the middle school and high school submitted character-related quotes that they had found or that they had written on a weekly basis. In addition, local businesses put the character trait in their newspaper ad either as a part of their slogan or as a part of the ad itself.

Student recognition. The newspaper would have pictures of students and a short summary to recognize students for their achievements each week. Student recognition ranged from honor roll, perfect attendance, positive office referrals, academic achiever of the week, student quotes related to the character trait of the month, awards, and results of competitions and contests.

Summary of the Newspaper

The themes revealed through the newspaper participation were: (1) academics, (2) discipline, (3) student recognition, and (4) character traits. The newspaper focused on academic achievement through weekly and quarterly recognition, reinforcing the monthly traits and communication with the community. The paper focused on positive office referrals concerning discipline. The newspaper used the four themes to spread consistent awareness about the benefits of the character education program.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

The purpose of this study was to discover how character education impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline. It was a document analysis design and involved several documents.

Data Analysis

As one analyzes the documents, one will discover that there have been some positive gains in all areas (attendance, academics and discipline) since character education began at the

Middle School. The information from discipline, attendance, and academics were all reviewed separately and analyzed to find the common themes. Table 8 is the discipline information of Greyson Middle School that is reported to the state yearly. The discipline that is referred to in this section (Table 8) refers to discipline that results in out of school suspension (OSS) for more than ten days, or multiple short sessions of OSS that add up to be ten or more days. These short sessions that are added together are counted as a single incident. The discipline decreased by half the number of reported incidences from the first year character education was an awareness year (2006) as compared to the year (2007) character education was implemented. The number of reported discipline incidences raised slightly the next two years. During 2010, which was the second year during the transfer of leadership, the numbers of reported discipline incidents were increasing again.

Table 8

DESE Discipline Data for the Building

Year	# of Incidents	10 Consecutive Days OSS
2006	24	24
2007	10	10
2008	14	14
2009	16	13
2010	22	21

Table 9 is the average daily attendance (ADA) and the document can also be found on the DESE website. Table 9 is the attendance data at Greyson Middle School from the awareness year (2006) of the Character Education program through the transfer of leadership (2009-2010). The collected data consisted of what the district reported to DESE for the middle school buildings ADA for that school year. The total attendance rate prior to character education being implemented is 94.8% . The researcher's goal was to determine if character education had an impact on increasing the attendance percentage. The total attendance rate from 2006-2009 was 94% or higher which does show an increase in attendance during the implementation of character education. However, during the second year (2010) of the transfer of leadership the attendance fell back to 93.5%.

Table 9

2005 – 2010 Attendance Data Grades 5-8

Year	Average Daily Attendance %
2006	94.8%
2007	95.0%
2008	94.2%
2009	94.6%
2010	93.5%

In 2007, the total attendance rate was 95% which was the highest the attendance rate at Greyson Middle School had been in over five years. The researcher now believes Character Education had an impact on increasing the attendance percentage.

DESE also provides academic data. The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is the standardized testing program that Missouri uses to see if students are meeting state expectations. Students in grades three through eight are tested each year in math and communication arts. The test consists of multiple choice and constructed response questions. Scores for the MAP test are divided into four categories: (A) Advanced, (P) Proficient, (B) Basic, and (BB) Below Basic. The goal in Missouri is for student achievement to be in the Advanced and Proficient categories. For the purpose of analyzing the data the researcher only used the Advanced and Proficient scores to analyze if the grade levels improved or declined academically. In comparing Table 10 through Table 13, one will notice a steady increase at grade 5 communication arts until the transfer of leadership. During the first year of transfer there was a 7% decline and then the data shows an increase of 10% the following year.

Table 10

5th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	33.1%	52.9%	14%	0%
2007	44.9%	40.7%	14.4%	0%
2008	51.4%	44.1%	4.5%	0%
2009	44.3%	49.2%	6.6%	.8%
2010	54.7%	37.4%	7.9%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

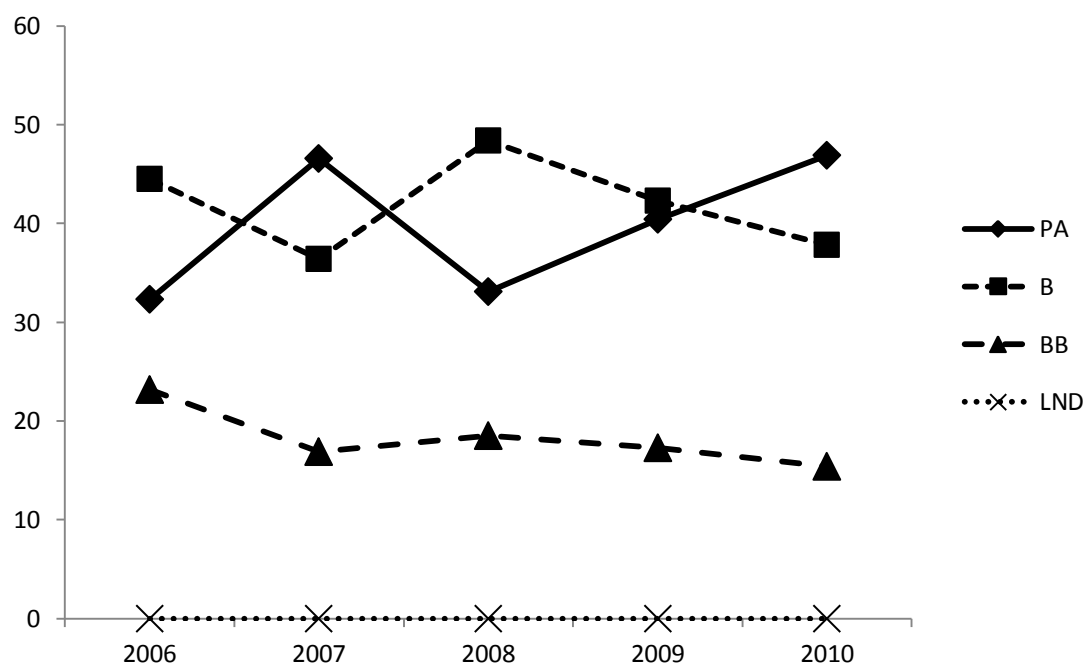


Figure 2. This is a visual representation of the 5th grade communication arts map data as seen in Table 10.

Table 11

6th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	38.1%	43.8%	18.1%	.6%
2007	38.8%	48.8%	12.5%	1.2%
2008	48.9%	38.7%	12.4%	0%
2009	54.6%	40.8%	4.6%	0%
2010	34.9%	53.2%	11.9%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

Table 11 shows a 10% increase from 2007 to 2008 and continues to increase from the first year of transfer. However, during the second year of transfer the scores decline by 20% .

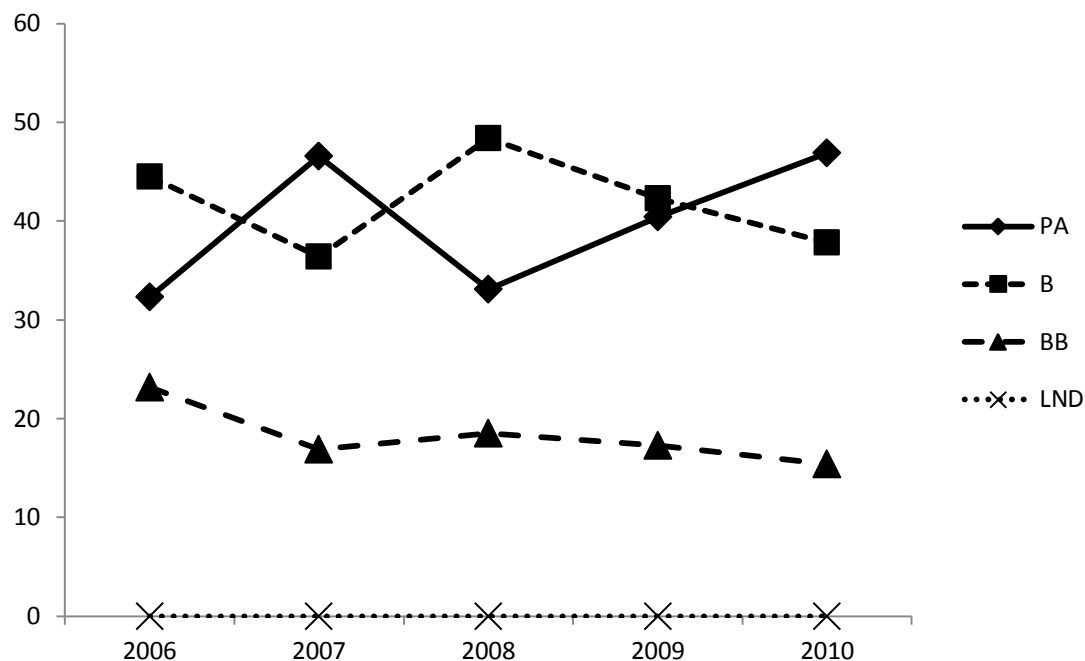


Figure 3. This is a visual representation of the 6th grade communication arts map data as seen in Table 11.

Table 12

7th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND%
2006	37.7%	41.3%	16.8%	.6%
2007	48.8%	41.4%	21%	.6%
2008	53.2%	43.1%	8.1%	0%
2009	40.2%	39%	7.8%	0%
2010	58.4%	31.2%	10.4%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

Table 12 shows an increase in scores except during the first year of transfer. The second year of transfer takes an 18% increase in scores.

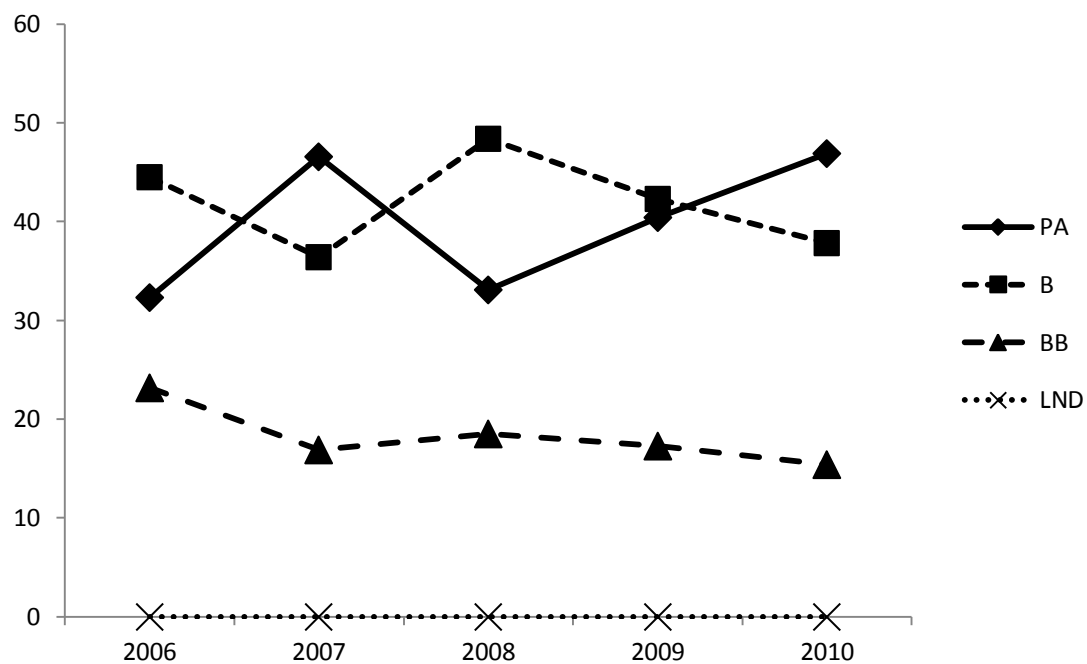


Figure 4. This is a visual representation of the 7th grade communication arts map data as seen in Table 12.

Table 13

8th Grade Communication Arts MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	40.2%	47.6%	12.2%	0%
2007	49.4%	42.2%	8.4%	0%
2008	44.3%	50.6%	5.1%	0%
2009	42.7%	55.4%	1.9%	0%
2010	45.5%	46.9%	7.7%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

In comparing Table 13, one will notice that there is little change in percentages. The questions that this data raises for the researcher are: “What is the determining factor at the grade levels

who gained such significant progress, and why is it not occurring at all the grade levels?” There is more research and follow-up that will need to occur in order to determine if Character Education has impacted academics.

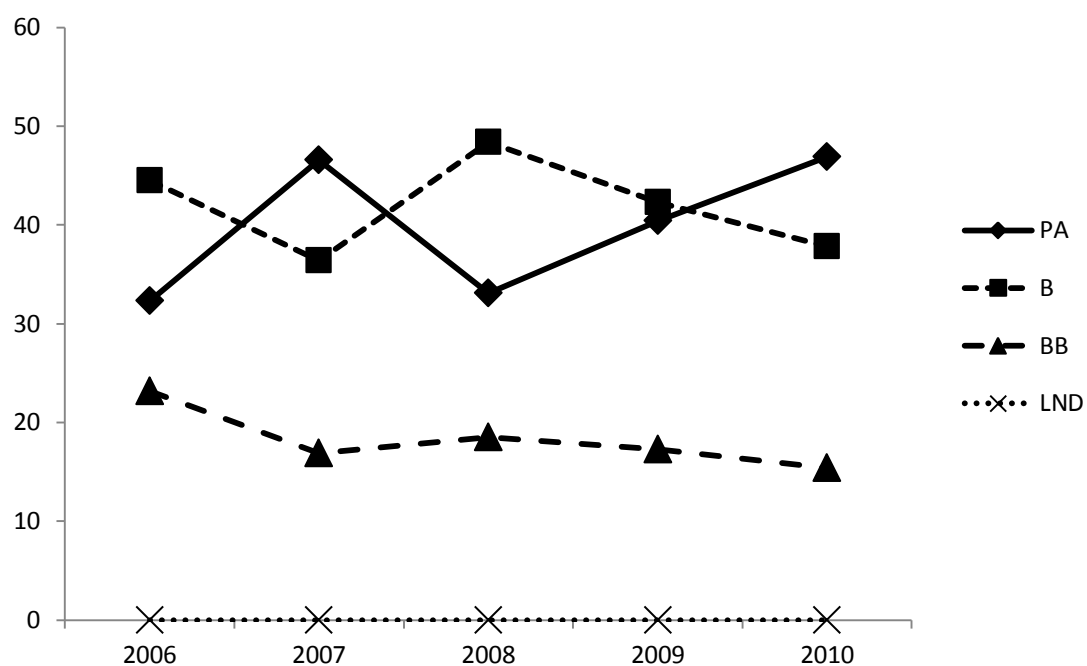


Figure 5. This is a visual representation of the 8th grade communication arts map data as seen in Table 13.

Table 14

5th Grade Math MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	45.9%	46.7%	7.4%	.7%
2007	46.2%	46.2%	7.7%	.8%
2008	45.0%	50.5%	4.5%	0%
2009	31.7%	57.7%	10.6%	0%
2010	52.5%	38.1%	9.4%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

Table 14 shows an increase in scores except during the first year (2009) transfer of leadership but during the second year (2010) of transfer shows a 21% increase in scores.

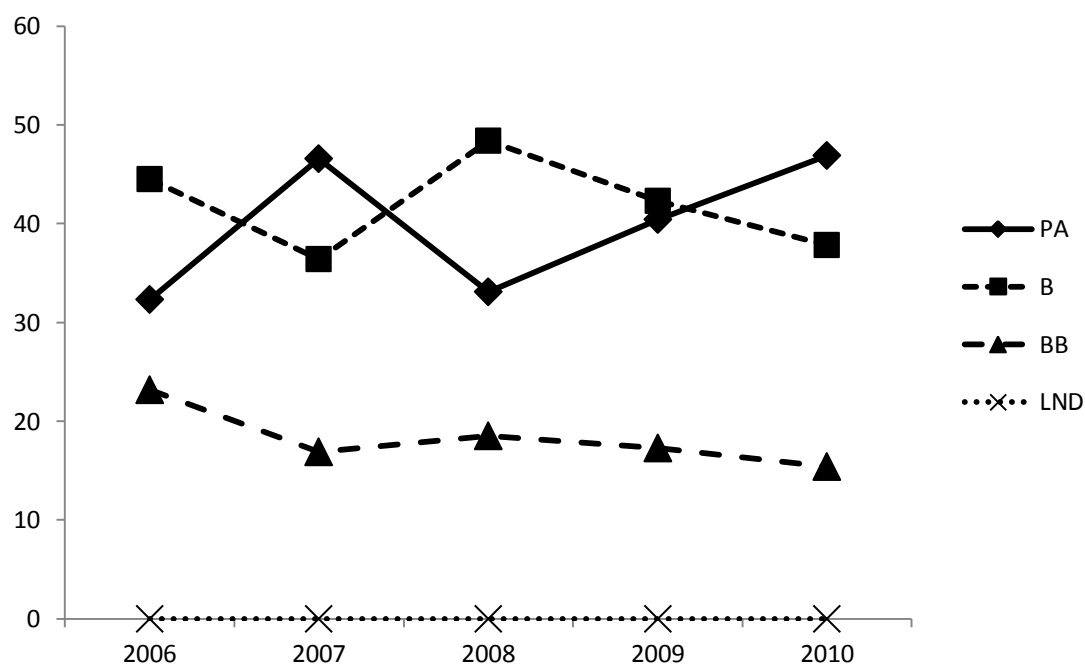


Figure 6. This is a visual representation of the 5th grade math map data as seen in Table 14.

Table 15

6th Grade Math MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	36.6%	51.6%	11.8%	0%
2007	35.2%	53.1%	11.7%	0%
2008	44.5%	46.0%	9.5%	0%
2009	51.5%	45.4%	3.1%	0%
2010	48.4%	45.2%	6.3%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

Scores are similar during first and second year and reflects a 10% increase the third year (2008) and continued to increase during the first year (2009) of transfer of leadership. The second year (2010) of transfer of leadership the scores take a slight decline in scores.

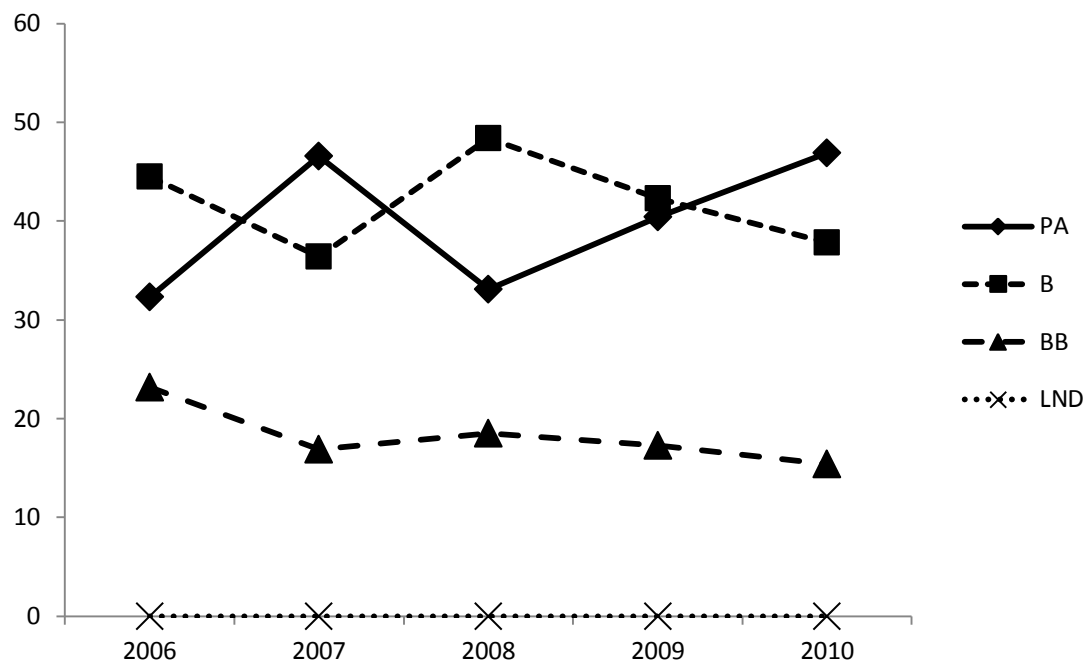


Figure 7. This is a visual representation of the 6th grade math map data as seen in Table 15.

Table 16

7th Grade Math MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A%	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	49.7%	36.1%	14.2%	.6%
2007	35.0%	44.2%	20.9%	0%
2008	49.4%	40.0%	10.6%	0%
2009	50.4%	37.6%	12.1%	0%
2010	54.4%	40.8%	4.8%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

During the year (2007) of implementation the scores declined. The next year (2008) the scores recovered and have continued to increase during the (2009-2010) transfer of leadership.

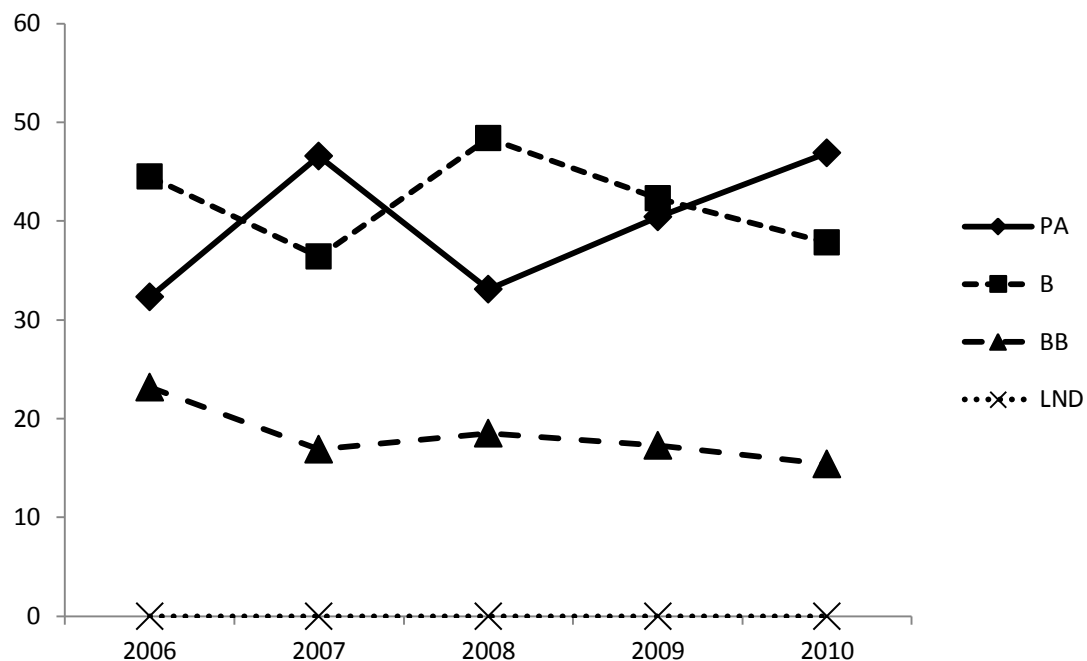


Figure 8. This is a visual representation of the 7th grade math map data as seen in Table 16.

Table 17

8th Grade Math MAP Academic Data

Year	P/A %	Basic%	BB%	LND %
2006	32.3%	44.5%	23.2%	0%
2007	46.6%	36.4%	16.9%	0%
2008	33.1%	48.4%	18.5%	0%
2009	40.4%	42.3%	17.3%	0%
2010	46.9%	37.8%	15.4%	0%

Note. P= proficient; A= advanced; B=basic; BB= below basic; LND= level not determined.

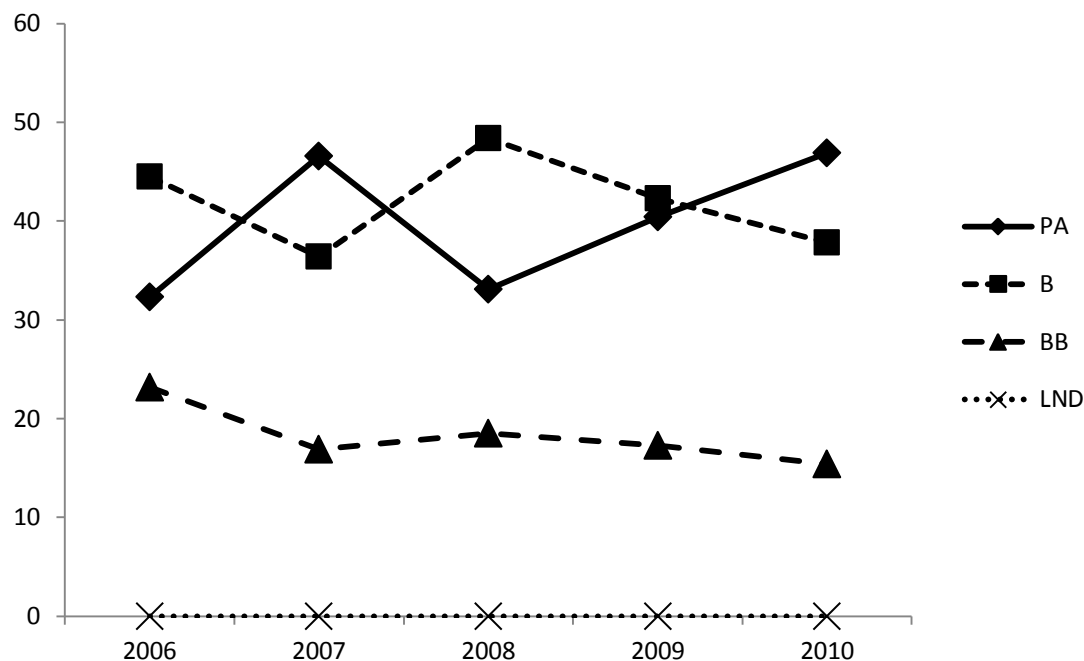


Figure 9. This is a visual representation of the 8th grade math map data as seen in Table 17.

The scores increased every year except during the second year (2008) of implementation. The questions that this has raised for the researcher are “What is the determining factor at the grade levels whose scores showed significant progress?” and “Why is it not occurring at all grade levels?”

Summary of the Findings

The researcher presented the major categories and themes that were identified through the document analysis process. After analyzing all the documents, the major themes were: communication, discipline, attendance, academics, character education, incentives for students, and professional development for teachers. The themes were discussed under each document that was analyzed. Chapter Five will present the introduction, summary, research questions, interpretation of data, program recommendations, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to use document analysis to discover how character education impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline at a designated middle school. The research plan guiding this study analyzed data that covered a five-year period including pre-implementation, planning, implementation, and post-implementation stages as well as the two years after the transfer of leadership of the school. This chapter includes interpretations from the data reported in Chapter Four as well as research questions, summary, program recommendations, recommendations for further research, and conclusion.

Summary

The review of literature refers to “a crisis of character” that is having an impact on our nation. Character education is a popular tool that educators utilized to address the crisis within the education system. The goal of the study was to see if character education could produce positive results in regards to attendance, academics, and discipline. The review of literature explained that the education system has focused on content curriculum only in the twentieth century, and that changes needed to be made to address character in schools. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was seen as content curriculum driven, and the standardized test score requirements, such as MAP tests, were seen as directly linked to the requirements of NCLB. An important question seems to be how character education could impact the rigorous standards of No Child Left Behind legislation.

The purpose of this study was to use document analysis to discover how character education has impacted student academic progress, attendance, and discipline through the stages pre-implementation, planning, implementation, post-implementation as well as the two years

after the transfer of leadership of the school. Historical and trend data documents were used to assess the impact that character education had on attendance, academics, and discipline. It is the goal of the researcher to discover effective methods of addressing the following questions:

1. How did the character education program develop, evolve, and continue after the transfer of leadership?
2. Did character education program impact academics at said middle school?
3. Did character education program impact attendance at said middle school?
4. Did character education impact discipline at said middle school?

Interpretation of the Data

This study was to reveal the impact of character education on attendance, academics, and discipline at Greyson Middle School. In order to see how the character education impacted those results, the pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation processes and applications must be analyzed to reveal how the program impacted attendance, academics, and discipline. The documents used in the data analysis are addressed in Chapter Four.

After analyzing all the documents, the major themes were: communication, discipline, attendance, academics, character education, incentives for students, and professional development for teachers. The themes were discussed under each document that was analyzed. The researcher found that attendance rates increased from the 2005 school year until the second year (2010) of the transfer of leadership. Improved attendance is seen as a positive factor. In addition, discipline incidences decreased by over half the total number of discipline incidents from the first year of awareness in the year (2006) until the second year (2010) of transfer of leadership. In 2010, the discipline incidents increased by half. However, the increase during the second year (2010) of transfer of leadership raises questions as to why the discipline incidents

increased. This negative trend might have been a result of changes in teaching assignments, change in leadership, and less focus on the character education program.

The Communication Arts MAP scores increased at every grade level during the implementation years. However, during the transfer of leadership the scores were random with some grade levels declining and some increasing. The academic trend appears random in the majority of the grade levels for the Math MAP scores. At some levels the scores remained consistent as previous years and other years they would increase and decrease. The biggest positive with the academics is the total percent of proficient/advanced in communication arts and math increased significantly at the seventh grade level during the 2008 year and the second year of the Character Education program.

Program Recommendations

The research reveals that Character Education provides positive results when implemented consistently. Eleven program recommendations were uncovered. (1) Create a needs assessment or survey to understand the climate of the building. It would also be beneficial to create a survey to understand the students, parents and community members perspective and gain insight to their needs. (2) Create a committee that involves all stakeholders and share results of the surveys in order to make a data driven decision of the type of program that is needed for your school and community. (3) Build awareness and educate all stakeholders so they understand the need and purpose of such a program. (4) Choose a character education program that embraces the needs of your school and community. (5) Provide training for all involved in implementing the program. (6) Have multiple leaders and involve the students throughout the entire process. (7) Get the program visible throughout the community and get the community involved in implementing the program as well as throughout your school. (8) The

committee should create goals and create a plan to carry out those goals (9) Hold staff accountable for implementing the program (10) Continuous evaluation and monitoring of the program (11) Sustainability so that it will continue when staff changes and new students enter building.

The use of a survey enables those preparing a Character Education program to identify the common concerns from the view of staff, students, parents and community members. The involvement of staff, students, parents, and community leaders develops a stakeholder ownership through all stages of implementation. Creating a committee to make decisions concerning character education programs reinforced the feeling of ownership. Building awareness for the need of a character education and communicating the positive results allowed stakeholders and community members to understand the need for a character education program and the positive results it can provide. It is important to research character education programs to identify the themes for each community and its stakeholders. If no program can be embraced by all stakeholders, then creating a Character Education program that satisfies all stakeholders is an option. It is also important that the vision be one developed by all stakeholders including, students.

Spreading awareness through community involvement is imperative. The community needs to understand the character education program, and the students need to see that strong character and moral compass is something that reaches beyond their educational experience. Students must see that good character is a real world expectation and a necessary component of being a member of a global and local society. Students need to see that having good character is a community expectation, not an option or choice for society. Measurable goals and plans are imperative. Stakeholders need to see that plans are in place and ready, and they need to see

proof of reaching the goals to keep them invested in the program. Staff members need to be held accountable for implementing the program. If students see that teachers aren't held accountable for character education, the students could question the program's importance. Stakeholders must be fully invested and model the program so students see the importance of character education. The program must be evaluated and monitored to observe progress. It can be adjusted if the need arises. The program needs to be designed to easily facilitate any changes in staff or students. People who enter the program should be able to understand and be able to participate in any stage of implementation. Careful documentation is imperative for all stakeholders who may become involved in the program at any time.

Based on my research, I found this program has provided the school with strategies that support increased attendance, academics, and discipline. The research will be valuable as schools look for programs to help with positive behavior, attendance, and academic strategies. This study is important because educators must teach and reach the whole child. By teaching the universal character traits within the curriculum, it helps meet the needs of the whole child. This study is relevant to the research of the effectiveness of character education because of the timeframe implemented and the evaluation of all the stages. The evaluation of the project through all stages will be helpful to principals, teachers, and others who are involved in the selecting and implementing a character education program.

Recommendations for Further Research

The key to a successful comprehensive character education program requires the support of the faculty leadership, parents, and the community. Therefore, continued research in character education that focuses on faculty roles, service, leadership, process, willingness to facilitate character development in students, and other issues will be essential to future efforts of

discovery. Further study should be done to discover how Character Education impacts other areas of school improvement, such as parental and community involvement, school climate, school staff perceptions, community and parental perceptions. Further research is needed to better understand if Character Education has impacted academics, attendance, and discipline of the students during their high school years. Since Character Education was implemented at the Middle School in 2006-2007 school year the next study could be at the high school using 2010-2013 data and compare the high school data to the four years prior to the Character Education implementation from 2003-2006 in order to compare if the character education program made an impact on these students.

In addition, studies should examine the extent of training for Character Education prior to implementation and to examine to what extent the staff is onboard with implementing the program. Another recommendation would be to conduct more research on the implementation stages of Character Education programs. Finally, the role that community leaders, teachers, and parents have on the character education of students needs to be further researched. Research also needs to address how their roles and actions impact student discipline, academics, and attendance both with and without the application and use of a Character Education program.

Conclusions

With growing violence within the American school system, and Lickona's statement concerning "a crisis of character," many schools are looking for solutions to these issues. Character education is in the forefront as a possible solution to the lack of character education that was once embedded into school curriculum. Elements of successful programs have made progress towards teaching our students to be tomorrow's leaders in government, work places, and successful and productive members of society. Elements of quality character education

programs bring together school staff, students, parents, and community members to embrace and implement a chosen program. The more support received from all stake holders in the program, the more successful a program can be on academics, attendance, and discipline.

The purpose of this study was to discover how Character Education impacted students' attendance, discipline, and academics. The data showed that all three (3) areas were impacted positively to some degree. The implementation of the Character Education program has made a positive difference in students' experiences at school.

On the basis of the data presented in this paper, the following conclusions are offered:

1. The Character Education awareness initiative did have a positive impact on student attendance at Greyson Middle School.
2. There was significant decline in the total number of discipline incidents with the exception of the transfer of leadership year (2010) when the discipline incidents returned to a high number.
3. There is a positive increase in the total number of proficient/advanced MAP scores in all grade levels of the Communication Art scores until the transfer of leadership. The math scores show constant decreasing and increasing and do not reflect any consistent pattern.

After analyzing the documents, it is apparent that there is an implementation process that facilitates a successful program. The implementation process should be research based and thorough. With NCLB, this study is important because it has a definite impact on academics, attendance, and discipline. This study supports that character education can successfully be implemented into the curriculum without being an interruption to the content fields. Not only is it not an interruption of one's studies but, when implemented correctly, it is successful in positively impacting academics, attendance, and discipline. Based on my research it is clearly

evident that character education has positive results. This research is valuable because it proves that character education is effective. It has a positive impact that is reflected in academics; students learn that character is related to work ethics. It's positive impact is seen in attendance; students learn that when they are absent from school they really miss important opportunities in their educational experience. It has a positive impact on discipline; they understand what types of behavior are socially accepted not only in school, but in the global community that they are a part of. It is important that students make real world applications of character education.

References

- All About History. (2012). *School prayer-case history*. Retrieved from www.allabouthistory.org
- Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3(3), 193-209.
- Beale, A., & Hall, K. (2007). Cyberbullying: What school administrators (and parents) can do. *The Clearing House*, 81(8), 8-12.
- Bennett, W. (1991). *Moral literacy and the formation of character*. New York: Teachers College.
- Benninga, J. S., Berkowitz, M. W., Kuehn, P., & Smith, K. (2006). Character and academics: What good schools do. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(6), 448-452.
- Berkowitz, M., & Haynes, C. (2007, February 20). What can schools do? *USA Today*
- Berkowitz, M., & Bier, M. (2005). *What works in character education: A research-driven guide for educators*. (Character Education Partnership Report). Retrieved from www.character.org
- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. (2004). Research-based character education. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 591(1), 72-85.
- Blasi, A. (1999). Emotions and moral motivation. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 29(1), 1-19.
- Boerema, A. (2008, April 30). Cyberbullying a challenge for schools and parents. *Daily Herald*. Retrieved from <https://dailyherald.com/story>
- Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). (2012). Youth risk behavior surveillance- US, 2011. (*MMWR*) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 61(4), 1-162.

- Character Development Group. (2008). *Profile of a leader: Dr. Phillip Fitch Vincent*. Character Development Group. Retrieved from www.charactereducation.com
- Character Education Partnership. (2012). *Profile of Dr. Marvin W. Berkowitz*. Center for Character & Citizenship. Retrieved from <http://www.characterandcitizenship.org/staff/staff/berkowitz.htm>
- Character Education Partnership. (2012). *Profile of Dr. Melinda Bier*. Center for Character & Citizenship. Retrieved from www.characterandcitizenship.org/staff/staff/bier.htm
- Character Education Partnership. (CEP) (2003). *New research documents positive effects of character education*. Retrieved from <http://web.lexisnexis.com.unx1.shsu.edu:2048/universe/document>
- Cohen, J. (2006). Making measurement meaningful in K-12 schools: Promoting a climate for learning. *CABL*, 22(12), 2-7.
- Constitutional Rights Foundation. (2012). *School violence*. Retrieved from <http://law.jrank.org/pages/12095/School-Violence-School-shootings.html>
- Cornell, D. G., & Mayer, M. J. (2010). Why does school order and safety matter? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 7-15.
- Crain, W. (1985). *Theories of development* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Damon, W., & Berkowitz, M. (2002). *Bringing in a new era in character education*. Stanford, CAL: Hoover Institution Press.
- Damon, W., & Colby, A. (1996). Education and moral commitment. *Journal of Moral Education, 25*(1), 31-38.
- Davidson, M., Lickona, T., & Khmelkov, V. (2007). Smart and good schools. *Education Week, 66*(2), 24-30.
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012). *Missouri department of elementary and secondary education standards*. Retrieved from dese.mo.gov
- DeRoche, E., & Williams, M. (1998). *Educating hearts and minds*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Devine, T., Ho Seuk, J., & Wilson, A. (2000). *Cultivating heart and character*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Publishing.
- Diamanduros, T., & Downs, E. (2011). Creating a safe school environment: How to prevent cyberbullying at your school. *Library Media Connection, 30*(2), 36-38.
- Elkind, D., & Sweet, F. (2004). *How to do character education*. Retrieved from www.goodcharacter.com
- Espelage, D., Hymel, S., Swearer, S., & Vaillancourt, T. (2010). What can be done about school bullying?: Linking research to educational practice. *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 38-47.
- Huitt, W. (2004). Moral and character development. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Retrieved from <http://www.edpsychinteractive.org/morchr/morchr.html>
- Kirby, E., Levine, P., & Elrod, B. (2006). *Federal policies on civic education and service*. Retrieved from <http://www.civicyouth.org>

- Kohlberg, L., & Colby, A. (1987). *The measurement of moral judgment*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Kohn, A. (1997). How not to teach values: A critical look at character education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(6), 428-439.
- Kohn, A. (2004). Safety from the inside out: Rethinking traditional approaches. *Educational Horizons*, 83(1), 33-41.
- Lasley, T. (1997). The missing ingredient in character education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(8), 654-655.
- Lee, C. (2009). The planning, implementation and evaluation of a character-based school culture project in Taiwan. *Journal of Moral Education*, 38(2), 165-184.
- Levy, T. (2000). Lookout point: The character of their content. *Social Education*, 64(5), M2.
- Lickona, T. (2003). The content of our character: Ten essential virtues. *The Fourth and Fifth Rs*, 10(1), 1-3.
- Lickona, T. (1994). *Combating violence with values: The character education Solution*, 19(3), 1-9.
- Lickona, T., Schaps, E., & Lewis, C. (2003). *CEP's eleven principles of effective character education*. Retrieved from www.character.org
- Lumpkin, A. (2008). Teachers as role models teaching character and moral virtues. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 79(2), 25-49.
- Lunenburg, F., & Bulach, C. (2005, July). *A process for creating high performing schools*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, Washington, DC.
- Matera, D. (2001). *A cry for character*. Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall Press.

- McDaniel, A. K. (1998). Character education: Developing effective programs. *Journal of Extension, 36*(2), 1-11.
- McElmeel, S. (2002). *Character education: A book guide for teachers, librarians, and parents*. Greenwood Village, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Murphy, M. (1998). *Character education in America's blue ribbon schools*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Murphy, M. (2003). *Character education in America's blue ribbon schools*. Lanham, MD: R & L Education.
- National School Boards Association (NSBA). (2012). *Bullying definitions in state anti-bullying statutes*. (NSBA). Retrieved from www.nsba.org
- Nichols, A., & Wade, K. (2008). Catch `em being good: An extension service and state school team up to promote positive outcomes for youth. *Journal of Youth Development, 3*(3).
- Rest, J. (1980). Moral judgment research and the cognitive-developmental approach to moral education. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 58*(9), 602-605.
- Rest, J., Narvaez, D., Thoma, S., & Bebeau, M. (1999). DIT2: Devising and testing a revised instrument of moral judgment. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 91*(4), 644-659.
- Rossmann, G., & Rallis, S. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ryan, K. (1993). Mining the values in the curriculum. *Educational Leadership, 51*(3), 16-18.
- Ryan, K., Bohlin, K., & Thayer, J. (1996). *Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character*. Retrieved from <http://www.bu.edu/education/>
- Ryan, K. (2003). Character education: Our high schools' missing link. *Education Week on the Web, 22*(20), 35-48. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org>

Schaeffer, E. F. (2003). Character education makes a big difference. *Principal*, 82(3), 36-39.

Shriver, T., & Weissberg, R. (2005, August 16). No emotion left behind. *New York Times*.

Retrieved from www.nytimes.com

Simons-Morton, B., Crump, A., Haynie, D., & Saylor, K. (1999). Student-school bonding and adolescent problem behavior. *Health Education Research*, 14(1), 99-107.

Skaggs, G., & Bodenhorn, N. (2006). Relationships between implementing character education, student behavior, and student achievement. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 18(1), 82-114.

Springfield Public Schools. (2012). *Character education: Brochure*. Retrieved from

<http://springfieldpublicschoolsno.org/charactered/>

Stirling, D., McKay, L., Archibald, G., & Berg, S. (2002). *Character education connections*. Port Chester, New York: National Professional Resources, Inc.

Strike, K. (1993). Against “values”: Reflections on moral language and moral education.

Education Policy Analysis Archives, 1(13), 1-14.

Tatman, R., Edmonson, S., & Slate, J. (2009). Character education: A critical analysis.

International Journal of Educational Research, 4(4), 1-31.

Tatman, R., Edmonson, S., & Slate, J. (2009). Character education: An historical overview.

International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 4(1), 1-14.

Taylor, M. (2008). *Violence on the increase in schools, teachers warn*. Retrieved from

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/Mar/17/schools/uk>

Underwood, M. (2011). Bullying and Suicide Risk. *Social Work Today*, 11(5), 10-13.

U.S. News Staff. (2008, February 15). Timeline of school shootings. *US News and World*

Report. Retrieved from www.usnews.com

- Vincent, P. F. (1996). *Promising practices in character education*. Chapel Hill, NC: Character Development Publishing.
- Willard, N. (2007). The authority and responsibility of school officials in responding to cyber-bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 41*(1), S64-S65.
- Wong, A. (2000). Kohlberg's theory of moral development-explained and illustrated. Retrieved from <http://www.vtaide.com/blessing/Kohlberg.htm>

Appendix A**IRB Approval Letter**

December 19, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sandra Goss
Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 12-12-332

Protocol Title: *Perceived Impact of Character Education Program at a Midwest Rural Middle School: A Case Study*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 12/19/2012 Expiration Date: 12/18/2013

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

Appendix B**Revised Non-Identifying GMS Approval Letter**

December 7, 2012

To Whom It May Concern,

The XXXXXXXXX School District is happy to cooperate with Sandra J. Goss as she completes her study titled, *Perceived Impact of Character Education Program at a Midwest Rural Middle School: A Case Study*, in partial fulfillment of requirements for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at University of Arkansas.

The XXXXXXXX School district will allow Ms. Goss the opportunity to utilize historical and trend data to discover if character education has effectively increased academics, attendance, and discipline at XXXXXXXX Middle School from the years 2005 through 2010.

Sincerely,

Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Appendix C

Revised Non-Identifying Email Approval Email to Use Chart

Hello Mr. Wong:

I am currently working on my dissertation and would like to use your chart you created. My University has said I must have written permission from the author who created the chart. Would you be willing to give me written permission? I am copying the chart in this email so you know which chart I am referring to. The following is the website I found the chart on: <http://www.vtaide.com/blessing/Kohlberg.htm>.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sandra J. Goss

Level One: Pre-conventional Morality	Stage 1: Punishment-Obedience Orientation
	Stage 2: Instrumental Relativist Orientation
Level Two: Conventional Morality	Stage 3: Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation
	Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation
Level Three: Post-Conventional Morality	Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation
	Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

Thank you, Sandra for asking. Go ahead and use it.

All the best on your dissertation writing.

*and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,
but unto Him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15)*

Alan S.L. Wong