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The effectiveness and value of a character education program administered to a group of second and third grade students with learning disabilities

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THE EFFECTIVENESS AND VALUE OF A CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM ADMINISTERED TO A GROUP OF SECOND AND THIRD GRADE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

By
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ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTIVENESS AND VALUE OF A CHARACTER EDUCATION
PROGRAM ADMINISTERED TO A GROUP OF SECOND AND THIRD GRADE
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
2002/2003
Dr. Stanley Urban
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness and value of a character education program when administered over a six-month period to a convenience sample of second and third grade students eligible for special education. The subjects for this study attend Parkview Elementary School in Stratford, New Jersey, and are a part of the resource program there. This study can help determine whether or not a character education curriculum will lead to improved decision-making in morals and ethics. The design of the program is individual to the researcher, but each of the following nine character traits are covered: *respect, honesty, responsibility, citizenship, self-discipline, perseverance, compassion, fairness,* and *trustworthiness.* Over the six-month training period, students were administered three assessments: a pre-test in September, an interim-assessment in January, and a post-test in March. Instruction was implemented throughout the six-month study as the researcher focused on a different character trait each month. The results of the three assessments were then examined for progression, regression or static rates of development in the area of character education. The overall results of the three assessments revealed that there was positive improvement in ethical decision-making between the pre-test and post-test periods.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

America's collective voice is calling for a change in our society's character and for reform in our nation's schools. Character education is one response to that call. It can provide a long-term solution that addresses moral, ethical and academic issues. Character education gets to the heart of the matter since it not only cultivates a student's mind, but it also nurtures their hearts.

Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream that one day his children would be judged, not by the color of their skin, but the content of their character. That dream becomes a real possibility when we realize that nearly all cultures, world religions and schools of thought have their most basic principle in common-*treat others the way that you want to be treated.* Most people refer to this as the "Golden Rule." Words and language may change; in Judaism it is stated as "What you hate, do not do to anyone," and in Hindu as, "Do nothing to thy neighbors which thou wouldst not have them do to thee," but they all acknowledge the most common character trait of *respect.*

Character education is a growing national movement advocating that social, ethical and emotional development of young people is as important as their academic development. Sometimes, it is believed, it's even more important knowing that you have to "reach" a child before you can "teach" a child. Core values that transcend political, cultural, religious and ideological distinctions are the emphasis in this initiative. Character education is nothing new and it is not a new trend or buzzword.

Since the founding of our nation's education system, it was always intended that character education be an essential part of schooling. In recent decades though, schools have strayed from active efforts to incorporate character development into their teaching. Ironically, this neglect came at a time when the need for nurturing virtue became greater as our society began providing more and tougher challenges to raising moral and ethical children. The need for reaffirming and instilling our collective values in an increasingly complex world, and a weakening in guidance in some families and communities, brought on widespread reflection and introspection toward the end of the 20th century. These concerns were punctuated in the late 90's by an incomprehensible wave of fatal shootings and other violence that claimed the lives of students and adults at a number of schools strewn across the country. The tragedies raised Americans' fears about a "wearing down" of values among our schoolchildren. Though educating for character has always been of vital importance, support for character education has increased significantly in the last decade.

Now, with the new millennium, character education is an emerging national movement that is increasingly viewed as an appropriate topic for school learning. An increasing number of Americans are learning about its purpose and its potential. From the local level, where schools nationwide are implementing it, to the districts and states, where school officials and legislators are mandating or encouraging it, to the national level where the federal government has given its stamp of approval. The demands and scrutiny on teachers and public education today is higher than ever before. Placing our focus back on the needs and potential of our children, and not so much on the demands of higher test scores is what we, as educators, must be mindful of. Those who educate

became teachers to touch the lives of children and positively impact those lives. Making a difference is our ambition.

Character education is simply true, quality teaching. It is a process of showing care concern, and determination. Programs occasionally do not work over extended periods, but processes rarely fail. Character education should not be just one more thing to add to your plate-it is the plate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness and value of a character education program when over a six-month period to a convenience sample of second and third grade students eligible for special education. Measures were administered prior to implementing the program, during the period of instruction, and at the conclusion of the study.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Over the past five years, inappropriate behavior regarding moral character has been observed in a population of second and third graders who are learning disabled. The examiner has viewed the students' unethical and immoral actions taken toward themselves, their peers, and authority while working as a special educator. These behaviors are offensive and unacceptable in the classroom and they must be altered. These observations of unethical decision-making dictate a need to conduct such a study as this. This has been a motivating factor for the examiner to research the effectiveness of this curriculum. In addition, the researcher believes strongly in the education of character building and wants to help improve each individual child's value system. Moreover, the New Jersey Character

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Education Partnership (NJCEP) Initiative was announced in January 2000 as part of the Governor's *State-of-the-State* message (NJ Department of Education, 2002). The purpose of the initiative is to assist public school educators to adopt validated character education programs that will meet the developmental needs of students throughout New Jersey by promoting pro-social student behaviors and creating a caring, disciplined school climate conducive to learning. In the 2001 budget, $4.75 million was provided to public school districts and approved charter schools to be devoted to character education program development and implementation during the 2000-2001 school year. In the following two school years (2001-2002, 2002-2003), $4.75 million was set aside each school year for the implementation and expansion of character education programs (NJ Department of Education, 2002).

VALUE OF THE STUDY

The value of this study is to identify curriculum and procedures that are effective in providing character education. The responsibility of the parent also plays an important role in the delivery of instruction, but unfortunately parents often surrender their duties of moral education to teachers in the schools. The task of educating children morally and ethically has recently become a crucial component of school curriculum. The integration and implementation of character education in schools has increased during the past ten years. Whereas parents used to provide nearly all moral and ethical training in the home, current trends show teachers are assuming a greater role in character education.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, the following research question will be answered:

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Research Question 1. What is the effectiveness and value of a character education program when administered to a group of second and third graders with learning disabilities?

DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this study and are defined below.

1. *Character Education* – Instruction that promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character types, such as: respect, honesty, integrity, responsibility, citizenship, self-discipline, perseverance, compassion, fairness, and trustworthiness. "Character education" is an umbrella term used to describe many aspects of teaching and learning for personal development. Some areas under this umbrella are "moral reasoning/cognitive development"; "social and emotional learning"; "moral education/virtue"; "life skills education"; "caring community"; "health education"; "violence prevention"; "conflict resolution/peer mediation" and "ethic/moral philosophy" (Character Education Partnership 1999). As indicated by the variety of terms associated with it, character education is broad in scope and difficult to define precisely.

2. *Ethical-* conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct.

3. *Moralistic-* characterized by or expressive of a concern with morality.

4. *Morals* – conformity to established sanctioned codes or accepted notions of right and wrong.

5. *Morality-* conformity to ideals of right human conduct.

LIMITATIONS

When generalizing the results of this study, the following must be considered: There is no single universal measure or assessment accessible to determine the effectiveness of character education instruction. Although there are a variety of materials

to be used to implement character education, and they are in abundance, there is no one specific common standard to follow when delivering instruction in the classroom. Diverse outcomes from instruction in character education will occur because of subjective interpretations that each teacher and examiner applies to the curriculum and evaluations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

A first grader killed another student with a gun in Michigan. Four girls and a teacher were shot in a school in Arkansas. Twelve students were killed at Columbine. An 11 year-old boy in Michigan was convicted of murder. A 15 year-old boy and his 14 year-old friend pleaded guilty to conspiracy in May 2001 for possession of a bomb, and making terrorist threats. Two young boys in Chicago dropped a five-year-old boy from a high-rise window because he would not steal candy for them. A six year-old girl in California killed an infant by kicking her in the head because she was in the wrong room at the wrong time. A Texas teenager killed a boy who blew a car horn at him. A girl in New York murdered another girl during an argument over a boy (Hutcheon). These cases alone are representative of the need for a renewal of character education. Violence in television, movies and music has played a part in the violence in schools as did out of control youth, drug abuse, gangs, video games, the Internet, and other problems in society (Thompson, 2002). The following review of the literature encompasses the history of character education as well as current programs and assessments in practice.

HISTORY

Character education is nothing new since it dates back to Aristotle and Socrates. Originally, moral development was the responsibility of the church. According to Mulkey

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(1997), school textbooks of 1776 contained 100% moral and religious content and parents demanded strict adherence to these values by their children. As public education developed, there began to be a separation between the school and the church. During the next 100 hundred years, the *McGuffey Reader* was the textbook used across the country. It focused on teaching values of good citizenship, honesty, patriotism and hard work (Field, 1996).

In 20th century American schools, moral training has had an evolving history. In the early 1900's, William Hutchins developed the *Children's Morality Code*. This program promoted values of self-control, good health, kindness, truth, sportsmanship, teamwork, self-reliance, duty reliability, and good workmanship (Mulkey, 1997). Subsequently, in the 1930's, John Dewey focused the attention of public schools on the need for moral training and development and encouraged them to provide the environment for the moral development of the students (Mulkey, 1997).

In 1966, Lawrence Kohlberg linked his cognitive-development theory of moral reasoning with the practice of moral education in schools (Leming, 1993). His work in moral development was consistent with Piaget's in that he proposed that children form ways of thinking through their experiences which include understandings of moral concepts such as justice, rights, equality and human welfare (Jeary, 2001). Kohlberg's theory was based on six stages of moral reasoning. (1) Children are guided by rewards and punishment. (2) Reciprocity dominates where children will do something for something in return. (3) The child's behavior is controlled by adult or peer approval. (4) Behavior is based on respect for authority. (5) The child's personal values and opinions determine what is moral. (6) The child's conscience determines what is right and wrong.

Elliot Turiel was committed to the basic Kohlberg framework and attempted through his research to resolve anomalies that resulted in Kohlberg's stage sequence. He concluded with the domain theory. Here, there is a distinction between the child's developing concepts of morality, and other domains of social knowledge, such as social convention.

Governor Thomas H. Kean, in his 1988 State of the State address, identified character development within schools as a priority and charged the Commissioner of Education with initiating a program to address this need. The Governor asserted his belief that the people of this state and nation have a common body of values, saying, "The thing that holds us together, that keeps society from flying centripetally apart, is the moral code we live by." In response to the Governor's mandate, in September 1988, the New Jersey State Department of Education, under the leadership of Saul Cooperman, Commissioner, promulgated a monograph entitled; "Developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students." (Report of the Advisory Council on Developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students, 1989).

That document provided for the establishment of an advisory council to accomplish the following:

    1. To list and define a common core of values deemed essential to our society and acceptable to the great majority of New Jersey citizens.

    2. To recommend goals and objectives for character education

There are six concepts that underlie the conclusions: (1) Values may be defined as essential principles or standards which guide behavior and are unifying to the members of our democratic community; a community which depends for its existence upon the

informed consent of the governed. (2) Values should first be taught within the family structure. (3) This nation includes numerous distinct ethnic, religious, and cultural groups who have a socially recognized and legally protected right to coexist as equals. (4) The apparent fact that values can and do conflict with each other from time to time, does not imply such values are relative, or insecurely based. (5) Value-infused conduct centering upon selflessness must be demonstrated by all of us. (6) Many list of values have been complied by independent groups in various states and by professional organizations (Report of the Advisory Council on Developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students, 1989).

The following are values that the Council concludes may be used as the core of our character and values education program: Civic Responsibility, Respect for Natural Environment, Respect for Others, and Respect for Self (Report of the Advisory Council on developing Character and Values in New Jersey Students, 1989).

In the early 1990's, a new character education movement began. The "*Aspen Declaration on Character Education*" established the eight principles of character education. By 1993, the Character Education Partnership was established. In 1996, the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C. established eleven principles of Effective Character Education (Lickona, Schaps, Lewis, 1996): *PRINCIPLE 1:* Character education promotes and teaches qualities of good character, such as prudence (good judgment), respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness, courtesy, kindness, courage, diligence, perseverance, and self-control. *PRINCIPLE 2:* Character is defined comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior. *PRINCIPLE 3:* Character education is intentional,

proactive and comprehensive. *PRINCIPLE 4:* The school is a caring community.

PRINCIPLE 5: Students have frequent opportunities for moral action.

PRINCIPLE 6: Character education includes an academic curriculum that builds good

character. *PRINCIPLE 7:* Character education strives to develop the intrinsic motivation

central to good character. *PRINCIPLE 8:* The entire school staff shares responsibility for

character education and lives by the school's character expectations. *PRINCIPLE 9:*

Character education involves moral leadership by staff and students. *PRINCIPLE 10:* The

school recruits parents and the community as full partners in character education.

PRINCIPLE 11: Character education assesses the character of the school, the school staff's

functioning as character educators, and the character development of students. (Please see

Appendix E for Eleven Principles Survey (EPS) of Character Education Effectiveness).

In 2000, the New Jersey Character Education Partnership (NJCEP) Initiative was

announced as part of the Governor's *State-of-the-State* message (NJ Department of

Education, 2002). The purpose of the initiative is to assist public school educators to adopt

validated character education programs.

<div align="center">APPROACHES TO CHARACTER EDUCATION</div>

There are numerous character education programs available as resources for schools,

businesses, parents and families. Moreover, there are several definitions about the topic:

"The life of right conduct in relation to others and to oneself," (Aristotle, Lickona, 1992),

"the types of choices people make, " (Elkind and Sweet, 1997), "moral knowing, moral

feeling, and moral behavior," (Lickona), "the development of a language with students that

instilled universal values that were worldwide," (Rusnak, 1998), "strategic instruction that

promotes social and personal responsibility and the development of the good character

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traits and moral virtues that make this possible," (Vessels and Boyd, 1996), and "formal instruction in honesty, trust, cooperation, respect, responsibility, hope, determination, and loyalty, " (Fertman and Linden, 1999). According to Tomaselli and Golden (1996), character education was everything the school did to help students make better, more effective choices and decisions. The students must identify, understand, and learn how to act on their own values. Schaeffer (1999) cited the definition developed by the Character Education Partnership, a national coalition of individuals and organizations concerned about children's character development; "the long-term process of helping young people develop good character, i.e. knowing, caring about, and acting on core ethical values such as fairness, honesty, compassion, responsibility, and respect for self and others (p.3)."

The Character Education Partnership (www.character.org) was founded in 1993 as a national nonpartisan coalition for character education. The CEP recognizes National Schools of Character, which serve as models of exemplary character education practice in the country.

Over 30 states in the United States have received U.S. Department of Education character education state grants. Sixteen states have legislation regarding character education. In 1995 the Indiana General Assembly passed a mandate for good citizenship education and delineated 13 character qualities necessary for Indiana Citizens, described at (ideanet.doe.state.in.us/charactered/instruction.html). This legislation was a restatement of similar passages of statutes enacted in 1937 and 1975 (Indiana Department of Education, 1999, xvii). To accomplish the objectives of the legislation, the Indiana Department of Education created "Partners for Good Citizenship: Parents, Schools, Communities." The

guide is intended as a resource for all stakeholders working on effective character education. Service learning is a vehicle for character education that actively involves students in addressing real community needs while allowing them to experience direct academic ties with the classroom. Service learning is mandated in some states for high school graduation and is optional in others. Several states have service-learning projects funded by the Corporation for National Service (www.cns.gov), which was created under the National Community Service Trust Act in 1993.

Some of the following programs include a variety of approaches that may be modified for the local school community. The following includes descriptions of three worthy current programs.

1. CHARACTER COUNTS! (www.charactercounts.org) is a voluntary partnership, which supports character education nationally. The six pillars of character identified by the coalition include *respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, fairness,* and *citizenship.* A variety of resource materials are available, along with training sessions and awards recognition.

The following are results from 21 sources on the impact of "CHARACTER COUNTS!" Some are simple comparisons, others are sophisticated studies, but "CHARACTER COUNTS!" has succeeded in every case, and usually dramatically. The evidence comes in three categories:

I.   South Dakota State University study

II.   School Records of Disruption

III.   Other surveys and questionnaires

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I. SOUTH DAKOTA STUDY-The most thorough and multi-faceted assessment of character education has been taking place in South Dakota since 1997-98. It is a five-year study of "CHARACTER COUNTS!" and uses an extensive questionnaire covering demographics, attitudes, and behavior. Each year researchers based at South Dakota State University collect the evaluation forms from large numbers of students and teachers. The student sample comprises as many as 8,419 respondents.

The results show that "CHARACTER COUNTS!" cuts crime and drug use sharply from 1998 to 2000. Students who said they had:

- Broken into another's property dropped 50 percent.
- Used a fake ID dropped 56 percent.
- Taken something without paying dropped 46 percent.
- Drank alcoholic beverages dropped 31 percent.
- Taken illegal drugs dropped 32 percent.
- Defaced or vandalized property dropped 46 percent.
- Used physical force against someone who insulted them dropped 33 percent.

The program led to many other improvements. For example, students who said they had:

- Cheated on an exam dropped 30 percent.
- Received a detention or suspension dropped 28 percent.
- Missed class without a legitimate excuse dropped 39 percent.
- Teased someone because of race or ethnicity dropped 45 percent.
- Borrowed money without repaying it dropped 34 percent.

Among the other findings:

- Students reported improvement in every category of misdeed assessed.
- Teachers reported better student behavior toward others and authority.
- "CHARACTER COUNTS!" especially affected students in grades 1-6.
- The more exposures per month students had to "CHARACTER COUNTS!" the better they behaved.

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

The South Dakota State 4-H Foundation funded the research, and Rachelle Walsh-Vettern, Marcey Moss and Bill Wright (all associated with South Dakota State University) carried it out.

North Dakota State University has commenced a similar study, using the same questionnaire. After one year, the results are parallel, with teachers noticing clear improvements in student behavior.

II. SCHOOL RECORDS OF DISRUPTION-Discipline referrals and other school records of disruption are useful evidence, since they show actual behavior. In the 10 cases below that follow, "CHARACTER COUNTS!" strikingly reduced the number of disruptions at school.

1) Tulare County, California-A principal reported that, among his nearly 300 sixth-grade students, suspensions decreased almost 30 percent during the first six months of the 1999 school year and 22 percent for the entire year. At another school, a sixth-grade teacher reported that discipline referrals had decreased by nearly 50 percent since implementing "CHARACTER COUNTS!" (Reported to John Forenti, "CHARACTER COUNTS!" Coordinator, Tulare County) (http://www.charactercounts.org)

2) Tulare County, California-In 1997 Donna Glassman-Sommer became principal at Kaweah High School. Michael Josephson had trained her in "CHARACTER COUNTS!," and she immediately implemented it pervasively. In her second year, 1998-99, a new high school opened nearby and enrollment at Kaweah fell by about 50 percent, from 150 to

around 75 students. Even considering the reduced enrollment, the drop-off in disruption has been marked:

- Discipline referrals fell from 553 in the 1997-98 school year, the first with "CHARACTER COUNTS!," to 67 in 2000-2001 -- a decline of 88 percent over four years. Factoring in the halved enrollment, the decline is 76 percent.

- Dropouts fell from 17 in 1996-97, the year just before "CHARACTER COUNTS!," to only 2 in 1999-2000 -- a decline of 88 percent. With the halved enrollment, the decline is 76 percent.

- Suspensions fell from 259 in 1997-98 to 69 in 1999-2000 -- a drop-off of 73 percent. With the halved enrollment, the decline is 47 percent.

- Expulsions fell from 17 in 1997-98 to 2 in 1999-2000 -- a decline of 88 percent. With the halved enrollment, the decline is 76 percent. (John Forenti, "CHARACTER COUNTS!" Coordinator, Tulare County) (http://www.charactercounts.org)

3) Easton, Maryland- In 1997, the year before "CHARACTER COUNTS!" was introduced to Moton Elementary School in Easton, teachers reported 115 incidents of classroom disruption. In 1998, the number fell to 36.) (http://www.charactercounts.org)

4) Frederick County, Maryland- Since introducing "CHARACTER COUNTS!" at Ballenger Creek Elementary School, administrators report that referral rates are down more than 50 percent, incidents of violence are rare and attendance averages are in the upper 90th percentile. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

5) Montcalm County, Michigan- At Blanchard Elementary, among 250 students, there were 106 discipline referrals in the fall of 1996-97, and 113 in the spring. Next year there were 68 discipline referrals in the fall of 1997-98, and only 34 in the spring. In other words, the number dropped 36 percent for the fall semester and 70 percent for the spring. In the third year there were 36 referrals in the fall of 1998-99. That is, the number for the fall semester had dropped 66 percent over two years. (Source: Principal Sheryl Presler) (http://www.charactercounts.org) In the same county at Webb Elementary, in the first semester of 1997-98 there were 60 discipline referrals, and in the second there were also 60. In the first semester of 1998-99, the number fell to 40. (http://www.charactercounts.org) Finally, at Lakeview Middle School, there were 425 discipline referrals in the first semester of 1997-98, and 430 in the second. In the first semester of 1998-99, there were 389. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

6) Albuquerque, New Mexico- One of the earliest tests of "CHARACTER COUNTS!" occurred at Bel-Air Elementary School. During September 1993 the school issued 64 official reprimands for bad behavior. Four months after systematically teaching the Six Pillars, with definitions and examples, the number of official reprimands had dropped to 17. The number of fights fell from 25 to 6, and the numbers stayed low. "Kids were bringing violence from the community into the school area," recalls Mary Jane Aguilar, then Bel-Air's school counselor. "We used to say things like 'that's not respectful' and get a glazed look. You cannot expect a child to make a choice unless he knows two things, andmany of our children only knew the aggressive response."

(http://www.charactercounts.org) The 570 students at gang-plagued Garfield Middle

School first were exposed to "CHARACTER COUNTS!" in October 1994. During the first

20 days of that school year, there were 91 recorded incidents of physical violence. One year

later, during the same period, there were 26 such incidents. (Source: then-principal Louis

Martinez) (http://www.charactercounts.org) Duranes Elementary School had 32

suspensions in 1993, the year before it began "CHARACTER COUNTS!." It has had 2 so

far in 2001-2002. "Good behavior has become the norm and misbehavior the exception,"

said principal Gabe Garcia in the U.S. Department of Education's "Community Update,"

October, 2001. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

7) Lubbock, Texas- At North Ridge Elementary, in the Frenship ISD, there were 425

discipline referrals to the assistant principal the year before the school adopted

"CHARACTER COUNTS!." That number fell to 220 during the first year of the program,

a 48 percent decrease. "The improvement in discipline has allowed teachers to move from

giving kids information to helping kids access and process information. Teachers have

become facilitators of learning," wrote analysts Patricia Cloud Duttweiler and Marilyn

Madden. (Source: "The District That Does What's Best for Kids: Frenship ISD," a Report

for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Winter 2001.) (http://www.charactercounts.org)

8) Round Rocks, Texas- After the Round Rocks School District in Texas initiated character

education classes, Round Rocks' Jollyville Elementary School reported a 40% drop in

disciplinary referrals. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

9) West Des Moines, Iowa- At the Clegg Park Elementary School, which has had

"CHARACTER COUNTS!" since fall of 1997, "time-outs" are down from 494 in the first quarter four years ago to 131 last year. Likewise, "quiet tables" (detentions) are down from 94 to 10 over that same time period, a drop-off of 89 percent. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

10) Lombard, Illinois- Glenn Westlake Middle School introduced "CHARACTER COUNTS!" in 1997-98, and has kept track of its disciplinary problems since then. It found:

- Suspensions increased 18 percent in the first year.
- Suspensions dropped 35 percent in year two (1998-1999).
- Suspensions dropped 24 percent in year three (from 1998-1999 to 1999-2000). Overall, they dropped 50 percent from 1997-98.
- In year two, repeat suspensions fell 43 percent.
- There was an average of 40 students suspended for fighting per year prior to the introduction of "CHARACTER COUNTS!" Subsequently:
- First year: no significant change
- Second year: 29 percent reduction
- Third year: 23 percent reduction
- Over two years, the number of students participating in extra-curricular activities increased 43 percent. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

III-Other surveys of "CHARACTER COUNTS!" participants have taken place, and all are consistent with its conclusions. They have occurred in Virginia, Louisiana, Nebraska, Iowa and New Mexico:

VIRGINIA: Teacher observation

The largest detailed scientific survey of elementary school teachers has been underway in Virginia since 2000. For the past two years, Dr. Michael Lambur and Joe Hunnings of Virginia Tech have evaluated the 4-H/"CHARACTER COUNTS!" program in elementary schools across the state. Though precise numbers are not yet available, the conclusion is

clear: "CHARACTER COUNTS!" improved student behavior in every category assessed. The researchers asked teachers to judge 24 kinds of student behavior, four for each Pillar of Character. For instance, "Set a good example for others to follow" fell under responsibility, and "Do what you say you will do" under trustworthiness. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

In 2001, teachers returned surveys from 55 schools representing 7,014 elementary school students. Of the 24 categories, investigators found statistically significant (<0.05) improvements in all but three: cheating (trustworthiness), using threats (respect), and judging others (respect). Even in these areas, changes moved in the right direction. When researchers calculated scores for each Pillar as a whole, they found statistically significant (<0.05) improvements in all Six Pillars. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

In 2002, teachers returned surveys from 27 schools representing 462 classrooms and 7,740 elementary school students. This time results were even better. The investigators found statistically significant (<0.05) improvements from pre- to- post-measurement in all 24 categories. When researchers calculated scores for each Pillar as a whole, they found statistically significant (<0.05) improvements from pre- to- post-measurement for all Pillars. (http://www.charactercounts.org) The researchers conclude, "Overall, this data indicates that the 4-H/ "CHARACTER COUNTS!" program is making a significant impact in elementary schools in increasing behaviors that reflect positive character development." (http://www.charactercounts.org) The study is ongoing. The investigators will evaluate elementary school teachers once again in 2002-2003, as well as assess outcomes at the

middle and high school student level, and gain perspectives from school administrators.

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

LOUISIANA: Teacher observation

In 1998-99 the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service surveyed teachers in 48 counties regarding their perception of behavioral change in students who had used the CC! Coalition's "Exercising Character" lesson plans. They received responses from 735 teachers throughout the state. Of them, 75 to 80 percent observed "some" to "very much" improvement in classroom behavior after using the "CHARACTER COUNTS!" "Exercising Character" lessons.

- Has behavior improved related to the Pillar of *trustworthiness*?
78.4 percent reported "some" to "very much" improvement.

- Has behavior improved related to the Pillar of *respect*?
78.4 percent reported "some" to "very much" improvement.

- Has behavior improved related to the Pillar of *responsibility*?
79.5 percent reported "some" to "very much" improvement.

- Has behavior improved related to the Pillar of *fairness*?
77.2 percent reported "some" to "very much" improvement.

- Has behavior improved related to the Pillar of *caring*?
81.6 percent reported "some" to "very much" improvement.

- Has behavior improved related to the Pillar of *citizenship*?
74.7 percent reported "some" to "very much" improvement.

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated that, apart from teaching lessons on the Six Pillars, they spent an extra five to 15 minutes per day on character education. Only 5.4

percent stated that they spent no additional time on character education.

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

In 1999-2000, the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service surveyed 191 principals and

75% of them observed "some" to "very much" improvement in behavior at their schools.

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

NEBRASKA: Teacher observation

In 2000 a survey took place of Nebraska teachers and facilitators using the Six-Pillar

framework. Among the 57 respondents:

- 85 percent reported an overall positive difference in the children they teach.
- 73 percent reported students using the language of the Six Pillars.
- 75 percent reported changing their own behavior as a result of teaching "CHARACTER COUNTS!".
- 61 percent reported seeing students help each other more frequently.
- 55 percent reported seeing few instances of students blaming others.
- 50 percent reported seeing more instances of students being truthful.

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

The teachers also noted that they now had a greater awareness of themselves as models

for desirable behavior and that "CHARACTER COUNTS!" had enabled them to focus

more on student's positive behavior.

IOWA: Parent observations, student and teacher self-assessments

In 1999, Clegg Park Elementary School in West Des Moines surveyed parents, students,

faculty and staff to gauge the effectiveness of its "CHARACTER COUNTS!" program.

Parents (114 responses)

- Have you seen any changes in your child's behavior that might be the result of "CHARACTER COUNTS!?"

  ---94 percent said "yes," 26 percent said "a lot," 68 percent said "a little," and 7 percent said "not at all."

- Does the "CHARACTER COUNTS!" program seem like a worthwhile effort to you?

  ---99 percent said "yes," 85 percent said "a lot," 14 percent said "a little," and 1 percent said "not at all"

- Has your child mentioned any of the Six Pillars of Character Education in conversation at home?

  ---98 percent said "yes," 51 percent said "a lot," 47 percent said "a little," and 2 percent said "not at all"

- Has your child talked about what he/she has learned in our "success assemblies"?

  ---78 percent said "yes," 20 percent said "a lot," 58 percent said "a little," and 22 percent said "not at all"

- Have you participated in "CHARACTER COUNTS!" home projects?

  ---62 percent said "yes." (http://www.charactercounts.org)

Students

- Do you think your behavior has changed after learning about the Six Pillars of character?

---82 percent said "yes," 49 percent said " a lot," 33 percent said "a little," and 18 percent said "not at all."

- Do you think that learning about character traits such as T.R.R.F.C.C. (the Six Pillars) has been important to you?

---89 percent said "yes," 67 percent said "a lot," 22 percent said "a little," and 11 percent said "not at all."

- Do you think the other students' behaviors have changed as a result of "CHARACTER COUNTS!?"

---83 percent said "yes," 28 percent said "a lot," 54 percent said "a little," and 17 percent said "not at all." (http://www.charactercounts.org)

Faculty/Staff (29 responses)

- Do you think "CHARACTER COUNTS!" has had an impact on you personally?

---93 percent said "yes" and 7 percent said "no."

(http://www.charactercounts.org)

NEW MEXICO: Parent observation

In 1998, the local "CHARACTER COUNTS!" task force surveyed parents in Albuquerque. Among the results:

- 94 percent agreed that "it is important to teach character education in the public schools."

- 73 percent (83 percent of parents with children in elementary school) agreed with the statement, "I believe the character education program at my child's school has made a difference in student behavior."

This finding parallels that in South Dakota, suggesting that "CHARACTER COUNTS!" has a bigger impact on younger children. (http://www.charactercounts.org)

2. The Giraffe Project (www.giraffe.org) challenges participants to "stick their necks out" for good character. The program offers examples of heroes who "stuck their necks out" for the care and concern of others. Students explore the difference between "hero" and "celebrity" and work toward developing a caring local community. Resource materials are available for students in K-12. (http://www.giraffe.org/)

3. The WhyTry Program was originally created by Christian Moore, L.C.S.W. as a set of practical tools to teach children and youth with learning differences. While working as a counselor at a special high school for at risk youth, Christian noticed that the majority of the kids were struggling as a result of learning differences. After being tested it was found that the many of these kids were visual learners. In an attempt to reach them during counseling sessions he began to draw pictures of analogies that related to the problems that the youth were trying to overcome. Those rough pictures eventually evolved into a set of analogies that he used to teach skills such as:

- - Basic problem solving
- - Anger management
- - Removing the negative labels placed upon them
- - Dealing with peer pressure
- - Living and keeping societies laws and rules
- - Building a support system
- - Having goals and a vision of their future

Over time the analogies were refined and more were created. Through the collaborative efforts of several people, additional pieces were added to the program such as music and experiential activities. All of these tools are used to communicate and reinforce the principles that are taught in the visual analogies and help to create a truly multisensory program that youth will understand. (http://www.whytry.org/)

Please see Appendices A – E for five various measures, assessments, and surveys used to measure the need for and knowledge of character education.

SUMMARY

In the earliest history of American education, character training was in the domain of a family and home. Subsequently, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, schools assumed greater responsibilities for the moral and ethical development of children. Numerous curricular approaches have been developed to address this new responsibility. Empirical evidence suggests that character and positive virtues can be improved by classroom teachers.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The Parkview Elementary School of the Stratford School District in Stratford, NJ is a K – 3 school that has implemented a school wide Character Education Program for the 2002-2003 school year. It is the second school year for the program. The design of the program is left to the discretion of each teacher, but each are expected to teach the nine character traits: *respect, honesty, responsibility, citizenship, self-discipline, perseverance, compassion, fairness,* and *trustworthiness*. The researcher's personal classroom program introduced one trait each month and provided a wide variety of materials and activities. Each month the students focused on a different character trait. (Please see Appendix F for a listing of character traits). Instruction began with a discussion of the specific type of behavior using a poster that presented different scenarios relating to the character type. Among the activities that occurred were the instruction of vocabulary and role-playing activities, which were thoroughly discussed to ensure the knowledge and understanding of the character type. Written assignments and worksheets concluded the lessons. Also, throughout the month, the teacher read stories related to the character trait, held weekly discussions and facilitated role-playing activities. (Please see APPENDIX G for a bibliography of the books used)

SAMPLE

The subjects for this study represented a convenience group of second and third grade children enrolled in the researcher's resource center program. There were 4 second grade level students and 3 third grade level students. Educational classifications of the students included Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Multiply Disabled (MD).

INSTRUMENTATION

Three measures were used including one pre-test, an interim-assessment and one post-test (Please see APPENDICES H, I and J for copies of the assessments used). The first pre-test was administered during the last week of September 2002. The interim-assessment was administered upon the student's return of the holiday break during the first week of January 2003. The post-test was administered at the end of March 2003. The two pre-assessments were similar in nature and required an oral response, whereas the post-assessment required a written response.

COLLECTION OF DATA

All data was collected by the researcher on both an individual and group basis throughout the six-month instructional period. Both the pre-assessment given in September and the interim-assessment completed in January included the following: daily observations of the students, note taking by the researcher, and audio-recorded interviews of the children. Immediately following each individual student assessment, the researcher took notes and reflected on the student's output. The final assessment in March consisted of a written measure designed by the researcher.

RESEARCH AND DESIGN ANAYLSIS OF DATA

A summary sheet was designed by the researcher to use during the audio-recorded assessments in September and January. Through analyzing and reflection of the notes taken, the researcher used the information gained to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each student. A total score was then accumulated from the data. The researcher designed the final assessment, which was administered in March. It represented a fill-in- the- blank worksheet including a word bank of all nine character types.

Chapter 4 displays the results of the three assessments given the end of September, the beginning of January, and the end of March. Tables 1 and 2, which plot the scores for the September Pre-Test and the January Interim-Assessment, represent how many correct answers were given out of a possible nine. There was also one point given if the student elaborated on the topic, allowing for a possible ten points. A symbol of a (+) or (-) before the number one, reflects whether the student received the point or not for elaborating on the topic. The percentage next to the (+1) or (-1) represents the total score for that student. The results of the final assessment given at the end of the training period are displayed in Table 3, also in percentages. Table 4 shows the comparison of the September Pre-Test and January Interim-Assessment through rates of regression, progression, or static levels in percentages. The information displayed in Table 5 replicates Table 4, but also includes data identifying gender. A summary of all three assessments administered is displayed in Table 6 using percentages. A final summary comparing the September Pre-Test and March Post-Test is displayed in Table 7, also shown in percentages. In addition, the words "increase" and "decrease" were used to chart the growth or regression made over the six-month study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness and value of a character education program administered to a group of second and third grade students eligible for special education. In order to achieve this purpose, the following research question was posed: What is the effectiveness and value of a character education program when administered to a group of second and third graders with learning disabilities?

RESULTS

Three assessments were administered across the period of September 2002 to March 2003. The first assessment (September Pre-Test) was administered during the last week in September prior to any instruction in character education in the researcher's classroom; the second assessment (January Interim-Assessment) was administered in the beginning of January upon return from a 12 day vacation; and the final assessment (March Post-Test) was administered during the last week in March. The following describes the grade level, gender and classification of the sample that applies to Tables 1 – 7.

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- male SLD	Student 5- female SLD
Student 2- male SLD	Student 6- female SLD
Student 3- male SLD	Student 7- female SLD
Student 4- female MD	

Scores obtained in the September 2002 Pre-Test and the January 2003 Interim Assessment are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The scores represent how many correct answers were given out of a possible nine. There was also one point given if the student elaborated on the topic, allowing for a possible ten total points. A symbol of a (+) or (-) before the number one, indicates whether the student received a point or not for elaborating on the topic. The percentage next to the (+1) or (-1) represents the total score for that student.

TABLE 1

September Pre-Test Scores

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- 6/9 (-1) 67%	Student 5- 6/9 (+1) 78%
Student 2- 2/9 (-1) 22%	Student 6- 5/9 (- 1) 56%
Student 3- 0/9 (−1) 0%	Student 7- 4/9 (+1) 56%
Student 4- 7/9 (+1) 89%	

The January Interim-Assessment was administered four days upon the return from winter break (12 day vacation).   Below are the results.

TABLE 2

January Interim Assessment Scores

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- 6/9 (-1) 67%	Student 5- 5/9 (+1) 67%
Student 2- 4/9 (-1) 45%	Student 6- 4/9 (+1) 45%
Student 3- 1/9 (-1) 11%	Student 7- 6/9 (+1) 67%
Student 4- 7/9 (+1) 78%	

In Table 3 (March Post-Test), the scores represent how many correct answers were given out of a possible ten on the final assessment. There were no additional points given in this assessment for elaboration due to the nature of the assessment. The percentages represent the total score for that student.

TABLE 3

March Post-Test Scores

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- 3/10 30%	Student 5- 9/10 90%
Student 2- 3/10 30%	Student 6- 7/10 70%
Student 3- 5/10 50%	Student 7-10/10 100%
Student 4- 4/10 40%	

From an inspection of Tables 1-3, it can be observed that all the subjects did not show equal gains over the six-month period.

Table 4, which follows, shows the progression, regression or static levels for each student comparing the September Pre-Test scores with the January Interim-Assessment scores. It can be interpreted, from Table 4, that there is a varied rate of success among the students in the sample when comparing both the September Pre-Tests and the January Interim-Assessments. In the entire sample of students, 1 student maintained his skill level. Of the remaining 6 students, 50% gained progress and 50% regressed.

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TABLE 4

Comparison of September Pre-Test and January Interim- Assessment
Regression, Progression, or Static Levels

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- 67% to 67% static	Student 5- 78% to 67% regression
Student 2- 22% to 45% progression	Student 6- 56% to 45% regression
Student 3- 0% to 11% progression	Student 7- 56% to 67% progression
Student 4- 89% to 78% regression	

An explication of the progression, regression or static levels for each student by

gender and grade level follows in Table 5. Three out of four students in the grade two

sample were males. Of those three males, two showed a progression of skills when the

September Pre-Tests and January Interim-Assessments were compared. The only female

in the second grade sample showed a regression of skills when the pre-tests and interim-

assessments were compared. One of the second grade males maintained his skills when

the comparison was made between his pre-test and interim-assessment. The third grade

sample was composed of three females. All three females showed a progression of skills

when the pre-tests and interim-assessments were compared.

TABLE 5

Comparison of September Pre-Test and January Interim-Assessment
Regression, Progression, or Static Levels
by Gender and Grade Level

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- male static	Student 5- female regression
Student 2- male progression	Student 6- female regression
Student 3- male progression	Student 7- female progression
Student 4- female regression	

Below in Table 6, three percentages for each student reflecting the three

assessments given over the sixth month study is denoted. The information contained in

this table is a summary of the information included in Tables 1 - 3.

TABLE 6

Progression Summary for September Pre-Test, January Interim-Assessment
and March Post-Test

Second grade			Third grade		
*Assessment (1)	(2)	(3)	*Assessment (1)	(2)	(3)
Student 1- 67%	67%	30%	Student 5- 78%	67%	90%
Student 2- 22%	45%	30%	Student 6- 56%	45%	70%
Student 3- 0%	11%	50%	Student 7- 56%	67%	100%
Student 4- 89%	78%	40%			

* Assessment (1) September Pre-Test (2) January Interim-Assessment (3) Post-Test

Table 7 was designed to summarize the overall success rate for the study when comparing the scores from then September Pre-Test and the March Post-Test. It can be inferred from Table 7, that the majority of the sample did make educational gains in the area of character education over the six-month study. Significantly, 50% of the second grade sample, and 100% of the third grade sample succeeded at increasing their knowledge of the value of character education. The two students in the sample who regressed at a significant rate, may have done so due to the nature of the assessment, fatigue or distractibility issues.

TABLE 7

Progression Summary Comparison between
September Pre-Test and March Post-Test

Second grade	Third grade
Student 1- 37% decrease	Student 5- 12% increase
Student 2- 8% increase	Student 6- 14% increase
Student 3- 50% increase	Student 7- 44% increase
Student 4- 49% decrease	

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness and value of a character education program when administered over a six-month period to a convenience sample of second and third grade students eligible for special education. The subjects for this study attend Parkview Elementary School in Stratford, New Jersey, and are a part of the resource program there. This study can help determine whether or not a character education curriculum will lead to improved decision-making in morals and ethics. The design of the program is individual to the researcher, but each of the following nine character traits are covered: *respect, honesty, responsibility, citizenship, self-discipline, perseverance, compassion, fairness,* and *trustworthiness.* Over the six-month training period, students were administered three assessments, a pre-test in September, an interim-assessment in January, and a post-test in March. Instruction was implemented throughout the six-month study as the researcher focused on a different character trait each month. The results of the three assessments were then examined for progression, regression or static rates of development in the area of character education. The overall results of the three assessments revealed that there was positive improvement in ethical decision-making between the pre-test and post-test periods.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study showed that a systematic program of character education over a six-month period does result in an increased awareness of ethically correct decision-making. Significantly, 50% of the second grade sample, and 100% of the third grade sample succeeded at increasing their knowledge in the value of character education.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the six-month study, the students in the sample appeared interested and eager to share their own personal experiences in regard to the character trait being discussed. In addition to the formal instruction that was delivered regarding each character trait, there were many informal discussions as well throughout the six months. At those times, the researcher was able to get a sense of each student's understanding beyond the traditional, formal way of administering assessments. It was understood by the researcher that the students usually understood the concepts being presented even though some scores did not reflect success. A belief that some of the students were nervous and focusing too much on the end result during each of their assessments (their score) may have played a part in limited growth. Both the pre-test and interim-assessments were verbal measures, although visual aids were displayed in front of the student to help assist them with each character type. Here, students were able to express their thoughts orally in response to a scenario that was being presented verbally by the examiner. Even though sometimes the students did not reply with the correct answer that the researcher was seeking, observed was a certain thought process and understanding that proved the concept was usually understood. Moreover, it was also observed, that the discussion following the post-test at the end of the training period reflected an understanding that did not always match the students' written responses. Although an

extended amount of time was spent previewing the test as a group, the design of the post-test may have been a factor that contributed to some of the lower scores. A possibility that may have caused this result could have been too many words on the page, causing some students to visually shut down. Difficulty with handwriting, fatigue, and distractions also could have contributed to some negative scores.

It is believed by the researcher that if one single character education program was adopted by the school district for all teachers to follow, (with modifications to the program for learning disabled students) and implemented school-wide with core curriculum standards to adhere to, there would be even more of a positive gain overall by the students. This consistency and continuity would with no doubt assure growth in the area of character education throughout all the grade levels.

APPENDIX A

The Defining Issues Test (DIT-2)

The Defining Issues Test (DIT-2) is a device for activating moral schemas. The reading of moral dilemmas and DIT issues statements activate moral schemas. As the participant encounters an item that both makes sense and also activates a preferred schema, that item is given a high rating and ranked of high importance. Alternatively, when the participant encounters an item that either doesn't makes sense or seems simplistic and unconvincing, the item receives a low rating.

The items of the DIT are fragments of lines of reasoning: the items are not complete orations arguing for one course of action or another. The DIT is a "projective test" in that the fragmented nature of the items require the participant to supply meaning to the items that they are rating. Validity for the DIT has been assessed in terms of seven criteria: differentiation of various age/education groups, (2) longitudinal gains, (3) DIT scores are significantly related to cognitive capacity measures, (4) DIT scores are sensitive to moral education interventions, (5) DIT scores are significantly linked to many "prosocial" behaviors and to desired professional decision making, (6) DIT scores are significantly linked to political attitudes and political choices, (7) Reliability—Cronbach alpha is in the upper .70's/low .80's. Test-retest is about the same (University of Minnesota, 2000).

APPENDIX B

The Ethical Qualities Of Good Character Study Guide

Grading Rubric	In Progress	Partially Proficient	Proficient	Advanced
Recognition - Definitions	Less than 60% of items are defined correctly.	At least 70% of items are defined correctly.	At least 80% of items are defined correctly.	At least 90% of items are defined correctly.
Spelling and Capitalization	Less than 60% of the spelling & capitalization are correct.	At least 70% of spelling and capitalization is correct.	At least 80% of spelling and capitalization are correct.	At least 90% of spelling and capitalization are correct.
Worksheet - Study Guide	Less than 60% are answered correctly.	At least 70% of items are answered correctly.	At least 80% of items are answered correctly.	At least 90% of items are answered correctly.
Assignment Heading - Study Skills	None of the assignment heading is labeled correctly.	Some of the assignment heading is labeled correctly.	Most of assignment heading is labeled correctly.	All of the assignment heading is labeled correctly.

APPENDIX C

A LIST OF NEEDS ASSESSMENTS by Thompson (2000).

Assessment of School Curriculum and Instructional Program
Professional Staff Assessment of School Effectiveness
Parent Assessment of School Effectiveness
Secondary Student Assessment of School Effectiveness*
Assessment of Beliefs
Staff Perceptions of Support Programs
Training Needs for Performance Based Education
Program Needs for Performance Based Education
Staff Development Needs Assessment
Organizational Quality Needs Assessment
Health Education Needs Assessment
AIDS Education Needs Assessment
Drug & Alcohol Education Needs Assessment
Family Life Education Needs Assessment
Shared Decision Making and Collaborative Planning
Learning Empowerment Survey
School Quality Needs Assessment

APPENDIX D

A CHARACTER EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT by Thomas F. Kelly, Ph. D.

1. Staff understand the difference between virtues and values

2. Students understand the difference between virtues and values

3. Parents understand the difference between virtues and values

4. Virtues are prominently displayed in classrooms

5. Virtues are prominently displayed throughout the school

6. Readings assigned present virtuous role models

7. The concept of natural law is understood by staff

8. The concept of natural law is understood by students

9. Students understand the relationship between virtue and happiness

10. Students understand the relationship between virtue and success

11. Staff understands that virtue satisfies basic human needs

12. Students understand that virtue satisfies basic human needs

13. Students understand that work is a virtue

14. Staff understand that simplicity is a virtue

15. Students are taught the virtues

16. Examples of virtuous behavior by staff are recognized

17. Examples of virtuous behavior by students are recognized

18. Students know all of the virtues

19. Students recognize the priority of virtues over values

20. Staff behavior is virtuous

21. Student behavior is virtuous

22. Character education is integrated into the school's program and activities

23. Staff is trained in character education

24. Parents understand the school's character education program

25. The teaching of virtue is seen as at least as important as anything else

26. Curriculum content and materials are assessed for their contribution to teaching virtue

27. There is staff development in character education

28. There is curriculum development for character education

29. Materials are available for character education

30. Staff recognize the relationship between virtue and self-respect

31. Students recognize the relationship between virtue and self-respect

32. Parents recognize the relationship between virtue and self-respect.

APPENDIX E

1. On the NCS Answer Sheet, in the Special Codes section ("K" column), please fill in the bubble indicating your school position. (No names, please. Responses are meant to be anonymous.)

   K-0 Administrator
   K-1 Teacher or teacher assistant
   K-2 Professional support staff (counselor, psychologist, social worker, etc.)
   K-3 Other staff (custodian, cafeteria aide, bus driver, etc.)
   K-4 Parent

2. Based on your observations, use a scale of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 (with 1 being "LOW Implementation" and 5 being "HIGH Implementation") to rate the degree to which you think the following 11 character education principles are implemented in your school.

1	2	3	4	5
Implementation Low			Implementation High	

   Please give your honest opinion, since candid responses provide the most valid data. If you do not have enough knowledge of a particular item to give a rating, leave it blank. *Please record your ratings in two places: on the NCS Answer Sheet, and on the blank line preceding each numbered item on this survey form.*

3. *Submit the NCS Answer Sheet* to the person gathering the data for your school to machine score. *Keep your copy of the survey,* with your ratings, to use in staff discussions once you receive the summary of your survey results.

PRINCIPLE 1:

CHARACTER EDUCATION PROMOTES AND TEACHES QUALITIES OF GOOD CHARACTER, SUCH AS *PRUDENCE (GOOD JUDGMENT), RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, HONESTY, FAIRNESS, COURTESY, KINDNESS, COURAGE, DILIGENCE, PERSEVERANCE, AND SELF-CONTROL.*

_____ 1. Our school staff and parent community have agreed on the character traits we wish to promote in our character education program.

_____ 2. We have defined these character traits in terms of behaviors that can be observed in the school, family, and community.

_____ 3. We have made these character traits and their behavioral definitions widely known throughout our school and parent community.

PRINCIPLE 2:

CHARACTER IS DEFINED COMPREHENSIVELY TO INCLUDE THINKING, FEELING, AND BEHAVIOR.

_____ 4. We take deliberate steps to help students acquire a developmentally appropriate understanding of what the character traits mean in everyday behavior and to grasp the reasons why some behaviors are right and others wrong.

_____ 5. We take deliberate steps to help students admire the character traits, desire to possess them, and become committed to them.

_____ 6. We take deliberate steps to help students practice the character traits so that they become habits.

PRINCIPLE 3:

CHARACTER EDUCATION IS INTENTIONAL, PROACTIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE.

_____ 7. Our program is intentional and proactive; it provides regular, planned, and explicit opportunities for students to learn the qualities of good character.

_____ 8. Our program is comprehensive across the curriculum; the character traits are regularly integrated into instruction in all subjects and at all grade levels.

_____ 9. Our character program is infused throughout the school day. The character traits are upheld by adults, and taken seriously by students, throughout the school environment: in classrooms, corridors, cafeterias, assemblies, and extracurricular activities, and on playgrounds, athletic fields, and school busses.

_____ 10. Our drug, alcohol, and sex education programs are character-based, consistent with the school's highest character expectations of respect, responsibility, and self-control and actively guiding students toward abstinence from drugs, alcohol and sexual activity.

PRINCIPLE 4:

THE SCHOOL IS A CARING COMMUNITY.

_____ 11. Our program makes it a high priority to foster caring attachments between adults and students. The school schedule, for example, is designed to minimize disruption and stress and to maximize staff time for developing supportive relationships with their students.

_____ 12. Our school makes it a high priority to help students form caring attachments to each other, including caring attachments between older and younger students.

_____ 13. Our school does not tolerate peer cruelty (persecution, exclusion and the like) and takes steps to prevent peer cruelty and deal with it effectively when it occurs.

PRINCIPLE 5:

STUDENTS HAVE FREQUENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORAL ACTION.

_____ 14. Our program provides students with repeated and varied opportunities for moral action such as cooperative learning, conflict resolution, class problem-solving meetings, classroom helper jobs, peer tutoring, school and community service, and taking personal responsibility for improving one's behavior or learning.

_____ 15. Our program helps students consciously take responsibility for developing their own character—for example, by encouraging students to set daily goals to practice the character traits and to assess and record their success in achieving their goals.

PRINCIPLE 6:

CHARACTER EDUCATION INCLUDES AN ACADEMIC CURRICULUM THAT BUILDS GOOD CHARACTER.

_____ 16. Our academic curriculum is designed to challenge all students to do their personal best and to develop the qualities of character—such as self-discipline, diligence, perseverance, and a concern for excellence—that support personal responsibility and a strong work ethic.

_____ 17. Our school respects the way students learn by providing active learning experiences such as problem-solving, cooperative learning, and projects that build on students' interests.

_____ 18. Our curriculum recognizes multiple intelligences and helps students of diverse abilities and needs discover and develop their special talents.

PRINCIPLE 7:

CHARACTER EDUCATION STRIVES TO DEVELOP THE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION CENTRAL TO GOOD CHARACTER.

_____ 19. Our program's approach to classroom and school discipline is centered on developing students' intrinsic commitment to doing what's right—following legitimate rules, for example, because doing so respects the rights and needs of self and others. Logical consequences for wrongdoing are administered in such a way as to strengthen a student's inner character resources: moral reasoning, self-control, and strategies for responsible behavior in the future. Students are also taught to take initiative to make active restitution when they do something wrong.

_____ 20. When we deal with discipline problems, we make explicit reference to the character qualities we are trying to teach—with the goal of helping students use standards such as courtesy, kindness, honesty, fairness, and self-control to evaluate and improve their conduct.

_____ 21. In our classrooms and school, we recognize and celebrate good character in ways that support rather than undermine intrinsic motivation (by keeping the focus on doing good things because it helps others and oneself); recognition for good character is accessible to all who are deserving and not limited just to a few.

PRINCIPLE 8:

THE ENTIRE SCHOOL STAFF SHARES RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION AND LIVES BY THE SCHOOL'S CHARACTER EXPECTATIONS.

_____ 22. All professional school staff (including administrators, counselors, librarians, coaches, and teaching faculty) have been included in planning, receiving staff development for, and carrying out the school wide character education effort.

_____ 23. All other staff (including secretaries, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, playground aides, etc.) have been included in planning, receiving staff development for, and carrying out the school wide character education effort.

_____ 24. The character traits espoused by our school are modeled by staff in their interactions with students.

_____ 25. The character traits espoused by our school are practiced by staff in their interactions with each other; there is a moral community among adults—including relations between administration and faculty—that is governed by norms of mutual respect, fairness, and collaborative decision-making.

_____ 26. Regular and adequate time is made available for staff planning and reflection: to design the character education program, share success stories, assess progress, and address moral concerns, especially gaps between the school's professed character expectations and observed behavior in the school.

PRINCIPLE 9:

CHARACTER EDUCATION INVOLVES MORAL LEADERSHIP BY STAFF AND STUDENTS.

_____ 27. Our program has a leader (the principal, another administrator, a lead teacher) who champions our character education effort.

_____ 28. There is a leadership group (a committee, a task force) that guides the ongoing planning and implementation of our character education program and encourages the involvement of the whole school.

_____ 29. Students are involved in leadership roles (e.g., through student government, special councils, and peer mediation) in ways that develop their responsibility and help the school's character expectations become part of the peer culture.

PRINCIPLE 10:

THE SCHOOL RECRUITS PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AS FULL PARTNERS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION.

_____ 30. Our program explicitly affirms that parents are the first and most important character educators of their children. Parents' questions and concerns about any part of our character program are taken seriously; every effort is made to respect parents' rights as their child's primary moral teacher.

_____ 31. Our program asks parents to identify the character qualities that should be fostered by the school.

_____ 32. Parents are included in our school's character education leadership group.

_____ 33. All parents are informed about the goals and teaching methods of our character education program.

_____ 34. Our school sends home communications (such as letters from the principal) and suggestions (such as dinner discussion topics and bedtime reading) that help parents reinforce the same character qualities the school is trying to teach. Our school also offers workshops, parenting tips, books, tapes, and other resources that help parents develop their general parenting skills and strengthen their relationship with their child.

_____ 35. Our school has involved representatives of the wider community (e.g., businesses, religious institutions, youth organizations, government, and the media) in helping to plan our character education effort.

_____ 36. Our school has involved members of the community in efforts to model and promote the qualities of good character in the community.

PRINCIPLE 11:

CHARACTER EDUCATION ASSESSES THE CHARACTER OF THE SCHOOL, THE SCHOOL STAFF'S FUNCTIONING AS CHARACTER EDUCATORS, AND THE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS.

_____ 37. Our program assesses the character of our school as a moral community (e.g., through school climate surveys using agree-disagree items such as, "Students in our school respect each other" and "Our school is like a family").

_____ 38. Our staff periodically engages in systematic formative assessment of our program, using surveys such as this to determine the degree to which we are implementing the intended components of our character education program. The results of these assessments are used to plan program improvements.

_____ 39. Our school asks staff to report periodically (e.g., through questionnaires or anecdotal records) their efforts to implement character education.

_____ 40. We assess our students' progress in developing an understanding of the character traits—for example, by asking them to define the traits, recognize or produce examples of the traits in action, and explain how these traits help them and others.

_____ 41. We assess our students' progress in developing an emotional attachment and commitment to the qualities of good character—for example, by asking students to rate how important the character traits are to them in their lives.

_____ 42. We assess our students' progress in behaving in ways that reflect the character traits—for example, by collecting data on observable character-related behaviors, such as school attendance, acts of honesty, volunteering for school or community service, discipline referrals, fighting, vandalism, drug incidents, and student pregnancies, and by asking students to complete anonymous self-report questionnaires on character-related behaviors (e.g., "How many times during the past week have you helped someone who is not a friend or family member?", "How many times have you cheated on a test or major assignment in the past year?", and "How many times in the past month have you stood up for what was right—for example, by resisting peer pressure to do something wrong or by defending a schoolmate against *unfair gossip?"*).

_____ 43. We include assessment of student character or character-related behaviors as part of our report card.

APPENDIX F

Nine Character Traits

Respect - September

Honesty – October

Responsibility – November

Citizenship – December

Self-Discipline and *Perseverance* – January

Fairness and *Trustworthiness* –February

Compassion –March

APPENDIX G

Book List

RESPECT

Miles, M., *The Drinking Gourd*

Cannon, Janell, *Stellaluna*

Berenstain, Stan, *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*

HONESTY

Andersen, Hans Christian, *The Emperor's New Clothes*

Demi, *The Empty Pot*

Berenstain, Stan, *Berenstain Bears and The Truth*

RESPONSBILITY

Polacco, Patricia, *Babushka's Doll*

Berenstain, Stan, *Berenstain Bears' Trouble at School*

Walsh, E., *Charlotte's Web*

De Paola, Tomie, *Stregnona*

CITIZNSHIP

Swanson, *I Pledge Allegiance*

Cohen, B., *Molly's Pilgrim*

Martin, C., Summer *Business*

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Stevens, Janet, *The Tortoise and the Hare*

Polacco, Patricia, *Babushka's Doll*

Brown, Marc, *Arthur's Tooth*

PERSERVERANCE

Viorst, Judith, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*

Williams, Vera B., *A Chair for My Mother*

Peck, Beth, *How Many Days to America?*

COMPASSION

Todd, L., *Thy Friend Obadiah*

Cooney, Barbara, *Miss Rumphius*

Teptoe, John, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*

Pfister, Marcus, *Rainbow Fish*

FAIRNESS

Steig, William, *Doctor De Soto*

Brown, Marc, *Arthur's April Fool*

Pinkwater, Daniel Manus, *The Big Orange Splot*

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lionni, L., *Look Through My Window*

Lionni, L., *Swimmy*

Monjo, F., *The Drinking Gourd*

APPENDIX H

Pre-Test (September)

The researcher displayed nine posters in the classroom reflecting the nine character types studied. On each poster the following was included: (1) character type (written word form) (2) a life-like photograph of a scenario representing the character type as a background (3) a dozen scenarios listed throughout the poster (in text) used for discussion. Individually to each student, the researcher presented nine different scenarios verbally (Please see Appendix L). The researcher then read all nine character types aloud while pointing to each poster. The student then had to point to the poster that matched the scenario posed. After being able to identify the character typed being described, the student was to answer the question posed following the scenario. Elaboration on the topic was encouraged.

APPENDIX I

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Interim-Assessment (January)

The researcher displayed nine posters in the classroom reflecting the nine character types studied. On each poster the following was included: (1) character type (written word form) (2) a life-like photograph of a scenario representing the character type as a background (3) a dozen scenarios listed throughout the poster (in text) used for discussion. Individually to each student, the researcher presented nine different scenarios verbally (Please see Appendix M). The researcher then read all nine character types aloud while pointing to each poster. The student then had to point to the poster that matched the scenario posed. After being able to identify the character typed being described, the student was to answer the question posed following the scenario. Elaboration on the topic was encouraged.

APPENDIX J

Post-Test (March)

Name _____   Date _____

Respect (ree –spek –t)   ***Honesty*** (o –n –iss-te)   ***Responsibility*** (re –spon –suh–bill–uh –te)

Citizenship (sit-uh-sin-ship)   ***Self-Discipline*** (sell-f-diss-uh-plin)

Perservance (per-ser-veer-ins)   ***Compassion*** (cum-pash-in)

Fairness (f-ay-r-niss)   ***Trustworthiness*** (tr-ust-wer-thee-niss)

Directions: Write the correct word on the line. Choose from the word bank above.

(HINT: one word is used two times)

1. _____ showing that you care to a person who has lost a loved one

2. _____ making your bed before school

3. _____ going to baseball practice the day after losing a big game

4. _____ doing what your parents ask you to do without asking why

5. _____ keeping a secret for a friend

6. _____ saving half your allowance each week instead of spending it all

7. _____ playing the game by the rules with no cheating

8. _____ telling the truth about the vase that you broke

9. _____ putting trash in its proper place

10. _____ saying *please* and *thank you*

* words in parenthesis above denote phonetic pronunciation of word

APPENDIX K

Verbal scenarios representing the nine different character types used:

Respect: *"Honor Your Father and Your Mother."*

- When you are playing at your best friend's house, her mother always yells and is mean to

  you. What do you say? What do you do?

Honesty: *"Be Heedful of Your Words; Do What is Right."*

- Your teacher asks who spilled juice during snack time. You did. Do you tell?

Responsibility: *"If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders."* Abigail Van Buren

- When you get home from school everyday, your mother expects you to do your homework

  before you go outside. Today though, your friends are going to the park right after school

  and they want you to come. What do you do? Why?

Citizenship: *"Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy."* Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th-century American essayist, public philosopher and poet

- You and you older brother or sister are always fighting. You think that she picks on you

  just because you are younger and smaller. What do you do? What do you say to your

  brother or sister? What do you say to you parents?

Self-Discipline: *"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Never excuse yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself-and be lenient to everybody else."* Henry Ward Beecher

- You have a choice. You may have one ice cream cone today, and no ice cream cones all of

  next week, or you may not have an ice cream cone today, but you may have one every day

  next week. What do you choose? Why?

Perseverance: "*Perseverance is a great element of success. If you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake up somebody.*" Henry W. Longfellow

- You are taking a math test in school. You aren't that prepared and you are getting frustrated because you don't know all the answers. Time is running out. What do you do?

Compassion: "*Let the Poor be Members of your Household.*"

- One of your friends never gets any dessert in his lunch box and always asks you to share your cookies. What do you do?

Fairness: "*Justice, Justice Shall You Pursue.*"

- When you are playing at recess, one of the kids keeps telling you that you aren't being fair because you take too long a turn on the swings. What do you say? What do you do?

Trustworthiness: "*Before you can trust others, you must believe in yourself.*"

- Your friend tells you a secret and asks you not to tell anybody. Later that day, you run into another friend that asks you if you "heard" the latest about "you know who." What do you say?

APPENDIX L

(January Interim-Assessment)

Verbal scenarios representing the nine different character types used:

Respect: *"Self-respect is the cornerstone of all virtue."* -- John Herschel

- When your friend pressures you to do something that you don't want to do, you begin to get nervous, scared and confused. What do you say? How do you react?

Honesty: *"It does not require many words to speak the truth."*-- Chief Joseph

- At recess, you lost the game ball, but no one saw you do it. When you get back inside, your teacher asks where the ball is. Do you tell?

Responsibility: *"Be responsible for who and what you are."* -- Jann Arden

- You get to school and your homework is not in your folder. Your teacher asks you what happened. What do you say? Why?

Citizenship: *"If you have no will to change it, you have no right to criticize it."*
- Unknown

- You have been waiting for a specific book to be returned to the library. When you get there, you see that it has been returned but someone is already reading the book. You notice that he puts it down on the table because he has to tie his shoe. What do you do? Why?

Self-Discipline: *"When you have decided what you believe, what you feel must be done, have the courage to stand alone and be counted."* Eleanor Roosevelt

- You absolutely love candy. Your parents told you that you are able to go trick or treating by yourself this year. You've collected a huge bag and you are getting hungry. What do you do? Why?

Perseverance: *"Don't get discouraged; it is often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock." --* Unknown

- Your team is losing the game by ten points. It seems hopeless for a win, but you're up to bat. How does your effort compare if you were winning, and not losing the game?

Compassion: *"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive." --* The Dalai Lama.

- Your best friend comes to school crying. When you ask her what's wrong, she tells you her cat died last night. What do you say? What do you do?

Fairness: *"Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud." --* Sophocles

- You are playing checkers with your friend and suspect that he is cheating. You finally notice that he is cheating when you turn your head and pretend to be looking for something you lost. What do you say? What do you do?

Trustworthiness: *"To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved." --* George MacDonald

- Your mom gives you $5.00 to go the store for her to get some things. The bill only came to $3.50. Your mom doesn't know that the items were on sale and didn't expect to get change back anyway. What do you do with the extra money?

APPENDIX M

"Building a Nation of Character"
by President George W. Bush

In the recent presidential campaign, candidates Gore and Bush both strongly endorsed character education. In his inaugural address on January 20, 2001, President Bush issued a call to character to all schools and citizens. An abridged version follows.

We have a place, all of us, in a long story, a story we continue but whose end we will not see. It is the American story, a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals. The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise: that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born. Americans are called to enact this promise in our lives and in our laws.

Even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel. While many of our citizens prosper, others doubt the promise--even the justice--of our own country. The ambitions of some Americans are limited by failing schools and hidden prejudice and the circumstances of their birth.

A Nation of Justice and Opportunity
We do not accept this. Our unity, our union, is the serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation. This is my solemn pledge: to work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity. I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves, who creates us equal in his image.

America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests, and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. If we do not turn the hearts of children toward knowledge and character, we will lose their gifts and undermine their idealism.

Civility Is a Choice
Today we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion, and character. Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos.

America at its best is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. All of us are diminished when any are hopeless. Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty. But we can listen to those who do. And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.

Compassion: The Work of a Nation
Government has great responsibilities, for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government.

America at its best is a place where personal responsibility is valued and expected. Encouraging responsibility is not a search for scapegoats; it is a call to conscience. Our public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness.

Sometimes in life we are called to do great things. But as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love. The most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone.

What you do is as important as anything government does. I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort, to serve your nation, beginning with your neighbor. I ask you to be citizens. Citizens, not spectators. Citizens, not subjects. Responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character. When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it. When this spirit is present, no wrong can stand against it.

APPENDIX N

Mahatma Gandhi was born in a small town into a family of average means. His father had less than grade 3 education; his mother was illiterate and most of his elders had little academic education. Gandhi was the first person in his family to graduate from a high school but his academic achievement was below average.

Though his parents could not impart much of academic education, they instilled in Gandhi a strong character education. The latter enabled him to educate himself and complete the London Matriculation as well as the London Bar examinations.

When Gandhi went to South Africa his main strength proved to be his sound Character. With this he not only overcame many seemingly insurmountable obstacles himself but also taught character education to thousands of almost illiterate Indians there. The main secret of Gandhi's success, first in South Africa and later in India, was his unique weapon, 'Satyagraha', whose implementation requires little academic education but strong character education.

"Education without courage is like a wax statue - beautiful to look at but bound to melt at the first touch of a hot stuff." – Mahatma Gandhi

APPENDIX O

Where there is hatred, may I bring love.
Where there is pain, may I bring healing.
Where there is darkness, may I bring light.
Where there is despair, may I bring harmony.
Where there is discord, may I bring harmony.
Were there is strife, may I bring peace.

Make this a better world. And begin with me.

Inspired by St. Francis of Assisi
Adapted by W. D.

APPENDIX P

If you will always assume
The person sitting next to you
Is the messiah
Waiting for some human kindness,
You will soon learn to weigh your words
And watch your hands.
And if he so chooses
Not to reveal himself
In your time,
It will not matter.

A Rebbe's proverb
Translated by Danny Siegel

APPENDIX Q

"Education has for its object the formation of character."
- Herbert Spencer

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"The missing link in leadership development is growing the person to grow the leader."

--Paul Walsh

"Teach you children well."

Deuternonlmy 6:7

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, 1969

"We are what we repeatedly do, excellence then is not an act, but a habit."
--Aristotle

"Character is the foundation stone upon which one must build to win respect. Just as no worthy building can be erected on a weak foundation, so no lasting reputation worthy of respect can be built on a weak character."
-- R. C. Samsel

Live with kindness,
live with caring.
Live with faith
and generous sharing...
Live with truth,
for when you do,
all good things
return to you.

-- Unknown

"Character is the sum and total of a person's <u>*choices.*</u>*"*
-- P.B. Fitzwater

"Character consists of what you do on the third and fourth tries."
-- James A. Michener

"Our lives teach us who we are."
-- Salman Rushdie

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