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A STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION, LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORES IN SELECTED PARISHES IN LOUISIANA

by

Cynthia Ford Pilcher, B.S., M.S.

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

MAY 2003
We hereby recommend that the dissertation prepared under our supervision by Cynthia Ford Pilcher entitled *A Study of the Implementation of Character Education, Learning Environment, and School Performance Scores in Selected Parishes in Louisiana* be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

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Advisory Committee

Approved:

Director of Graduate Studies

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Approved:

Dean of the Graduate School

GS Form 13 (4/03)
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate two sets of relationships: the relationship between character education and learning environment, and the relationship between character education and School Performance Scores in 17 elementary schools located in five public school districts in northeast Louisiana. Principal and teacher (K-6) respondents completed a 15-item questionnaire designed to measure their perceptions of the level of implementation of character education in the school setting and a 15-item questionnaire assessing perception of the learning environment. Data from surveys completed by school personnel were gathered to allow analyses by school, grade level taught, number of years experience, number of years at present school, certification status, highest degree completed, gender, and ethnicity. Students in grades 4-6 completed a 14-item survey assessing their perceptions of the learning environment in the school. Data were gathered to allow analyses by school, grade level, age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Archival data consisted of School Performance Scores for each participating school for the past three years (2000, 2001, and 2002). A total of 1,039 respondents (8 principals, 100 teachers, and 931 students) participated in this study. Internet access was required for participation in this study, and survey instruments were distributed on the Internet via www.surveymonkey.com.

The researcher used a correlational design to determine if there were relationships among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and

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School Performance Scores. Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the relationships among the three variables. Independent samples $t$-tests were calculated to determine statistical differences between demographic data gathered on respondents and the independent variables, level of implementation of character education and learning environment.

There was no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment, and there was no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores. A significant relationship was found between students' perception of learning environment and School Performance scores at the $p < .037$ level as measured by the Pearson correlation coefficient. Data revealed a positive correlation between students' perception of learning environment and School Performance Scores.
APPROVAL FOR SCHOLARLY DISSEMINATION

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Author  Cypria F. Pitcher

Date  May 24, 2003
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving family. Without their love, support, and encouragement this dissertation would not have been possible. To my husband, Kim, thank you for your patience and endurance through the process, for your love when I was present in body, but absent in mind, and for understanding when things were left undone. To my two daughters, Jade and Ashton, for enduring the hardships and keeping me company many late hours. To my parents, Travis and Fay Ford, for the love and support without which, this would not have been possible. To all of you, thank you for supporting me in this endeavor. Girls, I have finally finished my “homework.”
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Across America, private and business sectors depend on schools to develop integrity in students. Entrepreneurs want employees who not only excel academically, but who are also persons of character, and who possess a work ethic to be proud of. Businesses need a staff that is honest, trustworthy, and hardworking. Simultaneously, schools and parents are alarmed at students' antisocial behaviors. As a result, many schools, communities, and parents have turned to character education programs to foster values and ethical decision-making skills in today's youth (Wilbur, 2000).

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report commissioned by the United States Department of Labor identified the needs of high performance workplaces. Students entering the workforce should possess a three-part foundation: basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities that display responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty (Huitt, 1997; “What Work Requires,” 1991; Whetzel, 1992).

Schools need to help students develop a deep regard for themselves and their fellow human beings, a commitment to core values, and a commitment to living by these principles while accommodating the beliefs of others. Educators must develop students' hearts as well as their minds in order to meet their basic needs for safety, belonging, competence, and autonomy. Character education should not be viewed as a threat to
America's current emphasis on student achievement. Character education can help achieve academic goals (Brogan & Brogan, 1999; Schaps, Schaeffer, & McDonnell, 2001). With high stakes testing, increased accountability, and school improvement plans prevalent in the field of education, teachers tend to focus on academic performance.

Educators must consider the child as a whole--including his or her family, peers, community, values, and character (Wiley, 2000). If educating the whole child is not the ultimate goal, then the school's function is limited to orchestrating high scores on standardized tests as opposed to preparing children to function in an increasingly diverse society, according to Wiley (p. 1). Dual aims of education, character development, and academic achievement do not operate independently of each other; they must work simultaneously to achieve the common goal (Brogan & Brogan, 1999).

As a former educator, Miss America 2001, Angela Perez Baraquio's platform was **Character in the Classroom: Teaching Values, Valuing Teachers**. She was the first teacher to win the title, and she traveled 20,000 miles a month, speaking to schools and policymakers about the impact of character education (Stainburn, 2001). In a presentation to elementary students in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, Ms. Baraquio encouraged youngsters to take home six Ds: dare, dream, do, desire, dedicate, and discipline. Before becoming Miss America, Ms. Baraquio taught physical education and coached basketball, track, and volleyball at an elementary school in Hawaii (Ward, 2001).

**Louisiana: Vision 2020** (Foster & Sawyer, 1999) challenged residents to reinvent Louisiana as an avenue to foster economic growth statewide. Citizens must face the realities of a global economy and realize that "anything less than the best education possible for every man, woman, and child is unacceptable" (p. 22). Improving education
has become Governor Foster's highest legislative priority, according to *Louisiana: Vision 2020* (p. 24). Louisiana's K-12 educational system is currently undergoing significant reforms addressing student achievement including accountability and high stakes testing. Character education is a priority in Foster's administration. According to Governor Foster, one of the most important things residents can do to ensure the future of this state is to teach children the basics: responsibility, citizenship, respect, manners, trust, and honesty (Golsby & Johnston, 2002).

Students need academic knowledge to become contributing members of society. However, a society that prepares its citizenry by emphasizing academics at the expense of ethical, social, and emotional development will not be a strong and healthy society for long (Schaps et al., 2001). In America, the fabric of democracy depends on the ability of society to develop a sense of justice, a respect for fairness, and a spirit of contribution within the diverse population (Brandt, 1993; Otten, 2000). No generation will be perfect. Adults must realize the tremendous impact core values play in a person's character development. Parents would not want children to make the same mistakes they did and can only hope that someday the deficiencies of the next generation will be deplored (Brandt, 1993).

**An Overview of the Problem**

A dramatic increase in violent behavior and an apparent lack of core values is commonplace in today's society. Educators say exposure to shocking levels of aggression and profanity is common. Due to social and economic trends, family patterns and work schedules have changed, and it appears children are learning their values from their peers and television sets (Brandt, 1993).
Schools have become a playground for kids killing kids. The deadliest school shooting in the history of this nation took place at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, killing 12 fellow students, one teacher, and injuring 20 others. It had been 13 months since four students and a teacher were killed in Jonesboro, Arkansas (Portner, 1999). Disrespect and self-destructive behavior have become commonplace in schools across the nation. Wagner (1999) stated that to rebuild community in schools, educators must be held accountable for more than just standardized test scores. Schools that have taken steps to enhance community in the school setting have found that a more respectful learning environment is what best motivates youth to reach high academic standards, according to Wagner.

Society has changed drastically in the past forty years. Lickona (1993) reported the United States is now the most violent of all industrialized nations. According to Lyons (1995), similar findings shared disturbing and unsettling trends for families and educators: violent crimes increased by more than 500%, illegitimate births increased by more than 400%, the divorce rate doubled, single-parent families tripled, the teen suicide rate tripled, and 30% percent of all births were to unwed mothers.

Report Card 2002: The Ethics of American Youth (2002) clearly showed a decline in ethical behavior in America. Seventy-three percent of honor students surveyed reported that they had cheated at least once on a test in the past year and 39% stated that a person had to lie or cheat sometimes in order to succeed. Ninety-seven percent of students surveyed said it was important to them that people trusted them. These results clearly represented a discrepancy in moral reasoning and ethical behavior.
According to *The State of Our Nation's Youth 2000-2001 Survey* (2002), American youth identified crime and violence; decline of family; decline of moral and social values, and abuse of drugs; as the top three problems facing the nation. Participants in the survey were high school seniors. A recent study, *Public Agenda: Reality Check 2002*, revealed that 69% of employers and 74% of professors gave poor ratings to young people for lax work habits and tardiness. Similarly poor ratings were given for poor personal motivation and lack of conscientious behavior. Employers and professors are in many ways the ultimate consumers of K-12 education. Businesses thus have a vested interest in youth possessing positive character traits and ethical decision-making skills.

After tragic events of school violence such as at Columbine High School, national advocates for character education repeated their plea for schools to teach core values and ethics and for preservice teachers to learn to be successful character educators. Some states have mandated character education, but most future teachers remain unprepared to infuse character education into the curriculum and culture of the school (Plachta, 1999). Character development has been a topic of school reform not only in America, but also in England. Etzioni (2000) reported that Prime Minister Blair has the economy on the right track but now must do the same for the society. Americanization must be curbed to prevent family and social life being sacrificed for demands of employment. Mutuality, helping one another, is preferred over volunteerism. Character education should be the primary emphasis in the first years of school, stated Etzioni (2000).

Throughout American history, a primary goal of education has been to develop character in youth, according to Lyons (1995). One of the most important responsibilities of parents, educators, and the community has been to educate the conscience and
character of a child ("Why Character Education?" 2000). Lyons (1995) posited that if America is to remain a world leader, educators must assume a lead role in creating a strong sense of values and moral conscience in the nation’s children. Values are an individual’s stabilizing factors in a world where the only certainty is change, stated Lyons. In order to prepare children adequately for the acquisition of knowledge and academic achievement, character education should be a priority (Schaeffer, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate two sets of relationships: the relationship between character education and learning environment, and the relationship between character education and School Performance Scores. The researcher surveyed all principals, teachers, and students (grades 4-6) in 17 elementary schools in northeast Louisiana that had incorporated character education into the school curriculum for the past three years. The survey instruments assessed the perception of the level of implementation of character education and the perception of the learning environment in the school. Data gathered were correlated to the School Performance Scores (SPS) for the past three years. School Performance Scores for elementary schools consist of the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) scores (60%), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores (30%), and attendance (10%).

Data from surveys completed by school personnel were gathered to allow analysis by school, position held, certification, years of service, number of years in present school, highest degree completed, gender, and ethnicity. Demographic information was gathered from students regarding school, grade level, age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. It was expected that schools with intensive character education programs would
have a more positive learning environment and higher School Performance Scores than schools with minimal character education programs.

Justification for the Study

Character education has been promoted at both the state and federal levels. According to Milson (2000), 48 states have completed or were in the process of completing state educational standards addressing character education. Eleven states including Louisiana have mandated character education through legislation. Eight other states encouraged character education through legislation ("Defining and Understanding," 2002). President George Bush's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) provided $25 million in funding for character education programs in 2002, three times the previous level of funding.

In 1998, the Louisiana Legislature passed House Bill 102, creating a state mandate for character education in Louisiana public schools. Hammatt (2001) reported that the State of Louisiana appropriated more than $300,000 for implementation of character education programs to the LSU Agricultural Center, Louisiana State University, for one year. Currently, Governor Foster has awarded over $79,000 to educators for outstanding character education programs. Governor Foster has dedicated part of his salary to fund this awards program since January 1998 (Golsby & Johnston, 2002).

The most pervasive character education program in Louisiana is CHARACTER COUNTS! according to Hammatt (2001). This character building curriculum was developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics and has developed a consensus regarding a set of ethical values that transcend race, class, gender, and politics. The Six Pillars of Character teach the core values of respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness,
caring, and citizenship. The CHARACTER COUNTS! program has been implemented by 64 of the 66 school systems in the state in a joint educational effort with the LSU Agricultural Center. During the 2001-2002 school year, 218,000 youth received instruction in character education in 48 parishes according to Arceneaux (2002). Several character education curricula are available from parish Cooperative Extension Service offices including *Exercising Character*, *Character Critters*, *Workplace Ethics*, *Pursuing Victory with Honor* (sports ethics program), and *Leap into Character*. *Character Critters* is a literature and activity approach to teaching character to preschool and kindergarten children. *Leap into Character* integrates Louisiana content standards and benchmarks into character building lessons. According to Arceneaux (2002), there are also publications available that foster an infusion of character throughout the school community by providing training workshops for support staff including cafeteria workers, custodians, and bus drivers.

During a White House Conference entitled *Character and Community* held on October 23, 2002, First Lady Bush commented that reading and writing are not all that needs to be taught to children; respect and responsibility are equally important (Langan, 2002). In a similar conference on June 19, 2002, President Bush stated, "...you understand education should prepare our children for jobs, and it also should prepare our children for life. I join you in wanting our children to not only be rich in skills, but rich in ideals" ("President Speaks," 2002, p. 2).

Given the current interest and funding associated with character education, the need exists to assess the effectiveness of the infusion of character development into school culture. Since there is no formal evaluation system for character education
programs in Louisiana, this study increased the body of knowledge of the relationship between character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores.

According to Battistich (1999), there is remarkably little research on the effectiveness of various approaches to moral education. There is little credible evidence that moral development programs are effective, and little progress has been made in this field in the past 20 years (Battistich, 1999). Leming (1997) stated that the dissemination of trustworthy research to practitioners and researchers is important for the advancement of character education. There is a tendency for character education research not to be published in refereed journals, according to Leming.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment?

Question 2: Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses are stated in null form:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores.
Theoretical Framework

According to Wilson and Corcoran (1987), teachers in exemplary schools prepare their students to be academically competent and persons of character. The success of these schools is directly attributable to the teachers’ knowledge and understanding of educating the whole child. Schaeffer (1998) stated “children with academic knowledge but no moral compass to guide them are not fully educated” (p. 3).

Wiley (2000) concluded that the critical connection between academics and character development can be traced back to Aristotle. Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* portrayed ideals based on eudaimonia, which allows for a state of personal well-being and balance among the mind, body, and spirit, creating a harmonious state of existence. True character development provides a person with this same balance (Wiley, 2000).

According to Boyer (1996), “knowledge unguided by an ethical compass is potentially more dangerous than ignorance itself” (p. 1). Dewey (1944) believed schools should be democratic communities that allowed students the opportunity to blend individual skills and interests through collaborative work and decision-making, creating a commitment to common goals. Students’ experiences of fulfillment or frustration of their needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence can affect their commitment to the school’s values and norms. It is vital to foster a caring community in schools, where ethical values such as fairness, responsibility, and kindness are as much a part of the curriculum as mathematics or science (Battistich, Solomon, & Watson, 1998).

Schaps and Battistich (2002), researchers with the Developmental Studies Center, posited when a school becomes a strong, caring community, basic student needs are met more effectively. This position supports Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow (1970)
stated that needs for autonomy, belongingness, competence, and safety are basic to human motivation, which drives and shapes thinking, feelings, and human motivation.

In his work relating to the characteristics of a quality teacher and a quality school, Glasser (1993) stated that quality schoolwork and the quality of life that results from success in school can only be achieved in a caring, supportive learning environment. Such an environment is the first of six conditions required for quality schoolwork, according to Glasser. Other conditions included students are only engaged in useful work; students are expected to do their best work; students evaluate their own work and improve it; and students realize that quality work feels good and is never destructive.

Moral development in children occurs in a number of stages, according to Hendrick (1988). Children and adults have different perspectives on right and wrong. Developmentally, an adult’s conscience may view an act as morally wrong, and a child’s conscience sees the act as morally right. These developmental differences can confuse parents, educators, and children.

The works of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (Kohlberg, & Hersh, 1977) posited that there was a developmental sequence in the formation of moral reasoning. Progression from one stage to the next is a result of cognitive maturation and social experience, according to Kohlberg and Hersh. Piaget’s work revealed that as children interact with the environment, they construct and reconstruct their knowledge of the world. Piaget’s theory was based on his studies of children at play and their application of rules.

Kohlberg’s theory (Kohlberg, & Hersh, 1977) of moral development consisted of three primary stages: preconventional stage, conventional stage, and the postconventional stage. During the preconventional stage, children simply obeyed
authority figures to avoid punishment. When advancing to the conventional stage, children were able to empathize with others as they made moral decisions. In the final stage of moral development, right was defined by personal values and conscience. Kohlberg’s work revealed that not everyone attains the final stage. His “Just Community” approach was a method of assisting schools in becoming democratic communities that foster the moral development of students (Battistich et al., 1998; Hendrick, 1988; Kohlberg, & Hersh, 1977).

To be effective, character education must be infused throughout the school curriculum and culture of the school, involving the entire school community in the process. This fosters growth of the “whole child” and ensures growth socially, emotionally, ethically, and academically. Implementation of character education utilizing an infusion model creates classrooms where effective teaching and learning can occur (“Defining and Understanding,” n.d.).

The theoretical model used in study was designed by Dr. Thomas Lickona of the Center for the Fourth and Fifth Rs. Lickona’s 25 years of work with moral development led to his 12-Point Comprehension Model (Figure 1). Lickona (1998) posited that there is a low correlation between moral thinking and moral behavior. His model attempted to bridge the gap between the two. Piaget’s (1932) and Kolhberg’s theories dealt with moral thinking, not moral behavior (Kohlberg, & Hersh, 1977).

Lickona (1998) posited that by altering the learning environment, students develop a sense of academic responsibility and habit of doing their work well, thus positively affecting student achievement. Nine character building strategies for the classroom are shown in the inner wheel, and the outer wheel showcases three
school-wide strategies for implementation of character education ("Educating for Character," n.d.). The combination of these strategies has the potential to positively affect student achievement according to Lickona. Each of the 12 strategies of Lickona’s model is described following Figure 1.

Figure 1: Lickona’s 12-Point Comprehensive Approach to Character Education

(Reprinted with Permission)
Lickona's 12-Point Comprehensive Model

Nine Classroom Strategies (inner portion of wheel):

- **The teacher as a caregiver, moral model, and moral mentor.** Teachers should treat students with love and respect, encouraging right behavior, and correcting wrongful actions.

- **A caring classroom community.** Students should respect and care about each other.

- **Moral discipline.** Educators should use rules and consequences to develop moral reasoning, self-control, and generalized respect for others.

- **Creating a democratic classroom environment.** Students are engaged in shared decision-making and taking responsibility for making the classroom the best it can be for all students.

- **Teaching values through the curriculum.** Teachers use an ethically rich content of academic subjects as vehicles for values teaching.

- **Cooperative learning.** Teachers use this method of teaching to foster students' ability to work with and appreciate others.

- **The "conscience of craft."** Teachers use this strategy to develop students' sense of academic responsibility and the habit of doing their work well.

- **Ethical reflection.** Teachers use this method to develop the cognitive side of character through reading, research, writing, and discussion.

- **Teaching conflict resolution.** Teachers instruct students in how to solve conflicts fairly, without intimidation or violence. This skill is vital to good character development ("Educating for Character," n.d.).
Three School-wide Strategies (outer portion of wheel):

- *Creating a positive moral culture in the school.* Educators and students develop a caring school community to promote the core values.

- *Fostering caring beyond the classroom.* Role models are utilized to inspire altruistic behavior and provide opportunities for school and community service.

- *Schools, parents, and the community as partners.* Parents and the whole community join the school in a cooperative effort to build character (“Educating for Character,” n.d.).

The theoretical model for this study was based on Lickona’s work. Lickona (1998) posited that moral thinking and moral behavior positively affects the learning environment. As a result, student achievement is enhanced. Lickona’s model extends Piaget’s and Kohlberg’s theories on moral thinking to include his theory concerning the relationship between moral thinking, moral behavior, learning environment, and student achievement (Kohlberg, & Hersh, 1977; Piaget, 1932).

**Limitations of the Study**

The researcher identified these potential limitations to this study: turn-over of principals, teachers, and students during the past three years; use of self-reported data; lack of randomly selected research sample; high rate of sample schools were high poverty schools located in a selected geographically similar region; lack of computer/Internet accessibility to a large number of students; limited participation due to upcoming standardized testing (LEAP 21 and ITBS); high rate (69%) of participating schools received a School Performance Score performance label of Academically Below the State
Average; and four of the five districts observed an official school holiday during the response time frame. These conditions could lead to confounding variables.

Definition of Terms

Attendance

Attendance rate as reported by School Performance Scores

Character

Knowing the good; desiring the good; and the good habits of the mind, the heart, and of actions ("About CEP," 2002)

Character education

A planned, comprehensive, and systematic approach for teaching self-respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, and citizenship (Wood & Roach, 1999)

High poverty school

An elementary school in which 50% or more of students qualify for the free/reduced school lunch program

Learning environment

Participatory, democratic, and caring classroom environments that foster a caring community of learners (Battistich, 1999)

School Performance Scores (SPS)

For elementary schools, is composed of three elements: LEAP 21 (60%), ITBS (30%), and attendance (10%)
Six Pillars of Character

Six character traits as identified by the Josephson Institute of Ethics: respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, citizenship, and caring ("Good Ideas," 1998)

Socioeconomic status of students

Eligibility for participation in the free/reduced lunch program at school

Student achievement

LEAP 21 and ITBS scores as reported by School Performance Scores
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The review of literature revealed information relevant to the history and current views of character education, its place in education in America, character education models, and limited research on this topic. Extensive research by the Developmental Studies Center on a related topic, the effects of a caring school community on social, ethical, and intellectual development are discussed. Topics discussed in this chapter include the three significant periods of history in the character education movement, approaches to character and moral development, current character education models, research studies, teacher preparation, teachers as role models, critics of character education, effects and prevalence of poverty, poverty and the learning environment, School Performance Scores, and federal and state funding for character education programs.

A Historical Perspective

Lickona (1998) stated that character education is as old as education itself. According to Lickona, the current national character education movement is returning Americans to that ancient wisdom. Throughout history, education has had two goals: to help children develop academically and to foster good character (Lickona, 1993). Williams (2000) declared that the welfare and very existence of society does not so much depend on the IQs of the inhabitants, as on character. Historically, character development

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has been shared by three institutions: family, church, and school. These three institutions worked together to pass on the values that shape the next generation (Lickona, 2000).

The first law concerning education in the United States, the Massachusetts Law of 1642, required schools to link education and character. Before the American Revolution, the primary goal of an education was to create literacy which enabled citizens to read the Bible and proclamation of laws (Daggett, n.d.; Lyons, 1995). The Bible was the instructional manual for both moral and religious instruction (Lickona, 1993). In the early 1800s, when disagreements began to occur concerning the teaching of the Bible, school texts such as the McGuffey Readers were an avenue to teach virtues of hard work, thriftiness, and patriotism. These readers allowed students to practice their mathematics and reading and learn lessons of character development including honesty, caring, and courage (Harms, & Fritz, 2001).

In 1918, the National Education Association circulated Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, one of which was Ethical Character (Wood & Roach, 1999). Ethics played a vital role in education during the early 1900s. Teachers were chosen for their high moral standards rather than their academic training. Character development was taught through discipline and by the exemplary moral character of the teacher.

There were three significant periods in the history of moral education in America: the character education movement of the 1920s and 1930s, the values and moral education emphasis of the 1970s and 1980s, and the current trends in character education since the 1990s (Leming, 1997). Kirschenbaum (1992) reported the history of values
education and moral education since the 1950s closely parallels the social history in America. Each period in the history of moral education is briefly discussed.

*Character Education in the 1920s and 1930s.* This period in American history brought technological changes, immigration, and urbanization. The “Roaring Twenties” disregarded previous social and moral values of the times. *The Children’s Morality Code* called for ten laws of right living: self-control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork. Schools attempted to infuse this code in all aspects of the school day (Fields, 1996; Leming, 1997; Lyons, 1995).

The Hartshorne and May Study (1928) revealed a relationship between classroom atmosphere and moral development. These researchers concluded that more emphasis should be placed on providing students with an avenue to practice moral decision-making than on devices used to teach honesty and other desired character traits.

Following World War II, the value of education soared. Suddenly, an education was viewed as the vehicle to a higher standard of living. Every state in the nation passed school reform regulations between 1949 and 1951. As schools shifted their focus to preparing students for higher education, character issues were placed on the back burner (Daggett, n.d.).

*Values and Moral Education in the 1970s and 1980s.* The period between 1966 and 1986 was dominated by two models of moral development that included values education and moral reasoning (Leming, 1997; Lyons, 1995). Values clarification was a popular approach to character education wherein educators were expected to facilitate the
seven-step process that guided students in clarifying their value system without influence from teachers.

Kohlberg's beliefs led the moral reasoning movement of this period in history (Leming, 1997). Meanwhile, the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score peaked at 980 in 1963, and dropped consistently for the following 18 years. During this same period, school vandalism, violent crimes by students, and teacher absenteeism rose sharply (Ryan, 1986). As a result of the "anti-authority" spirit, the influence and power of teachers was weakened according to Ryan. The period of the 1970s brought the popularity of television and an increase in the divorce rate. Ironically, moral education slipped into the background according to Lyons (1995).

**Character Education from 1990 to present.** The concern for character education was spurred by a national crisis of declining character and social values including rising youth violence, self-destructive behaviors, the disintegration of the family, and teen pregnancy (Kirschenbaum, 1992). In the late 1980s, the United States Secretary of Education urged schools to take a primary role in fostering character development in youth (Leming, 1997).

Kilpatrick (1992) stated the core problem facing schools is a moral one. School reform is unlikely to succeed unless character education is put at the top of the agenda. According to Williams (2000) character education is the fastest growing reform movement in P-12 education in the country. Education must include both character and academic achievement, focusing on a balance between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains at the different stages of child development (Williams, 2000). Today's leaders demand that educators improve education in order to be more
competitive in the world market, to have a better prepared workforce, and to maintain the
standard of living. Historically, character development has been the primary goal of
education, and a secondary goal was academic performance according to Williams.
Currently, ethical and social development in youth is as important as academic
achievement (Battistich, 1998).

The 1990s brought a new beginning to the character education movement.
Being passionate about the need for character development in youth, Michael Josephson
founded the Josephson Institute of Ethics. In 1992, Josephson gathered a diverse group of
leading educators, ethicists, and youth development specialists to identify common, core
ethical values that would transcend all religious and political views, race, ethnicity or
socioeconomic status. This group created a document known as the Aspen Declaration
(Appendix A) that identified six core, universal values or pillars of character (Good
Ideas, 1998). The Six Pillars of Character include respect, responsibility, fairness,
trustworthiness, caring, and citizenship. The result of this meeting was the establishment
of the nonprofit CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute
that involves more than 400 youth serving organizations representing more than 55
million youth (Good Ideas, 1998).

The following year, a meeting funded by the Johnson Foundation and sponsored
by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) with the
Princeton Project 55 yielded the formation of the Character Education Partnership
(Lickona, 1993). Lickona stated that the Character Education Partnership (CEP) was
formed in March 1993 with the mission of putting character education at the top of the
educational agenda in America. Members of this coalition included representatives from
business and labor, government, families and youth, faith communities, and the media. CEP concluded that character education was an essential element of school reform. Goals of the Character Education Partnership included reducing negative student behavior, improving academic performance, and preparing young people for responsible citizenry, reported Lickona.

*Approaches to Character Development*

According to Damon (2002), four building blocks of character are present at birth: empathy, fairness, self-control, and self-awareness. In order for these characteristics to be expanded, youth require nurturing from adults in all aspects of their lives, including family, school, and community. High standards of moral behavior should be established for children and reinforced by all adult role models (Damon, 2002).

Ryan and Bohlin (1999) reported the three common approaches to character education are the values approach, the views approach, and the virtues approach. Each defines character differently. The most popular approach, the values approach, advocates individuality and acceptance of others. Ryan and Bohlin (p. 2) contended it is the weakest approach to successful character development. The views approach facilitates classroom discussion on controversial issues, and the virtues approach evokes emotional responses from youth. Virtues are cultivated from within the individual and improve character and intelligence. Virtues enable people to become better students, parents, spouses, teachers, friends, and citizens, stated Ryan and Bohlin (p. 4).
Character Education Models

Josephson Institute of Ethics. Formed in 1992 as a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization, the Josephson Institute uses curricula such as CHARACTER COUNTS!, Choices Count!, and Kids for Character to teach six core ethical values, known as The Six Pillars of Character. These six core ethical values are used to teach, enforce, advocate, and model good character. The CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition is a national partnership of schools, communities, education, and service organizations committed to fostering ethical development in youth. The Josephson Institute, located in Marina del Rey, California, was founded by Josephson and is involved with over 400 youth serving organizations (Good Ideas, 1998).

Character Education Partnership (CEP). Formed in 1993 with funding provided by the United States Department of Education, the CEP is located in Washington, D.C. Esther Schaeffer, the current director, national experts in the field of character development and corporate leaders comprise the Board of Directors ("About CEP," n.d.). The Character Education Partnership presents Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education (Appendix B) as the guidelines needed for effective, comprehensive character education. The CEP is a nonpartisan coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to developing moral character in youth and serves as a national resource center with over 100 organizations as members including schools, universities, and civic organizations. Special projects of the group include a national Schools of Character Awards program, newsletters, and a research division. CEP created a Character Assessment Task Force resulting in the production of a primer on evaluating character education. CEP has developed character education quality standards that should be addressed when
evaluating character education programs ("About CEP," n.d.). Effective character education:

- promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character
- is comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior
- requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life
- requires the school to be a caring community
- provides students opportunities for moral action
- includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed
- should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation for developing good character
- requires that the school staff is a learning and moral community in where all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students
- demands that staff and students demonstrate moral leadership
- requires that the school recruits parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort
- requires that evaluation of character education assesses the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students' manifest good character

*The Child Development Project.* The Child Development Project (CDP) is a comprehensive, whole-school intervention program designed to foster social, ethical, and
intellectual development in youth by aiding schools to become a caring community of learners. The five components of the CDP program include literature-based reading and language arts program, collaborative classroom learning, developmental discipline, parental involvement, and school-wide activities that promote non-competitiveness and inclusion (Battistich, et al., 1998). The CDP was developed in 1981 by the Developmental Studies Center located in Oakland, California. The curriculum has been implemented in approximately 150 schools in six states. The Developmental Studies Center is a nonprofit educational organization established in 1980 and has over 40 contributors including philanthropic organizations, government agencies, corporations, and individuals. The mission of the Developmental Studies Center is to integrate children’s academic, ethical, and social development in learner-centered programs and conduct research (“About DSC,” 2003).

Center for the Fourth and Fifth Rs (Respect and Responsibility). This center is located at the State University of New York at Cortland and serves as a regional, state, and national resource in character education. Dr. Thomas Lickona, Center Director, developed the 12-Point Comprehensive Approach to Character Development that served as the theoretical model for this study. The Center is a resource for character educators, publishes newsletters, and hosts annual conferences. All materials on the Center’s website (www.cortland.edu/c4n5rs/CONTENTS.htm) may be downloaded and used for educational purposes (“Character Education,” n.d.).

Heartwood Institute. The Institute was conceptualized in 1986 by a criminal defense attorney and mother of seven who saw a need for ethics education. The Heartwood Institute, a nonprofit organization located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, offers
An Ethics Curriculum for Children. The mission of the Heartwood Institute is to promote the understanding and practice of ethical values that are the foundation of community among all people, particularly children and families. Heartwood offers pre-K and elementary ethics curricula that promote seven universal attributes: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty, and love ("Heartwood Teams," 2000).

Character First! Character First! Education is one of the three branches of the Character Training Institute, a nonprofit organization in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The Institute began developing character training materials for businesses to utilize in staff development in 1993. In 1997, a curriculum designed for education was piloted and has spread all over the world due to the rise in school violence ("Our History," 2001). The Character First! Curriculum utilizes 45 character qualities.

Research Studies

Comprehensive studies on the effectiveness of character education are difficult to locate. Even though the U.S. Department of Education has provided over $33 million since 1995 for states to incorporate character education programs, no evaluative studies exist. Character education is a field where success is not easily measured ("The Three Rs," 2000). Although character education programs are widely used and promoted by many prominent individuals and groups, there is little to no research available on the effectiveness of this educational effort. Extensive research has been conducted by the Developmental Studies Center on the relationship between the creation of caring school communities and social, ethical, and intellectual development. Leming (1997) stated that there is a tendency for character education research not to be published in refereed journals. The only exception to that generalization, according to Leming, has been the
research on the Child Development Project. Most dissertation research found on character education was qualitative studies, several of these are reviewed later in this chapter.

As early as the 1920s, researchers began to investigate ethical behavior and classroom climate. Yale University psychologists, Hartshorne and May (1928), found that when given the opportunity to lie, cheat, or steal, some groups of children were significantly more honest than others. Researchers attributed the differences in this sample of 10,000 to the moral climate fostered by the classroom teacher. This study was one of the first formal studies to address classroom climate or community.

The Josephson Institute of Ethics ("The Evidence," 2002) stated there are 22 known studies on the impact of CHARACTER COUNTS! The most extensive research was a five-year study conducted in South Dakota in 1997-98. Over 8,400 students were sampled in addition to teachers. Students reported a 30% decrease in cheating on exams, a 28% decrease in detentions or suspensions, and a 45% decline in teasing because of race or ethnicity. The study revealed that the more exposures per month to character education the students experienced, the better the students behaved. In 14 additional studies across the nation, discipline referrals dropped from 30-89% as a result of a school's participation in the CHARACTER COUNTS! program. Four other states surveyed teachers, students, and parents concerning perceptions of behavioral changes in students exposed to the program. All results were positive ("The Evidence," 2002).

In the 1998-99 school year, the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service surveyed teachers in 48 parishes regarding their perceptions of behavioral changes in students as a result of participating in the CHARACTER COUNTS! program. Over 735
teachers responded, and 75-80% observed "some" to "very much" improvement in classroom behavior after implementing this character education program. In 1999-2000, 191 Louisiana school principals were surveyed and 75% observed "some" to "very much" improvement in student behavior as a result of this program ("The Evidence," 2002).

Wiebers (2001) evaluated CHARACTER COUNTS! activities in relationship to the behavior of elementary school children. This study included over 300 teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators in 27 schools in three public school systems in Tennessee. The study revealed that 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that character education is an important part of their work. Eighty percent of participants stated that CHARACTER COUNTS! is an effective program. When asked if CHARACTER COUNTS! had a positive affect on student behavior, 67% agreed or strongly agreed. The study revealed a substantial positive correlation (p = .64) between school involvement index scores and student behavior index scores which indicated that 40% of the variance in behavior scores was related to variations in the school involvement scores. Wiebers found substantial and very high positive correlations (p = .53 - .84) between on the one hand the effects of this character education program, and on the other hand, classroom atmosphere, school atmosphere, student behavior, and discipline problems. Teacher and administrator training in CC! was most prevalent in schools with the best behaved students. Wiebers recommended additional research on the relationship between school involvement index scores and attendance rates of students and faculty, academic performance, school atmosphere, and the number of discipline incidences.
The Child Development Project assists schools in building community by modifying curriculum, pedagogy, organization, and climate in order to infuse character education into the daily school experience. Leading researchers and theoreticians believe a person’s basic needs of motivation (autonomy, belonging, competence, and safety) must be met before a child can bond in a school setting and become committed to common goals. Building a sense of community provides a powerful framework for educational practice to effectively meet the needs of students and educators (Schaps, & Battistich, 2002).

The framework of the Child Development Project is quite different from the traditional school. According to Battistich, Soloman, and Watson (1998), in a typical American school, all authority is vested in the teachers and administrators. Extrinsic incentives are utilized to control behavior, and relations within the school are inherently competitive. The CDP framework minimizes the use of extrinsic rewards, fosters cooperation instead of competition, and involves students in school governance. The creation of a school community may be particularly beneficial to students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and socially disenfranchised (Battistich et al., 1998).

The Child Development Project was designed to meet basic psychological needs, foster values such as caring, fairness, lifelong learning, and to teach academic and social skills necessary to become productive members in a democratic society. CDP activities are organized into five components: cooperative learning that fosters working together in ways that are fair, kind, and respectful; developmental discipline that emphasizes self-control, respect, and avoidance of extrinsic incentives; social understanding that promotes acceptance of diversity; interpersonal helping that includes classroom and
community involvement; and prosocial values such as fairness, kindness, responsibility, and respect. Special efforts were made to decrease the degree of competitiveness that is commonplace in the school environment among students, classrooms, and teachers (Solomon, Battistich, & Watson, 1993).

In the early 1980s, the Developmental Studies Center began working intensively with a small number of educators to implement a comprehensive approach to enhance prosocial development in youth. The concept of a "caring community" emerged and has continued to serve as the fundamental principle guiding the work of these researchers. The work of the Developmental Studies Center defines the goal of creating a "caring community of learners" as producing outcomes such as students who are socially responsible and just, and who value academic achievement. These goals are particularly pertinent to those who have been least likely to succeed in school (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1994).

Research on the Child Development Project was implemented as a quasi-experimental design in 12 elementary schools in six school districts throughout the United States over a four-year period (Battistich, 1998). The CDP has been thoroughly evaluated over the past 20 years via three separate quasi-experimental designs (Battistich, 2001). All three studies investigated the relationship between moral development, student achievement, and "caring communities of learners." Implementation of the CDP resulted in a significant increase in students' sense of school as a community and the students' school related attitudes, motivation, and behavior; significant increases in social and ethical outcomes; and significant decreases in students' involvement in alcohol consumption and marijuana use. Research shows that sense of community is not as
positive for low-income students and persons of color (Schaps, & Battistich, 2002). Effects of the CDP on student achievement have been less consistent. However, significant long-term academic benefits have been found in longitudinal studies ("CDP Results," 2002).

The first of the three studies occurred prior to the inception of the Child Development Project. According to Battistich et al. (1994), researchers assisted three elementary schools over a seven-year period in creating a sense of a caring community in the classroom. Initial research on community focused on the creation of a sense of community in the classroom and how that sense of community affected the students' attitudes, values, motivation, and behavior. The effectiveness of the program was evaluated by following a longitudinal cohort of students in the three program schools and three similar schools from kindergarten through sixth grade states Battistich et al. (1994).

This longitudinal study by Battistich et al. (1994) refined the goals of the program, resulting in the creation of the Child Development Project. As a result of the 1994 work of Battistich et al., researchers determined the major goal of the program to be the creation of a caring community in the classroom. Students in such classrooms should feel strong ties to the teacher and fellow students. Classrooms that are caring communities would be expected to have positive effects on the students' social, ethical, and intellectual development.

Participants in this longitudinal study by Battistich et al. (1994) were students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades who had been a part of the Child Development Project since kindergarten. The item pool for this study included the following: students in my class work together to solve problems; students in my class really care about one another;
and in my class, the teacher and students decide together what the rules will be.

Responses to the Battistich et al. (1994) study were recorded utilizing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree a lot) to 5 (agree a lot). Responses to behavioral items were recorded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Based on Cronbach's alpha, the internal consistency of this measure averaged .74 across the three years. As a measure of validity, student scores were aggregated to the classroom level. Aggregated scores were found to be strongly correlated with observational measures of student behavior. Validity ranged from \( r = .51, p < .01 \), to \( r = .61, p < .01 \). Program students scored significantly higher (\( p < .05 \)) than comparison students on the measure of sense of community in grades four through six.

Findings from the 1994 work of Battistich et al. revealed a positive relationship between numerous personal and social qualities (empathy, self-esteem, and commitment to democratic values) and school related variables including liking for school and intrinsic motivation for learning. The study revealed that in some cases, students and teachers may have conflicting views on whether the school is a community. According to Battistich et al., the more diverse the population, the more difficult it may be to establish a sense of community in a school. Poverty has a detrimental effect on students and teachers. It is vital to control for poverty level when researching the sense of community in a school. The student and teacher community were negatively associated with schools wherein the teacher was the sole authority in the classroom. Limitations of this study included that "community" was conceptualized as a characteristic of an individual classroom, and teachers' perceptions of community were not investigated (Battistich et
Research findings from this seven-year study yielded data that led to the creation of the Child Development Project and revised methodology.

The second of the three studies by the Developmental Studies Center examined the original Child Development Project. Battistich et al. (1998) explained the original Child Development Program was implemented in 12 schools throughout the United States, and an additional 12 schools served as the comparison group. Training of the implementation team began in the 1991-92 academic year and was ongoing for the entire staff for the following three years. Schools in the CDP represented a cross-section of geographical areas in America, as well as a diverse combination of race, socioeconomic status, student population, and average student achievement as reported by norm-referenced achievement tests.

This first evaluative study of the Child Development Project consisted of both a teacher and student component (Battistich et al., 1998). Research was conducted in 24 elementary schools in six districts across the nation. Selected schools were diverse in locale, population, socioeconomic status, racial composition, and average achievement. Student populations ranged from 2%-95% students receiving free or reduced lunch, 26%-100% minority attendance, and 0-32% limited or non-English speaking students. Average achievement on standardized tests ranged from the 24th to the 67th percentile (Battistich et al., 1994). Data were collected in the baseline year and each of the three program years, including classroom observations, and teacher and student questionnaires.

Approximately 550 classroom teachers, including all teachers at both the program and comparison schools, were observed four times during each school year for 90 minute intervals (Roberts, Horn, & Battistich, 1995). Observation measures included promotion...
of student autonomy and influence; use of cooperative learning activities; promotion of social understanding and prosocial values; personal teacher-student relations; minimization of external control; emphasis on intrinsic motivation; and student thinking and active discussion. Teachers also completed an annual survey that provided additional measures of classroom practices, measures of teacher attitudes and beliefs, and school climate. The annual questionnaire addressed optimism regarding students’ learning potential, trust in students, belief in "constructivist" learning, and orientation toward student autonomy. The teacher Sense of Community section addressed collaborative and supportive relationships among staff, teacher participation and influence, and shared goals and values. The response scale was a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The final measure of the teacher Sense of Community survey contained 13 items and a high internal consistency (a = .89) reported by Roberts et al. (1995).

Roberts et al. (1995) stated annual student questionnaires were administered to almost 5,000 students, grades 3-6. The student questionnaires measured the students’ sense of the school as a community, school-related attitudes, motives for learning and learning behaviors, personal and social attitudes, motives for prosocial behavior, and values and value related behavior. The item pool and Likert scale for assessing perceptions of the school as a community were the same or similar to those in the previous study. The final measure of the student Sense of Community survey contained 38 items and showed high internal consistency (a = .91). Student classroom behavior was derived from the classroom observations. Items rated were positive behavior among students and student engagement. All measures had adequate to excellent internal
consistency reliability. A measure of the overall program success was derived from combining the seven scales taken from the classroom observations with the four scales from the teacher questionnaire (Roberts et al., 1995).

Subgroup differences found in the Sense of School Community measures included females generally scored higher than males in the sense of community among students; Asian Americans and Latino/a students scored higher than European American or African American students on sense of community among students; and sense of community declined significantly with increasing grade levels. Contrary to what might be expected, students' sense of community is not significantly related to school size; however, teachers' sense of community is positively related to school size in this study. Roberts et al. (1995) found that sense of community is negatively correlated with school poverty level. Students' sense of community was consistently associated with a positive orientation toward school and learning, and with prosocial attitudes, motives, and behaviors. Child Development Project schools generally had a significantly positive effect on teachers' classroom practices and students' sense of school as a community. These were linked to moderate to large gains in social and ethical outcome variables among students (Battistich et al., 1998).

The third of the three studies conducted by the Developmental Studies Center, was a follow-up study of a sub-sample of former Child Development Project students (Battistich, 2001). Positive results were found for the effects of moral development and student achievement with program students. Students from program schools and their matched comparison schools participating in this study were considered to be at-risk youth. A total of 525 students (334 program students and 191 comparison students)
surveyed attended middle school at the time of the research project. Approximately half of the students were assessed at one or more grade levels during this four-year follow-up study. The sample is predominately European Americans (53%) and African American (46%) students. Battistich reported students participating in the CDP had significantly higher grade point averages and achievement test scores, were engaged in less misconduct at school, and reported that more of their friends were positively engaged in school. Teachers rated program students as being more reliable, hardworking, socially skilled, assertive, considerate, respectful, and helpful to others than non-program students. Battistich (2001) concluded that CDP students were more “connected” to school, exhibited greater trust and respect for teachers, and had higher educational goals than non-program students. Battistich stated that school connectedness shields youth from involvement in many antisocial and self-destructive behaviors. Schaps and Battistich (2002) reported that a sense of community in the school setting is crucial to improving education in this country and to fostering the creation of a healthy, humane, and productive society.

In his study of the Heartwood curriculum, Antis (1997) assessed the effect of *An Ethics Curriculum for Children* at the end of the one-year implementation period and later conducted a five-year follow-up study. Data sets were collected in 1996 and 2000. The one-year study was conducted during the 1995-96 school year in four schools with 603 students, grades one through six utilizing an experimental group design. Pre- and post-test data were collected. Results showed ethical understanding increased and racial prejudice decreased for program students. Disciplinary referrals declined significantly in schools implementing the ethics curriculum. An additional study in May 2000 was
conducted after five years of exposure to this curriculum. In both studies, researchers collected data in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Youth reported a higher level of trust and respect than those from the comparison school (Antis, 1997). Antis recommended further research into the transfer of cognitive knowledge of character traits to action and behavior. He also recommended additional research on the effects of character education programs on academic achievement and attendance related outcomes.

In the five-year follow-up study, both quantitative and qualitative research was utilized. Leming (2001) reported instruments developed by the Child Development Project were substituted in the five-year study to measure variables consisting of trust and respect for teachers, sense of school as community, and concern for others. The *Trust and Respect for Teachers Scale* was a 10-item, three-point Likert scale that assessed students’ feelings concerning the trustworthiness, supportiveness, fairness, and consistency of the teachers. This scale had an internal consistency reliability of .84. The *Sense of School as Community Scale* was a 14-item, five-point Likert scale that assessed the degree to which students felt their school was supportive and safe. The *Concern for Others Scale* was a 10-item, five-point Likert measure that assessed the students’ concern for and the desire to help other people. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of this scale was .80.

Results of the five-year study yielded the following results: Heartwood produced students who exemplified respectfulness, caring attitudes, and perceptions of their teachers as possessing the same characteristics. Students with the greatest exposure to the Heartwood curriculum were the least referred for discipline concerns in the school district. The teachers’ approach to students and their craft was positively affected by five
years of exposure to this ethics program, stated Leming (2001). Because this study intended to address change over time, it was important to note the differences in the two data sets, 1996 and 2000. Limitations of this study included the attrition rate of students was 45% for the Heartwood school and 30% for the comparison school, and some of the instruments utilized in the original one-year study were dropped because of detected weaknesses and replaced with instruments from the Developmental Studies Center.

A study conducted by the Center for Child and Family Studies at the University of South Carolina indicated that 90% of school administrators in South Carolina stated that character education had improved student attitudes and behavior. Sixty percent of administrators reported greater academic achievement in schools with character education programs, according to Exstrom (2000).

Gewertz (2002) reported the "missing link" for school reform is trust. In order for school reform to be successfully implemented, trusting relationships among principals, teachers, students, and parents must be in place. Relational trust is often studied as it concerns success in business, but the theory had not been applied to education until now. Gewertz (2002) stated relationships form social capital, a tremendous resource for problem solving. Putnam's (1995) work on civic engagement is applicable to the field of education as it relates to the formation of school communities and social ties that affect the core functioning of the school. Gewertz (2002) revealed that schools performing in the top quartile on standardized tests were more often schools with higher levels of trusting relationships than those schools in the bottom quartile. Gewertz matched schools that had the greatest and least annual gains on standardized tests over a five-year period and reported schools with trust were three times more likely to report gains on
standardized tests. Trust was defined by four variables: respect, competence, integrity, and personal regard for others. The study noted that improvements in academic achievement were less likely in schools with high levels of poverty, racial isolation, and student mobility; however, a strong correlation was present even after controlling for these variables. According to Gewertz (2002), trust is easier to develop in schools of 350 or fewer students. Management systems in schools play a pivotal role in organizational trust by empowering the principal to select and maintain school staff that best suits the vision for the school (Gewertz, 2002).

A doctoral research study implemented character education for a six-week period in three 4th grade classrooms. Teachers and students reported statistically significant changes in perceptions of school and classroom climate. This study was conducted in a mostly African American inner city in the South (Gresham, 2000).

Van’s (1999) doctoral research focused on elementary school principals and their perceptions and collaborative support for character education. This California study revealed that principals with larger student populations expressed stronger beliefs in character education for addressing issues of discipline, respect, and civility in youth.

Thompson (2002) reported findings from his qualitative dissertation research that character education may have a positive effect on student behavior. Findings from this multiple-case study led to the recommendation of implementation of character education programs in elementary schools. Thompson stated that character education should be an integral part of the curriculum, not taught as a separate subject. Character education should be infused into reading, mathematics, art, music, and physical education. Classroom rules should be based on the principles of good character with teachers
serving as role models. This researcher recommended the teaching of character via
service learning activities that contribute to the school, community, and society.

*Teacher Preparation*

There is a lack of preparation regarding how to infuse character education into the
curriculum for today’s preservice teachers (Berkowitz, 1998; Jones, Ryan, & Bohlin,
1998; Weber, 1998; Williams, 2000). Ryan and Bohlin (2000) found that over 90% of the
deans and directors of teacher education across the nation agreed that core values should
be taught in schools, but 81% said addressing character education was hindered by an
already overcrowded curriculum. Only 24% stated character education was a high
priority within their teacher preparation program (Ryan, & Bohlin, 2000). This survey
was conducted for the Character Education Partnership by the Center for the
Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University and was co-sponsored by the
American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education and the Association of Teacher
Educators (“Nation’s Schools,” 1999). Little will be accomplished in this field if the two
million new teachers needed in the next decade are unprepared to be character educators,
according to Ryan and Bohlin (2000).

Greer (1998) found that teachers with the most experience are often the most
skeptical of the character education programs. They view character development as the
latest fad in education and perhaps an additional burden on the classroom teacher. Greer
(1998) stated that it is imperative that the nation’s future teachers be prepared to
effectively address ethics and character. According to Greer, teachers must be trained in
the study of ethics. Teachers should learn how to integrate ethics into every aspect of the
school day, how to involve the community, and how to provide a framework for the
students on the subject. Berkowitz (1998) conceptualized character education as school reform. Rather than being an added element, it is merely a different method of managing classroom behavior. Ideally, a teacher's role is to inspire children to lead moral lives (Jones et al., 1998). Children must understand the development of character involves cultivating intellect and good habits (Greer, 1998). Berkowitz (1998) posited that it is difficult to train teachers in character education without available research to know which programs are effective.

According to Milson and Mehlig (2002), teachers are a crucial factor in the development of character in youth. The results of the Milson and Mehlin study indicated that teachers believe they can handle the responsibility of teaching character. Elementary teachers feel confident in their ability to serve as role models, to discuss issues of right and wrong, and to use strategies that lead to positive changes in students' character development. Despite the findings, teachers reported receiving little training for the task of teaching character education. Teaching character is far more complex than teaching reading or mathematics, according to Milson and Mehlig, because it requires personal growth and skills development. The results of this study contradict the theory that teachers are uncomfortable teaching character. Respondents included 254 elementary school teachers in a large mid-western suburban school district (Milson, & Mehlig, 2002).

Ryan (1996) advocated there are five reasons for teachers to teach moral education: great philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Dewey) saw education as a combination of intellectual ability and moral reasoning; the Founding Fathers knew the future of this nation rested on ethical decision-making and democracy;
character education has been mandated in numerous states; several opinion polls showed that Americans believe character education should be a part of the public school curriculum; and the social nature of the classroom deeply affects the moral beliefs of children. The continuing emphasis on "back-to-the-basics" education is usually interpreted to mean more emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic, stated Ryan (1996). According to Palardy (1992), it should be a return to moral education while educating for intellectual development.

In a recent study conducted by Wood and Roach (1999), 81% of school administrators felt character education should be included in the curriculum, although 72% indicated there was no school policy regarding character education. Seventy-eight percent of teachers were in favor of teaching character education, but respondents indicated that 50% of the faculty had received no training in character education. This statewide study was conducted in South Dakota sampling 200 public school administrators.

*Teachers as Role Models*

Early history in education revealed teachers were hired for their upstanding moral characters more than for their academic backgrounds. Research shows that children emulate the character traits modeled for them. Wagner (1996) stated people often only focus character education programs on youth. In America today, it is common to find both educators and community members who are not positive role models for students. The top priority in moral development is not the curriculum or the character education program, but the quality of a school's role models.
Proposals for a return to more direct approaches to character education place enormous responsibility on educators, stated Ryan and Bohlin (1999). Teachers must serve as positive role models, seize opportunities to reflect on moral climate by infusing character into the curriculum, create a moral classroom climate, and provide youth with service learning opportunities outside of the classroom to practice good character.

Focus groups conducted by Wagner (1996) revealed that lack of respect, by adults and youth, was students’ most common complaint about school. A recent Public Agenda survey revealed that 71% of all Americans believe it is more important to teach values than academics, according to Wagner. This landmark study named respect as the top core value adults want taught in schools. It is the role of the teacher to not only model moral behavior and engage students in situations concerning everyday moral issues, but also to help young children behave in ways consistent with those values (Battistich et al., 1998).

Some people believe that a person’s character is permanently formed during childhood. To the contrary, character development is a lifelong process (Harms, & Fritz, 2001). A study conducted by these researchers examined the possibility of internalization of character traits by those who teach character education. Survey results indicated that 89% of educators were more sensitive to ethical issues in the workplace, and 77% were more aware of ethical dilemmas in their personal lives as a result of teaching character education. Internalization of ethical decision-making practices can only prove to positively affect school environment and provide positive role models for youth (Harms, & Fritz, 2001).
Critics

Character education is not immune to criticism. One of the most well-known critics of character education is Alfie Kohn. Kohn advocates that most brands of character education are trying to "fix the kids." He expresses concern that the techniques of character education may succeed temporarily in producing a particular behavior, but most of character education is geared toward creating obedient sheep (Kohn, 1997). Kohn stated that rewards motivate students to get rewarded and do not develop a commitment to being generous or respectful. He feels that extrinsic motivation tends to erode intrinsic motivation. According to Kohn (1997), what goes by the name of character education is for the most part a collection of exhortations and extrinsic inducements designed to motivate students to work harder and do what they are told to do. Kohn posited that controlling behavior instead of instilling values is not character development. According to Kohn (1997) to be most effective in the pursuit of ethical excellence, it is crucial to look beyond the individual student or individual classroom and focus on the culture of the entire school.

Lasley (1997) stated that it is doubtful that school programs will prove successful if they attempt to teach lessons that adults have not yet learned. Lasley believes values are learned through observation, thus values are caught, not taught. After values are "caught," they must be practiced to become instilled in a person's character. The real challenge for educators, according to Lasley (1997), is changing the behavior of those who influence children.

Otten (2000) stated the inclusion of character education is sometimes a controversial issue for schools. Critics inquire about "whose values" will be taught and
who will teach them. Some believe values are to be taught at home and/or church instead of in the school setting. An additional criticism of character education is that it does not contribute to the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic; thus, it does nothing to improve student achievement or standardized test scores. In times of increased accountability, some question time spent on a curriculum that they feel does not have a direct impact on standardized test scores (Otten, 2000).

Effects and Prevalence of Poverty

Poverty is pervasive and directly threatens the future of all residents of this state, not just students. Louisiana has the highest poverty rate in the South ("Fighting Poverty," 1999). Between 1996-1998, 19% of Louisiana's residents were poor. This is well above the national average of 13%. Thirty-two percent of Louisiana's children live in poverty, more than any other state in the nation. Parishes in the Mississippi River Delta are among the poorest in the nation. Poverty affects many aspects of an individual's quality of life, including education, health, crime, housing, and hunger. Malnutrition among the poor is increasing, and very young children are most affected. Cognitive development can be substantially impeded by malnutrition, resulting in behavior and learning problems in school ("Fighting Poverty," 1999).

Low-income students as identified by their participation in the free/reduced lunch program, scored well below the national average on the National Assessment of Education Progress exam (NAEP) in 1998. Similar reports are reflected in the 1999 School Performance Scores given to elementary and middle schools across the state. Of the 57 schools that placed in the "academically unacceptable" category, nearly all had high percentages of students in poverty ("Fighting Poverty," 1999).
Poverty diminishes the educational opportunities of low-income students and makes it difficult for them to leave poverty behind. Today’s rapidly changing economy has little room for the low-skill, labor intensive jobs that have been a staple in this state in the past. The issue of poverty is prevalent in this state and can only be effectively addressed after the formation of caring communities and dissatisfaction with the status quo. Louisiana is the only southern state where out-migration is occurring more rapidly than population growth. Poverty has a detrimental effect on education, which is directly tied to the economic status of this state (“Fighting Poverty,” 1999).

**Poverty and the Learning Environment**

High performing, high poverty schools (HP2) in California focused on quality of instruction, curriculum, and learning environment to provide low-income students the tools they needed to succeed in school (Bell, 2001). Twelve HP2 schools were identified, and 14 common themes emerged. Best management practices included fostering of a work ethic; promotion of discipline and a safe, orderly environment; and the creation of a sense of family in the school. Moral leadership was key to the commitment to building a learning community, according to Bell.

A positive learning environment is crucial to reaching out to the impoverished student (Haberman, 1992). Effective teaching gets students involved in applying ideals such as fairness, equity, or justice. Character is built by students who have had practice comparing ideals with reality in their lives and the lives of others. High school graduates must possess basic skills for employability, critical thinking, and the ability to make moral choices, stated Haberman. According to Cassel (2001), success in the adult world is dependent upon academic achievement and personal development. Cassel addressed...
the global functioning of students and identified several hallmarks for success. These hallmarks serve as a basis for learning and later success in life. Students must be able to function in operational daily actions with society and group members in relation to diverse values and beliefs. They should also develop a sense of caring and concern for the personal welfare of others in this global society. Schools must become caring communities and provide students with educational experiences that foster the development of relationships, according to Cassel. For a school to become a caring community, the concept of caring must serve as a foundation to the development of school norms, policies, and goals. To accomplish this goal, parents, teachers, and students must view one another as partners in education (Ferreira, & Bosworth, 2000).

School Performance Scores

Accountability and assessment are among the most prominent issues in school reform nationwide. During the 2000-2001 school year, all 50 states tested students on knowledge gained, and 45 states published school report cards on individual schools ("Accountability," 2002). Quality schools are fundamental to the economic status of communities and the foundation of a democratic society. School reform initiatives are designed to create more productive schools.

In 2000, a graduate exit examination was required in 18 states. Additionally three states, including Louisiana, have implemented high stakes testing linked to grade promotion. Critics argue that high stakes testing is discriminatory to poor and non-white students and encourages poor ethical decision-making by teachers and administrators. Some educators feel that before students can be held accountable for their academic performance, curriculum, instruction, teacher training, and other resources must be in
place to ensure success ("Accountability," 2002). Currently, most state policymakers are committed to setting higher standards, using standardized testing, and providing incentives for achievement. Polls reflect that the public and educators are in favor of this plan ("Accountability," 2002).

Various school accountability indicators are presented on school report cards across the 50 states. Issues including school safety, qualifications of teachers, class size, graduation rates, and student dropout rates are among the top indicators requested by parents, educators, and the public in compilation of data for school report cards. Commonly used indicators have included these items and others such as attendance rates and student scores on state and national tests (Gullatt, & Ritter, 2000).

Several indicators can be utilized to determine school quality according to Heck (2000). Such indicators include leadership of principals, high expectations for student achievement, emphasis on academics, monitoring of student progress, positive climate of the school, and strong relationships between the school and parents. The students' backgrounds are also a determining factor in the quality of the school. Student qualities that have been shown to affect achievement include prior achievement, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language background, and special education status. Heck stated the home environment and socioeconomic status have an equal or greater impact on student achievement than school quality.

The School Performance Score (SPS) or school report card of an elementary school in Louisiana is determined using a weighted composite index derived from three indicators: criterion-referenced tests (CRT), norm-referenced tests (NRT), and student attendance ("The Louisiana School," 2002). Dropout rates are also a component in the
School Performance Score for grades 7-12. For elementary schools, the performance indicators consist of LEAP 21 (60%), ITBS (30%), and attendance (10%). School Performance Scores may range from 0-100 and beyond. A score of 100 indicates a school has reached the 10-Year Goal, and a score of 150 recognizes the achievement of the 20-Year Goal. The lowest score that schools can receive for each individual indicator index or for the SPS is “0.” Baseline scores were established in 1998-1999 according to the Louisiana Department of Education.

School Performance Scores assign each school a performance label of School of Academic Excellence, School of Academic Distinction, School of Academic Achievement, Academically Above the State Average, Academically Below the State Average, or Academically Unacceptable. Once a baseline score was determined, a growth target was set for each school. Growth labels were assessed based on the success in attaining the growth target. Growth labels include Exemplary Academic Growth, Recognized Academic Growth, Minimal Academic Growth, No Growth, and School in Decline. Recognition and monetary awards were given to schools that met or surpassed the growth target. A corrective action plan is implemented for schools receiving growth labels of Academically Unacceptable or School in Decline. District Assistance Teams of Distinguished Educators are assigned to these schools as a method of action for improvement with the expectation that extensive efforts shall be made by students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and the school board to improve student achievement (“The Louisiana School,” 2002). With the creation of School Performance Scores, standardized testing became high stakes testing not only for students, but also for schools.
Federal Funding

Character education was emphasized in the school reform agenda of the 1997 State-of-the-Union message by President Clinton. The President’s Call to Action for American Education In the 21st Century: Ensuring Excellence in 1998 and Beyond was a ten-point plan including a provision for ensuring safe, disciplined, drug-free schools, and an emphasis on instilling American values. Boyer (1996) stated academic reform begins with character and teaching values enhances education. Former United States Secretary of Education, Cavazos (2002), advocated balancing academic achievement with character education. Creating a disciplined classroom environment was one of the six original national goals for education to be reached by the year 2000.

In October 1999, the Texas Commissioner of Education and the Josephson Institute of Ethics announced the implementation of the largest and most comprehensive character development program in the nation. This initiative was a key element of Governor Bush’s Lone Star Leaders Initiative for the State of Texas. This program was funded by a $900,000 state grant to develop materials and programs designed to help youth learn core ethical values (“Texas,” 1999).

Louisiana’s Approach

House Bill No. 102 (1998) established the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) as the clearinghouse for information on character education in Louisiana. Beginning, January 1, 1999, the state superintendent was required by law to provide a progress report of the implementation and effectiveness of character education programs conducted in public school systems of this state.
In 1999, Louisiana became the first state in the nation to pass a law that encourages courtesy in elementary schools. The law stated that students in kindergarten through fifth grade must address teachers as Mr., Ms., "sir" or "ma'm." According to Exstrom (2000), this bill represented the need for schools to be involved in character education programs.

The most pervasive character education program in Louisiana is CHARACTER COUNTS! according to Hammatt (2001). Hammatt reported that the State of Louisiana appropriated over $300,000 to the LSU Agricultural Center, Louisiana State University, for implementation of character education programs. The CHARACTER COUNTS! curriculum developed a consensus regarding a set of ethical values that transcend race, class, gender, and politics known as The Six Pillars of Character. The CHARACTER COUNTS! curriculum has been utilized by 64 of the 66 school systems in the state in a joint educational effort with the LSU Agricultural Center. In the 2001-2002 school year, 218,000 youth received instruction in character education in 48 parishes utilizing the *Exercising Character* curriculum according to Arceneaux (2002). Curriculum specialist Peggy Adkins developed character education materials for five different age levels designed for teenagers to use with four-year-olds through teen audiences. Several other character education curricula are available from local Cooperative Extension Service offices including *Character Critters*, *Workplace Ethics*, *Pursuing Victory with Honor* (sports ethics program), and *Leap into Character*. *Character Critters* is a literature and activity approach to teaching character to preschool and kindergarten children. *Leap into Character* integrates Louisiana content standards and benchmarks into character building lessons.
Over a four-year period, Governor Foster has awarded over $79,000 to educators for outstanding character education programs. Since January 1998, Foster has dedicated part of his salary to fund this awards program (Golsby, & Johnston, 2002). Governor Foster’s commitment to education is evident. In *Louisiana: Vision 2020, Master Plan for Economic Development*, a vision for a “vibrant, balanced economy; a fully-engaged, well-educated workforce; and a quality of life that places it among the top ten states in the nation in which to live, work, visit, and do business” is presented (Foster, & Sawyer, 1999, p. 2). Character education is a priority in the educational plan for the next 20 years as a method of educational reform (p. 24). Also included in the reform plan are an accountability system, high-stakes testing, in-service training for teachers, and the expansion of charter schools. The new reform initiatives in K-12 and post-secondary education total more than $750 million.

Character education is the oldest mission of education, not a school’s newest fad, according to Schaeffer (1998). President Bush (2001) stated a huge difference can be made in the lives of American children. Bush posited that society is changed one child at a time.

*A Summary of the Review of Related Literature*

The review of literature revealed that character development is as important as academic achievement in educating the “whole child” and preparing him or her for success in society. Many experts in the field of character education believe character is as much “caught” or modeled as “taught.” Positive role models are crucial for moral development in youth. Character is developed over a lifetime. The internalization of
character traits by educators and peer instructors serves to reinforce these moral values and challenge instructors to be exemplary role models for students.

For character education to be most effective, it must be an integral part of the environment in the school. Good character must be reinforced in the classroom, at recess, in sports activities, and in school functions by all staff members. Teachers may not be receiving the training required to infuse character education into the curriculum and the daily school routine.

The lack of research in the field of character education and the large allocation of federal and state funds in this area increased the justification for this study. Currently, accountability and assessment are top priorities in the field of educational reform. Kilpatrick (1992) stated the core problem facing schools is a moral one. School reform is unlikely to succeed unless character education is put at the top of the agenda.

Research has shown that character development has a positive effect on the learning environment in a school setting. Researchers have known for decades that learning environment and school climate positively affect student achievement. Character education may be the avenue to better moral development and greater student achievement in children. Today's children will be tomorrow's leaders. Educators can ensure they will be well informed and equipped to make ethical decisions.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores in 17 elementary schools located in five northeast Louisiana public school districts. Principal and teacher (K-6) respondents completed a 15-item questionnaire designed to measure the perception of the level of implementation of character education in the school setting during the past three years. A 15-item questionnaire assessing the perception of the learning environment in the school was also completed by principals and teachers. Data from surveys completed by school personnel were gathered to allow analysis by school, grade level taught, number of years experience, number of years at present school, certification status, highest degree completed, gender, and ethnicity (Appendix C, D). Students in grades four through six completed a 14-item survey assessing their perceptions of the learning environment in the school setting. Data from student respondents were gathered to allow analysis by school, grade level, age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Appendix E). Archival data used consisted of School Performance Scores for each participating school for the past three years (2000, 2001, and 2002). These data were retrieved from the annual report of the Louisiana Department of Education.
Research Design

The researcher used a correlational design to determine if there was a relationship among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were utilized in data analyses of all components of the three variables. Additionally, Spearman’s correlation coefficient was computed on the principal data set. Independent samples t-tests were calculated to determine statistical differences between demographic data gathered on respondents and the independent variables: level of implementation of character education and learning environment. Data gathered from the two survey instruments regarding perception of the level of implementation of character education and the three survey instruments measuring the perception of the learning environment were used as predictor variables in a multiple regression model. The mean School Performance Scores of each school served as the criterion variable. This was a correlational study, thus no causation can be reliably inferred. Due to the large sample size of 2,323, no pilot study was needed.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included 2,323 respondents (17 principals, 275 teachers, and 2,031 students) in 17 elementary schools located in five public school districts in northeast Louisiana. A total of 1,039 respondents (8 principals, 100 teachers, and 931 students) from 16 elementary schools in five public school districts participated in this study. The parameters of this study included school districts that had utilized character education curricula for the past three years, were located in rural settings, had geographically similar locations, had high levels of poverty, and had diverse student
populations. This study included all principals and teachers in the 17 selected elementary schools as well as all students in grades 4-6 in these schools. Parameters were established to include all elementary schools in the five public school districts where students had continuous attendance from grades four through six. Middle schools (grades 6-8 only) and PK-2 schools were not included in this study. The remaining 17 elementary schools composed the population for this study. Internet access by principals, teachers, and students was required for participation in this study. This geographical region was chosen to increase the body of knowledge in character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores in rural elementary schools in Louisiana.

Instrumentation

Five survey instruments were utilized in this study. Separate survey instruments designed specifically for principals and teachers measured the perception of the level of implementation of character education and assessed the perception of the learning environment. Instrument 1 (Principal Version) and Instrument 3 (Teacher Version) measured the perception of the level of implementation of character education and were adapted from previous research by Wiebers (2001). Instrument 2 (Principal Version) and Instrument 4 (Teacher Version), created by the Developmental Studies Center, assessed the perception of the learning environment. Instruments 1, 2, 3, and 4 each consisted of 15 questions. Student respondents completed Instrument 5, a 14-item questionnaire, assessing their perception of the learning environment in the school setting. Instrument 5 was also designed by the Developmental Studies Center. All five instruments were completed electronically at www.surveymonkey.com.
Instruments 1 and 3. The principal and teacher versions of the survey questionnaire, Level of Implementation of Character Education, Instrument 1 and Instrument 3, were adapted from previous research by Wiebers (2001) that collected data assessing the perception of the level of implementation of character education in the school setting. Instrument 1, questions 1-8, and Instrument 2, questions 1-5, required a numerical response regarding analysis of time spent in character education training by administrators, teachers, and support staff; percentage of school rules, policies, and school functions utilizing character education components; and percentage of students recognized for positive behavior. Instrument 1, questions 9-13, and Instrument 2, questions 6-13, had a response scale format consisting of a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). Survey questions addressed perceptions of the level of implementation, level of involvement by students, community support for character education, and level of importance of teaching character education. Questions 14-15 required a yes or no response and for statistical purposes were assigned a numerical response. Questions were taken from previous evaluative questionnaires and, therefore, validity had been established. The reliability of Instrument 1 was impossible to determine due to small sample size (n = 7). Using Cronbach’s alpha, the reliability coefficient of Instrument 3 was .86.

Instrument 2 and 4. Instrument 2 and Instrument 4, entitled Assessment of Learning Environment, was designed by the Development Studies Center. Both instruments consisted of 15 questions with a response scale format utilizing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), creating a minimum score of 9 and a maximum score of 75. Question #1 was reverse scored. High scores
indicated a perception of a positive learning environment in the school setting, and low scores reflected the opposite. This item pool assessed perceptions of cooperation, respect, shared decision-making, work toward common goals, parental and community involvement, and internalization of the subject matter (Roberts et al., 1995).

Questions 1-14 from both Instrument 2 and Instrument 4 were taken from the School Climate section of the Teacher Questionnaire: Psychometric Information used in studies assessing teachers' sense of school community conducted by the Developmental Studies Center. Other sections of the psychometric information survey were not relevant to this study, thus were eliminated. The 14 questions used in this study were selected from the 44 items that composed the School Climate section of the Developmental Studies Center instrument. Questions selected had the highest factor loading scores. Due to extensive use of this instrument by the Developmental Studies Center, validity had been confirmed. The 44-item survey utilized by the Developmental Studies Center had a reliability coefficient of .82. Actual use of the selected 14 questions in this study yielded a reliability coefficient of .86 on both Instrument 2 and Instrument 4 using Cronbach's alpha. Questions from the Teacher Questionnaire: Psychometric Information were used with permission from the Developmental Studies Center.

Instrument 5. The student survey, Instrument 5, Assessment of Learning Environment was also designed by the Developmental Studies Center. Instrument 5 consisted of 14-items and contained a response scale format utilizing a five-point Likert scale. Possible responses ranged from 1 (disagree a lot) to 5 (agree a lot). Questions #7, 8, 11, and 13 were reverse scored creating a minimum score of -10 and a maximum score of 70. High scores reflected a perception of a positive learning environment in the school.
setting, and low scores reflected the opposite. This item pool assessed perceptions of respect for others, caring environment, and cooperation. This questionnaire, *Sense of School as a Community*, was developed by the Developmental Studies Center (Roberts et al., 1995). Due to extensive use of this instrument by the Developmental Studies Center, validity had been confirmed. The total internal consistency reliability of the 14 questions as determined by the Developmental Studies Center was .91. Actual use of the questionnaire in this study, Instrument 5, rendered a reliability coefficient of .65 using Cronbach’s alpha. This questionnaire was used with permission from the Developmental Studies Center.

Procedural Details

The researcher contacted the five parish superintendents and the 17 school principals individually and secured support for the research project (Appendix F). Informed consent was obtained from participating principals, teachers, students, and their parents prior to gathering data (Appendix G). There were separate consent forms for faculty, parents, and students. Participants read and signed an informed consent form that explained the purpose of the study and ensured them of their confidentiality as well as the voluntary nature of their participation in this study. Questionnaires were completed by those participants who had given their informed consent and who had access to the electronic survey instrument. No compensation was provided.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the university Human Use Committee (Appendix H). The researcher contacted parish school
superintendents individually requesting approval to conduct the study. Each
superintendent received a cover letter requesting approval to conduct the study, a copy of
each of the three participant consent forms, and the five survey instruments. Each
principal received similar materials.

Actual survey instruments were distributed on the Internet via
www.surveymonkey.com, and the request for return was approximately one week, at
which time data were analyzed. Results will be provided to participating schools and
districts.

Data Analysis Procedures

The Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were
used to determine the relationship between the level of implementation of character
education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. In the multiple
regression analysis, predictor variables were character education and learning
environment. The criterion variable was School Performance Scores. Independent
samples t-tests were used to analyze any statistically significant differences in
demographic data as it related to the perception of the level of implementation of
character education or perception of the learning environment. For further analysis of the
principal data set (n = 7), Spearman correlation coefficients were computed. The
Statistical Package for Social Sciences software was utilized to analyze the data.

The reliability of Instruments 1-5 was determined using Cronbach’s alpha
(Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998). The reliability coefficient for Instrument 3 was .86,
Instrument 4 was .86, and Instrument 5 was .65. The reliability coefficients of
Instruments 1 and 2 were impossible to determine due to small sample size (n = 7).
According to Cronk (1999), Cronbach's alpha is one test of reliability or measure of the internal consistency of a survey instrument. An alpha score close to 1.00 indicates very good reliability, and an alpha score close to 0.00 represents poor internal consistency.

Limitations

The researcher found the following limitations to this study. Administrator and teacher turn-over during the past three years in the participating schools could have potentially affected the continuity of the character education program in that school. Students gained in the past one or two years had not been exposed to the character education curriculum for the past three years. Turn-over among respondents could limit accurate responses for perceptions of the level of implementation of character education over a three-year period.

Additional limitations identified by the researcher included the fact that all schools were in a similar geographical region, and all schools were high poverty schools. A fourth limitation was that the sample was not randomly selected. These factors could lead to confounding variables.

Response rate was limited due to upcoming standardized testing (LEAP 21 and ITBS), limited computer and/or Internet accessibility to a large number of students, and survey response time being limited to one week. Four of the five districts observed a scheduled holiday during the response time frame.

Archival data revealed that 11 of the 16 (69%) participating schools received a School Performance Score performance label of Academically Below the State Average (30.1-79.8). This factor could have affected the implementation of the character education curriculum as well as created distortions in self-reported data.
CHAPTER 4

Results of Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate two sets of relationships: the relationship between character education and learning environment, and character education and School Performance Scores in 17 elementary schools located in five northeast Louisiana public school districts. Five survey instruments were utilized to collect data. Instruments 1 and 3 consisted of 15 items assessing the perception of the level of implementation of character education over the past three years and were completed by principals (Instrument 1) and teachers (Instrument 3). Instrument 2, also completed by principals, and Instrument 4, also completed by teachers (K-6), consisted of 15 items designed to measure the perception of the learning environment in the school. Instrument 5 was completed by students in grades 4-6 and contained 14 items pertaining to the perception of the learning environment in the school. The survey instruments were accessed by 8 of the 17 principals, 100 of the 275 teachers (K-6), and 1,039 of the 2,031 students (grades 4-6) via the Internet at www.surveymonkey.com. Internet accessibility was available at all 17 schools either by classroom computers or in a computer laboratory. Archival data used in this study included School Performance Scores from 2000, 2001, and 2002 retrieved from the Louisiana Department of Education.
Survey Returns

A total of 1,039 respondents (8 principals, 100 teachers, and 931 students) participated in this study. This equates to a response rate of 47% for principals, 36% for teachers, and 46% for students. The total response rate of this study was 45% of the population in the 17 selected elementary schools. The researcher determined these rates to be acceptable based on the 1996 work of Crowl. According to Crowl (1996), samples representing as little as 10% of the population have yielded a representative sample. Popham (1993) stated no definitive answer exists for adequate return rate.

Instrument 1 (Appendix C), the principal version of the Level of Implementation of Character Education survey was used to collect data assessing the perception of the level of implementation of character education in the school setting. Principals also completed Instrument 2 (Appendix C), the principal version of the Assessment of Learning Environment survey. Usable data were gathered from seven participants (n = 7). Demographic data gathered on these participants included name of school, number of years experience, number of years as principal, number of years at present school, level of highest degree completed, and classifications of gender and ethnicity. Principals were contacted on the fourth day of the survey period to prompt additional participation from each school.

Instrument 3 (Appendix D), the teacher version of the Level of Implementation of Character Education survey, was completed by 100 teachers from 14 elementary schools in five district public school districts. Teachers also completed Instrument 4 (Appendix D), the teacher version of the Assessment of Learning Environment survey. Six participants gave incomplete information, creating a usable data set of 94 teachers.
(n = 94). Demographic information gathered on the teacher sample included school name, grade level taught, years experience, years at present school, certification status, highest degree completed, gender, and ethnicity.

Students from 15 elementary schools in five districts completed Instrument 5 (Appendix E), the student version of the Assessment of Learning Environment survey. Participants included 931 students in grades 4-6. Usable data were gathered from 877 participants (n = 877). Demographic data gathered on students included school name, grade level, age, gender, ethnicity, and free/reduced lunch participation.

Total return for the study was 45%. Sixteen of the 17 selected schools chose to participate across five public school districts in northeast Louisiana. All 16 elementary schools were located in rural communities, were geographically similar and were considered high poverty schools with diverse populations. Data were collected in February 2003. Data obtained and the statistical analyses are presented in this chapter.

Demographic Data

As shown in Table 1, of the 2,323 potential respondents, 1,039 completed the online survey. Usable data were obtained from 978 respondents including seven principals from seven elementary schools in four districts, 94 teachers from 14 elementary schools in five districts, and 877 students from 15 elementary schools in five public school districts. Participation by gender included male principals, 25%; female principals, 75%; male teachers, 3%; female teachers, 97%; male students, 48%; and female students, 52%. The racial diversity of this study included 25% African American principals, 75% Caucasian principals, 40% African American teachers, 60% Caucasian teachers, 45% African American students, 48% Caucasian students, and 7% of students
reported other ethnic backgrounds. This confirms that student enrollment at participating elementary schools included a diverse population.

Table 1

*Number, Location, Percent Return, Gender, and Ethnicity of Survey Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers (K-6)</th>
<th>Students (4-6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent return</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender by percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity by percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = 1039, n of usable data = 978.

Table 2 presents the years of experience and highest degree completed by principal participants. Years of experience for principals ranged from 14-39, with a mean score of 25 years. The number of years as principal ranged from 1-8, with a mean score of 4 years. The principals (n = 7) reported years at present school to be from 5-27 years, creating a mean of 11 years. Seventy-five percent of principals surveyed had completed a
master's degree plus 30 additional hours of coursework, with 25% holding a master's degree. One data set was unusable because incomplete information was given. Even though there was a 47% rate of return of principal respondents, the data set had little practical significance due to effect size (n = 7).

Table 2

*Years of Experience and Highest Degree Completed by Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as principal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years at present school</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest degree completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's + 30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 7.*

As reflected in Table 3, 94 usable data sets were acquired from teachers that participated in this study. Respondents included 34% teachers (K-3) and 66% teachers (4-6). Years of experience ranged from 1-45, with a mean score of 18.5. Certified teachers made up 84% of the sample, and 16% reported uncertified status. Advanced degrees were held by 35% of respondents, including 10% of teachers reporting a master's degree, 24% holding a master's degree plus 30 additional hours of coursework and 1% possessing a doctoral degree. The remaining 65% of the teacher sample held bachelor's degrees. Six data sets were unusable due to incomplete information. There were no statistical significant differences between demographic information shown in Table 3 and
the respondents' perception of the level of implementation of character education or perception of the learning environment as calculated by independent samples $t$ tests.

Table 3

*Grade Level, Years of Experience, Certification Status, and Highest Degree Completed by Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade level taught</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certification status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest degree completed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's + 30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $n = 94.$

Selected schools were high poverty schools as evidenced by information contained in Table 4. Sixty-eight percent of students surveyed participated in the free/reduced price lunch program at school. The student sample consisted of 4th graders (45%), 5th graders (36%), and 6th graders (19%). Although 931 students completed the
online survey, only 877 (94%) of the data set was usable. Some unusable data are expected in research projects involving elementary students. There were no statistical significant differences between demographic information gathered on students and their perception of the learning environment as calculated by independent samples t tests.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level and Free/Reduced Lunch Participation of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received free/reduced lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 877.

Survey Instruments 1-5

Instruments 1 and 3 measured perception of the level of implementation of character education. Survey items for Instruments 1 and 3, Level of Implementation of Character Education survey, were divided into two scales based on method of measuring responses. Scale 1 consisted of questions #2-8 on Instrument 1 (Principal Version). These seven questions required responses given in percentages and are referred to as principal responses in percentages on character education survey (P%CE). Possible scores ranged from 0-100%. The mean score of these seven questions was compiled to create a composite score for principals represented by P%CE. A similar procedure was utilized for Instrument 3. Scale 1 consisted of questions #3-5 completed by K-6 teachers (n = 94).
These three questions required responses given in percentages and are referred to as teacher responses in percentages on character education survey (T%CE). Possible scores ranged from 0-100%. The composite score for these three questions was represented by T%CE.

Scale 2 of Instrument 1 consisted of questions #9-13 and Scale 2 of Instrument 3 consisted of questions #6-13. These five and eight questions respectively were scored on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 (low) to 7 (high). Possible scores on Instrument 1, Scale 2, were 5-35; and possible scores on Instrument 3, Scale 2, were 8-56. The mean score of questions #9-13 on Instrument 1 was utilized as the composite score for the principal responses on the character education survey (PCE). Similarly, the mean score of questions #6-13 on Instrument 2 was utilized as the composite score for teacher responses on the character education survey (TCE).

Instruments 2, 4, and 5 measured perception of the learning environment. The principal learning environment (PLE) composite score represents the mean score of Instrument 2, principals’ perception of learning environment that consisted of 15 questions. Questions were scored on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Question #1 was reverse scored. A similar procedure was utilized for the teacher learning environment (TLE), a composite score for teachers’ perception of learning environment that was obtained from the 15 questions on Instrument #4. Question #1 was reverse scored. Possible scores on Instruments 2 and 4 ranged from 9-75. Instrument 5, student perception of learning environment (SLE), was also scored on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (disagree a lot) to 5 (agree a lot). Questions # 7, 8, 11, and 13 were reverse scored. Possible scores on Instrument 5 ranged from -10 to 70. SLE
represents the mean score of students (n = 877) on Instrument 5. Data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range and Mean Scores of Instruments 1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P%CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 1, Scale 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions #2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of 0-100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 1, Scale 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions #9-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of 5-35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of 9-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T%CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 3, Scale 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions #3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of 0-100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 3, Scale 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions #6-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of 8-56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of 9-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Possible score of -10 to 70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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School Performance Scores

Archival data from the Louisiana Department of Education were utilized to obtain the School Performance Scores for years 2000, 2001, and 2002 of the 16 participating elementary schools. The mean score for the three-year period for each of the 16 schools was entered into the data base to analyze a total School Performance Score mean of participating schools as represented by Total Mean in Table 6. SPS mean scores ranged from 43.53-100.53. Eleven of the 16 (69%) participating schools received a School Performance Score performance label of Academically Below the State Average (30.1-79.8).

Table 6

Range of Mean and Total Mean of School Performance Scores for 16 Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Performance Scores (SPS)</td>
<td>43.53-100.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal Respondents

Principals (86%) indicated that CHARACTER COUNTS! was the most widely utilized curriculum in the school, and 86% stated that the implementation level of character education was rated a 4 (29%), 5 (29%), 6 (14%), or 7 (14%) on a Likert scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high). Permanent character development displays, banners, signs, or murals were present in 71% of the schools as indicated by principals. Fifty-seven percent expressed the level of support for character education in the school setting from parents and the community to be a level 4 (medium) with 7 being the highest rating. The
remaining 43% of principals rated the level of support at 3 (29%) or 1 (14%) with 1 being the lowest rating. All principals (100%) surveyed indicated they regarded the level of importance of teaching character education in the school setting to be at the level of 5 (29%), 6 (57%), or 7 (14%). When asked if their actions as a principal and role model in the school had been affected by their involvement in character education, 86% agreed.

Teacher Respondents

CHARACTER COUNTS! was the most widely utilized character education curriculum in the school as reported by 74% of the teacher respondents. Permanent character development displays, banners, signs, or murals existed in 70% of the schools. Teachers (72%) indicated that the level of implementation of character education in their school was at the level of 4 (20%), 5 (22%), 6 (20%), or 7 (10%) on a Likert scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high). Fifty percent of respondents perceived the level of support from parents and the community for character education to be 4 (31%), 5 (9%), 6 (7%), or 7 (3%) on the same Likert scale. The effect of character education on reducing discipline problems was rated 4 (32%), 5 (18%), 6 (12%), or 7 (4%) by 66% of teachers. When asked to describe their feelings regarding the level of importance of teaching character education in the school setting, 76% chose 6 or 7 (high). “Agree” or “strongly agree” was the choice answer of 64% of teachers when asked if their actions as a teacher and role model in the school had been affected by their involvement in teaching character education. The data from these selected responses by principal and teacher respondents are shown in Table 7.
Table 7

*Selected Responses from Principals and Teachers on Instruments 1-4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers (K-6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC! is most widely utilized curriculum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent character displays exist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from parents and community</td>
<td>Score of 4</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Likert scale 1-7, 1 = low, 7 = high)</em></td>
<td>Score of 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of implementation</td>
<td>Score of 4</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Likert scale 1-7)</em></td>
<td>Score of 5</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 6</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of importance</td>
<td>Score of 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Likert scale 1-7)</em></td>
<td>Score of 5</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 6</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 7</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions were affected by involvement</td>
<td>86% agreed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect on reducing discipline problems</td>
<td>Score of 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Likert scale 1-7)</em></td>
<td>Score of 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score of 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examination of Research Questions

Research Question 1. Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the perception of the level of implementation of character education (P%CE, PCE, T%CE, and TCE) as measured by Instruments 1 and 3, and the perception of the learning environment (PLE, TLE, and SLE) as measured by Instruments 2, 4, and 5. No significant relationship was found between the perception of the level of implementation of character education and perception of learning environment. The perception of the level of implementation of character education is not related to the perception of the learning environment as reported in Table 8.

The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between the perception of the level of implementation of character education as reported by teachers (TCE) and learning environment as perceived by teachers (TLE). Considering there is little to no research nationwide in the field of character education, this relationship merits further research. Research data from this study addressing Research Question 1 are reported in Table 8.
Table 8  

*Correlation Between Character Education and Learning Environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PLE</th>
<th>TLE</th>
<th>SLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P%CE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.492</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.702</td>
<td>.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T%CE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.405</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.441</td>
<td>.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.382</td>
<td>.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research Question 2.* Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores? A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the perception of the level of implementation of character education (P%CE, PCE, T%CE, and TCE) as measured by Instruments 1 and 3 and School Performance Scores (SPS Mean) for the 16 participating elementary schools. There was no significant relationship found between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores.
Performance Scores as reported in Table 9. The perception of the level of implementation of character education is not related to School Performance Scores.

Table 9

*Correlation Between Character Education and School Performance Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPS Mean</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P%CE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.466</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T%CE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n= 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further analyze the small data set of principals (n = 7), the principal related independent variables (P%CE, PCE, and PLE) and School Performance Scores were correlated utilizing the Spearman rho correlation coefficient. A negative correlation was found between PCE (Instrument 1, Scale 2) and PLE (Instrument 2) by the Spearman rho correlation coefficient, and it is significant at the p < .034 level. According to this
statistical calculation, when the principal’s perception of the level of implementation of character education increases, the perception of the learning environment decreases. Several factors should be considered when interpreting this data set including the limitations of self-reported data and the low School Performance Scores of the majority (69%) of participating schools. Considering the sample size (n = 7), this finding may have no practical significance.

Table 10

Correlation Between Principal Data and School Performance Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P%CE</th>
<th>PCE</th>
<th>PLE</th>
<th>SPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P%CE</td>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>-.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCE</td>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.791*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLE</td>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td>-.414</td>
<td>-.791*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 11 reflect a significant relationship in the correlation between students’ perception of learning environment (SLE) as measured by Instrument 5 and School Performance Scores (SPS) at the p < .037 level. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between SLE and SPS.
Students' perception of learning environment is positively related to School Performance Scores as reflected in Table 11.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPS Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLE</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation 0.541*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed) 0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

A significant difference in the perception of the level of implementation of character education between African American teachers and Caucasian teachers as reflected in a t-test for Equality of Means is reported in Table 12. T%CE (Instrument 3, Scale 1) was significant at the .001 level, $t = 3.42$ and TCE (Instrument 3, Scale 2) was significant at the .001 level, $t = 3.67$, reflecting ethnic differences in reported implementation levels of character education. African American teachers perceived levels of implementation of character education to be higher than Caucasian teachers, according to the results of the independent samples t test.
Table 12

*Relationship Between Ethnicity of Teachers and Level of Implementation of Character Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T%CE</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77.90</td>
<td>21.09</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57.82</td>
<td>30.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCE</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39.56</td>
<td>10.12</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>31.55</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLE</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46.39</td>
<td>12.63</td>
<td>-.850</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>N.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48.27</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple Regression Analysis

All independent variables (P%CE, PCE, PLE, T%CE, TCE, TLE, and SLE) were rejected as predictors of School Performance Scores except PCE (Instrument 1, Scale 2). PCE was negatively correlated to SPS. A significant regression equation was found, whereas SPS Mean = 132.472 – 2.846 (PCE) as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Multiple Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variance Explained</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>R Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R Square</td>
<td>Std. Error of the Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.822</td>
<td>.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.595</td>
<td>10.4947</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>919.113</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>919.113</td>
<td>8.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>440.556</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>110.139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1359.669</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regression Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>132.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCE</td>
<td>-2.846</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examination of Hypotheses

This study failed to reject both null hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1.* There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment.

*Hypothesis 2.* There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores.

A strong relationship was identified between teachers' perception of the level of implementation of character education and their perception of the learning environment. This topic warrants additional research. A statistical significant relationship ($p < .037$) was found between students' perception of learning environment and School Performance Scores. Also found to be a statistical significant relationship ($p < .001$) was the perception of the level of implementation of character education between African American teachers and Caucasian teachers. African American teachers perceived the level of implementation of character education to be higher than Caucasian teachers did.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of statistical procedures designed to identify the relationships among the perception of the level of implementation of character education, perception of the learning environment, and School Performance Scores in 16 elementary schools in five public school districts in northeast Louisiana. Survey results from 978 respondents including principals, teachers (K-6), and students (grades 4-6) demonstrated no significant relationship exists between the level of implementation of character education and learning environment. However, the findings revealed a strong relationship between the level of implementation of character education as reported by
teachers and their perception of the learning environment. This finding merits a need for further research in this area considering little to no research is available on character education nationwide. No significant relationship was found in the relationship between the level of implementation of character education and School Performance Scores. A statistical significant relationship (p < .037) was found between students' perception of learning environment and School Performance Scores. A statistical significant relationship (p < .001) was also found in the perception of the level of implementation of character education between African American teachers and Caucasian teachers. African American teachers perceived a higher level of implementation of character education than Caucasian teachers did.

Statistical analysis of data generated by this study confirmed that CHARACTER COUNTS! is the most widely utilized curriculum for character development in these 16 elementary schools as reported by 80% of respondents. The majority of principals and teachers (53%) perceived average or above support from parents and community for character education, and 66% of teachers perceived character education to have an average or above effect on discipline. The implementation level of character education was perceived to be average or above by 79% of respondents. An overwhelming majority (88%) stated their perception of the importance of character education in the school setting to be average or above, and 75% reported their actions as principals or teachers and role models had been affected by their involvement in character education.
CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate two sets of relationships: the relationship between character education and learning environment, and the relationship between character education and School Performance Scores in 17 elementary schools in five public school districts in northeast Louisiana. Letters of support for this study were obtained from several stakeholders and policymakers including Governor Foster; Representative Lelon Kenney, member of the House Education Committee; Julie Dwyer, National Director of CHARACTER COUNTS!; and Adkins, the curriculum author of CHARACTER COUNTS! (Appendix I). This correspondence reiterated the need for research in the field of character education. The literature review confirmed the lack of research in the field of character education, and the Louisiana Department of Education confirmed the lack of research in the area of School Performance Scores in northeast Louisiana.

The theoretical model used in this study was designed by Lickona. Lickona’s 25 years of work with moral development led to his theory that there is a low correlation between moral thinking and moral behavior. Lickona (1998) posited that by altering the learning environment, students develop a sense of academic responsibility and habit of doing their work well, thus resulting in a positive affect on student achievement.

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A total of 1,039 respondents (8 principals, 100 teachers, and 931 students) from 16 elementary schools in five public school districts participated in this study. Student respondents consisted of youth in grades 4-6. The parameters of this study included school districts that had utilized character education curricula for the past three years, were located in rural settings in a geographically similar region, had high levels of poverty, and diverse student populations. Internet access by principals, teachers, and students was required for participation in this research study.

Schools reported that participation was limited due to upcoming standardized testing (LEAP 21 and ITBS), limited computer and/or Internet accessibility to a large number of students, and survey response time being limited to one week. Four of the five districts observed an official school holiday during the response time frame. Other limitations may have included turn-over of principals, teachers, and students during the past three years, utilization of self-reported data, lack of randomly selected sample and high level of high poverty schools in sample. Sixty-nine percent of the participating schools received a School Performance Score performance label of Academically Below the State Average. These conditions can lead to confounding variables.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study and the review of literature, several conclusions may be drawn.

1. Although a statistically significant relationship was not found among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores, further research is needed. Little research exists nationwide in the field of character education.
2. A statistically significant relationship was found between students' perceptions of learning environment and School Performance Scores. Classrooms that are caring communities would be expected to have positive results on the students' social, ethical, and intellectual development. The 1994 work of Battistich et al. revealed a positive relationship between numerous personal and social qualities (empathy, self-esteem, and commitment to democratic values) and school related variables including liking for school and intrinsic motivation for learning. Theoretically, the more diverse the population, the more difficult it may be to establish a sense of community in a school. Poverty has a detrimental effect on students and teachers. In a four-year follow-up study by Battistich (2001), students participating in the Child Development Project had significantly higher grade point averages, higher achievement test scores, and exhibited higher educational goals than non-program students.

3. A statistically significant relationship was found in the perception of level of implementation of character education between African American teachers and Caucasian teachers. African American teachers reported higher levels of implementation of the character education program than Caucasian teachers.

4. This study confirmed CHARACTER COUNTS! is the most widely used character education curriculum as reported by 80% of the respondents in the 16 participating elementary schools. The literature review revealed that CHARACTER COUNTS! had been implemented in 64 of the 66 school districts in Louisiana. The curriculum is in place to teach universal values that transcend all religious and political views. These values also transcend race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
5. The majority (53%) of principals and teachers perceived support of parents and community for character education at the average or above level. Wagner (1996) stated 71% of Americans believe it is more important to teach values than academics.

6. Teachers (66%) perceived character education to have an average or above effect on discipline. According to the Josephson Institute of Ethics ("The Evidence," 2002) discipline referrals dropped from 30-89% in schools across the nation as a result of a school's participation in the CHARACTER COUNTS! program.

7. The level of implementation of character education was reported at the average or above level by 79% of the respondents. For character education to be most efficient, it must be infused into the daily routine of the school experience.

8. The overwhelming majority (88%) of educators participating in this study reported their perception of the importance of character education in the school setting to be average or above. Wood and Roach (1999) surveyed 200 school administrators in South Dakota, and the study revealed that 81% of school administrators felt character education should be included in the curriculum. Teachers (74%) were in favor of teaching character education according to Wood and Roach.

9. An overwhelming majority (75%) stated their actions as principals or teachers and role models had been affected by their involvement in character education. According to Harms and Fritz (2001), character development is a lifelong process. Their research revealed that 89% of educators who teach character education were more sensitive to ethical issues in the workplace, and 77% were more aware of ethical dilemmas in their personal lives as a result of teaching character education.
Internalization of ethical decision-making practices can only prove to positively affect school environment and provide positive role models for youth (Harms, & Fritz, 2001).

Recommendations

The results of this study led to the following recommendations for administrators, school systems, teachers, researchers, and other stakeholders who are responsible for decision-making processes that address character education.

1. Results indicated that more research is warranted in determining the relationship among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. An additional study should be conducted that includes a larger sample of principals and teachers to understand better the impact of character education on learning environment and School Performance Scores. Urban and rural schools should be included as well as a larger geographical region located in a less poverty stricken area.

2. A study investigating the perceptions of policymakers in regard to the impact of implementation of character education, learning environment, and student achievement is needed.

3. Additional studies are needed to investigate the relationship between character education, student behavior and discipline, and student achievement.

4. The overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) perceived the importance of character education in the school setting to be average or above. The literature review revealed that character education is not included in most preservice teacher training programs. A study is needed to investigate the feasibility of implementing character education in teacher training programs for preservice teachers.
5. Results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the students' perception of learning environment and School Performance Scores. A positive learning environment and the creation of school community may be particularly beneficial to students who live in impoverished environments and are socially disenfranchised. Parishes included in this study are among some of the most impoverished areas in the nation. A longitudinal study is needed to examine students' perception of learning environment and School Performance Scores.

6. Results indicated a significant relationship between the reported level of implementation of character education by African American teachers and Caucasian teachers. African American teachers tended to view implementation of character education at a higher level than Caucasian teachers. A study should be conducted to examine the relationship between the leadership style of teachers and principals, years of experience of those teachers and principals, and the level of implementation of character education.

7. The overwhelming majority of respondents (75%) indicated that their actions as principals or teachers and role models had been affected by their involvement in character education. Internalization of ethical decision-making practices can only prove to positively affect school environment and provide positive role models for youth. A study is needed investigating the internalization of character traits in adults and youth that teach character education and how those teachers and peer teachers are perceived as positive role models.
8. Additional research is needed to investigate the relationship among teachers’ years of experience, level of implementation of character education, and internalization of the character traits.

9. Longitudinal studies are needed in regard to the impact of character education on moral decision-making and prosocial behavior in youth.

10. A longitudinal study should be conducted to examine the level of implementation of character education and the level of social and human capital that exists in the school and community.

11. A longitudinal study is needed to examine the relationship between continued intensive involvement in character education and acquisition of workforce development skills in youth.

12. A longitudinal study should be conducted to examine the relationship of the level of implementation of character education and student achievement.
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APPENDIX A

Aspen Declaration on Character Education
Aspen Declaration on Character Education

1. The next generation will be the stewards of our communities, nation, and planet in extraordinary critical times.

2. In such times, the well-being of our society requires an involved, caring citizenry with good moral character.

3. People do not automatically develop good moral character; therefore, conscientious efforts must be made to help young people develop the values and abilities necessary for moral decision making and conduct.

4. Effective character education is based on core ethical values rooted in democratic society, in particular, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, justice and fairness, caring, and civic virtue and citizenship.

5. These core ethical values transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences.

6. Character education is, first and foremost, an obligation of families and faith communities, but schools and youth-service organizations also have a responsibility to help develop the character of young people.

7. These responsibilities are best achieved when these groups work in concert.

8. The character and conduct of our youth reflect the character and conduct of society; therefore, every adult has the responsibility to teach and model the core ethical values and every social institution has the responsibility to promote the development of good character.

Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1992
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APPENDIX B

Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education
Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.

2. Character must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.

3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.

4. The school must be a caring community.

5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.

6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and help them succeed.

7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.

8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.

9. Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.

10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.

11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

The Character Education Partnership
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APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument 1: Level of Implementation of Character Education Survey
(Principal Version)

Survey Instrument 2: Assessment of Learning Environment Survey
(Principal Version)
Level of Implementation of Character Education Survey  
(Instrument 1: Principal Version)

Demographic Information:

1. Name of school  
2. Number of years experience  
3. Number of years as principal  
4. Number of years at present school  
5. Highest degree completed  
6. Gender  
7. Ethnicity

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Write your answer in the blank.

_____ 1. How many hours have you spent attending character education trainings or workshops in the past three years?

_____ 2. What percentage of teachers and administrators have participated in 5 or more hours of character education training in the past 3 years?

_____ 3. What percentage of teachers and administrators utilize and reinforce the Six Pillars language in the regular school routine (lesson plans, discipline methods, recess, in the cafeteria and hallways)?

_____ 4. What percentage of support staff (secretary, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, aides) have participated in one or more hours of character education training in the past 3 years?

_____ 5. What percentage of support staff regularly utilize and reinforce the Six Pillars language in the regular school routine?

_____ 6. What percentage of school rules, policies, or discipline methods utilize the Six Pillars language?

_____ 7. What percentage of school functions utilize character education components?

_____ 8. What percentage of students have been recognized for their positive behavior related to the Six Pillars of Character language?
Directions: Please read each item carefully. Choose a number from 1-7 that best describes your answer.

9. Describe the level of involvement of older students teaching/assisting younger students in character education lessons or projects.
   Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Medium
   High

10. Describe the level of implementation or reinforcement of character education on a school-wide basis (pillar of the week, intercom messages, bulletin boards in hallways, etc.).
    Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Medium
    High

11. Describe the level of support for character education from parents and the community.
    Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Medium
    High

12. Describe the level of implementation of character education in the school over the past three years.
    Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Medium
    High

13. How would you describe the level of importance of teaching character education in the school setting?
    Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Medium
    High

14. Does your school exhibit permanent character development displays, banners, signs, or murals?
    Yes
    No

15. Is CHARACTER COUNTS! the most widely utilized curricula in the school for teaching character education?
    Yes
    No
Assessment of Learning Environment Survey
(Instrument 2: Principal Version)

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Choose the answer that agrees the most with how you feel.

1: Strongly disagree
2: Disagree
3: Not sure
4: Agree
5: Strongly agree

1. Students show little concern for one another in this school.
2. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.
3. Teachers are supportive of one another.
4. The principal is capable and well-organized.
5. Parents are supportive of the school and the teachers.
6. Parents are actively involved in school activities (as volunteers, participants in class and school programs, etc.).
7. Teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children.
8. There are generally good relations between teachers and students.
9. Most teachers here provide intellectually stimulating and challenging learning environments for their students.
10. Staff are involved in decisions that affect them.
11. The principal usually consults with staff before she or he makes decisions that affect us.
12. Teachers take an active role in planning at this school.
13. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.
14. In this school, there is a feeling that everyone is working together toward common goals.
15. My actions as a principal and role-model in this school have been affected by my involvement in character education.

Note. Questions 1-14 are from Teacher Questionnaire: Psychometric Information, School Climate developed by the Developmental Studies Center (Roberts et al, 1995).
APPENDIX D

Survey Instrument 3: Level of Implementation of Character Education
(Teacher Version)

Survey Instrument 4: Assessment of Learning Environment
(Teacher Version)
Level of Implementation of Character Education Survey
(Instrument 3: Teacher Version)

Demographic Information:

1. Name of school 5. Certification status
2. Grade level taught 6. Highest degree completed
3. Number of years of experience 7. Gender
4. Number of years at present school 8. Ethnicity

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Write your answer in the blank.

_____ 1. How many hours have you spent attending character education trainings or workshops in the past three years?

_____ 2. How many of the Six Pillars have you infused into the curriculum during the past 3 years (Respect, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Fairness, Caring, Citizenship)?

_____ 3. What percentage of school rules, policies, or discipline methods utilize the Six Pillars language?

_____ 4. What percentage of school functions utilize character education components?

_____ 5. What percentage of students have been recognized for their positive behavior related to the Six Pillars of Character language?

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Choose a number from 1-7 that best describes your answer.

_____ 6. Describe your level of utilization and reinforcement of the Six Pillars language in the regular school routine (lesson plans, discipline methods, recess, in the cafeteria, and hallways).

<table>
<thead>
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_____ 7. Describe the level of involvement of older students teaching/assisting younger students in character education lessons or projects.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Low</th>
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</table>
8. Describe the level of involvement of students in creating character education journals, essays, banners, posters, etc.
   Low 1 2 3 Medium 4 5 6 High 7

9. Describe the level of implementation or reinforcement of character education on a school-wide basis (pillar of the week, intercom messages, bulletin boards in hallways, etc.).
   Low 1 2 3 Medium 4 5 6 High 7

10. Describe the level of support for character education from parents and the community.
    Low 1 2 3 Medium 4 5 6 High 7

11. Describe the level of implementation of character education in the school over the past three years.
    Low 1 2 3 Medium 4 5 6 High 7

12. Describe the level of effect character education has had on reducing discipline problems.
    Low 1 2 3 Medium 4 5 6 High 7

13. Describe your feelings regarding the level of importance of teaching character education in the school setting.
    Low 1 2 3 Medium 4 5 6 High 7

14. Does your school exhibit permanent character development displays, banners, signs, or murals?
    Yes  No

15. Is CHARACTER COUNTS! the most widely utilized curricula in the school for teaching character education?
    Yes  No
Assessment of Learning Environment Survey
(Instrument 4: Teacher Version)

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Choose the answer that agrees the most with how you feel.

1: Strongly disagree
2: Disagree
3: Not sure
4: Agree
5: Strongly agree

___ 1. Students show little concern for one another in this school.
___ 2. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.
___ 3. Teachers are supportive of one another.
___ 4. The principal is capable and well-organized.
___ 5. Parents are supportive of the school and the teachers.
___ 6. Parents are actively involved in school activities (as volunteers, participants in class and school programs, etc.).
___ 7. Teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children.
___ 8. There are generally good relations between teachers and students.
___ 9. Most teachers here provide intellectually stimulating and challenging learning environments for their students.
___ 10. Staff are involved in decisions that affect them.
___ 11. The principal usually consults with staff before she or he makes decisions that affect us.
___ 12. Teachers take an active role in planning at this school.
___ 13. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.
___ 14. In this school, there is a feeling that everyone is working together toward common goals.
___ 15. My actions as a teacher and role-model in this school have been affected by my involvement in teaching character education.

Note. Questions 1-14 are from Teacher Questionnaire: Psychometric Information, School Climate developed by the Developmental Studies Center (Roberts et al, 1995).
Assessment of Learning Environment Survey  
(Instrument 5: Student Version)

Demographic Information:

1. Name of school  
2. Grade level  
3. Age  
4. Gender  
5. Ethnicity  
6. Free/reduced lunch participant

Directions: Please read each item carefully. Choose the answer that agrees the most with how you feel.

1: Disagree a lot  
2: Disagree  
3: Not sure  
4: Agree  
5: Agree a lot

1. When I'm having a problem, some other student will help me.  
2. Students at this school really care about each other.  
3. Students in this school are willing to go out of their way to help someone.  
4. Teachers and students treat each other with respect in this school.  
5. People care about each other in this school.  
6. Students at this school work together to solve problems.  
7. Students in this school don't seem to like each other very well.  
8. Students in this school are just looking out for themselves.  
9. Students in this school treat each other with respect.  
10. My school is like a family.  
11. The students in this school don't really care about each other.  
12. I feel that I can talk to the teachers in this school about things that are bothering me.  
13. Teachers and students in this school don't seem to like each other.  
14. Students in this school help each other, even if they are not friends.

Note. Questions 1-14 are from Sense of School as a Community questionnaire developed by the Developmental Studies Center (Roberts et al, 1995).
Dear ________________:

I am requesting approval to survey principals, teachers, and students in your district concerning character education. I am conducting this research in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Louisiana Education Consortium doctoral program at Louisiana Tech University that I am currently enrolled in. This study will investigate the relationships among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. Results of the survey will be available to you upon request.

Each principal and teacher will complete a 30-item questionnaire assessing the level of implementation of character education over the past three years and perception of the learning environment. Students will complete a 14-item survey assessing learning environment. Enclosed are sample surveys; actual surveys will be completed online.

Please indicate your willingness to participate at the bottom of this letter, and return your reply in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. With your approval, the survey will be distributed in February 2003.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in this research project.

Sincerely,

Cynthia F. Pilcher
PO Box 216
Columbia, LA 71418
(318) 308-9363
cpilcher@agcenter.lsu.edu

____ Yes, the principals, teachers, and students will participate in the survey.

____ No, the principals, teachers, and students will not participate in the survey.

______________________________  _______________________
Signature of Superintendent       Date
Dear [School District],

With the approval of Superintendent [Last Name], I am requesting your assistance to survey teachers and students in your school concerning character education. I would like your input as well. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Louisiana Education Consortium doctoral program at Louisiana Tech University that I am currently enrolled in. This study will investigate the relationships among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. Results of the survey will be available to you upon request.

Each principal and teacher will complete a 30-item questionnaire assessing the level of implementation of character education over the past three years and perception of the learning environment. Students will complete a 14-item survey assessing learning environment. Enclosed are sample surveys. Actual surveys will be completed online during February 2003.

Before surveys can be completed, each participant must complete the Participant Consent Form. Participant Consent Forms and letters to the parents should be sent home and returned prior to the student’s participation in the survey.

Your assistance and support of this project is essential to the success of this research. Thank you for your cooperation in this research project.

Sincerely,

Cynthia F. Pilcher
PO Box 216
Columbia, LA 71418
318-308-9363
cpilcher@agcenter.lsu.edu
Dear Teachers,

With the approval of the Superintendent and Principal, I am collecting data for a research study investigating the relationships among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Louisiana Education Consortium doctoral program at Louisiana Tech University that I am currently enrolled in. Results of the survey will be available to your school upon request.

Each principal and teacher will complete a 30-item questionnaire assessing the level of implementation of character education over the past three years and perception of the learning environment. Students will complete a 14-item survey assessing learning environment. Enclosed are sample surveys; actual surveys will be completed online during February 2003.

Before surveys can be completed, each participant must complete the Participant Consent Form. Participant Consent Forms and letters to the parents should be sent home and returned prior to the student’s participation in the survey.

I appreciate your assistance and support of this research project.

Sincerely,

Cynthia F. Pilcher
Doctoral Student
Louisiana Tech University
Dear Students, Parents/Guardians,

I need your help to learn more about how character education helps our students. I would like each student in grades 4-6 to complete a 14-item questionnaire about the learning environment in your school. Surveys will be completed online, and instructions will be given by the classroom teacher.

Parents/guardians must sign the Participant Consent Form that gives students permission to complete the survey. The superintendent, principal and teachers have given their permission to complete this survey.

This research project will help us to learn more about character education and the effect it has on the students and the school.

Thank you for your help in this project.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Pilcher
Doctoral Student
Louisiana Tech University
APPENDIX G

Participant Consent Forms
PRINCIPAL/TEACHER CONSENT FORM

The following is a brief summary of the project that you have been asked to participate in. Please read it before you sign the statement below.


PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: To identify relationships among the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores in selected northeast Louisiana parishes.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS: Teachers and principals may complete a 30-item online questionnaire including the “Level of Implementation of Character Education Survey” and “Assessment of Learning Environment Survey.”

RISKS/ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS: There are no risks associated with participation in this study. Participation is voluntary.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: None

I, ______________________________, show by my signature that I have read and understood the description of the study, “Level of Implementation of Character Education Survey” and “Assessment of Learning Environment Survey,” and its purpose and methods. I understand that my participation in this research is strictly voluntary. I am aware that I will use the Internet to complete this online survey. Further, I understand that I may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions. I understand that I may request the results of this study when it is completed. I understand that my answers on the survey will be confidential and will not affect my position. These are my rights related to participation in this study, and no one has asked me to waive them.

____________________________   ______________________
Signature of Participant           Date

CONTACT INFORMATION: The researchers listed below may be reached to answer questions about the research, subjects’ rights, or related matters.

Cynthia Pilcher
Doctoral Student, LEC Consortium
PO Box 216
Columbia, LA 71418
(318)649-6343

Dr. Cathy Stockton
Major Professor
College of Education
Louisiana Tech University
Ruston, LA 71272
(318)257-3229

Members of the Human Use Committee of Louisiana Tech University may be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the researchers: Dr. Terry McConathy (318) 257-2924, Dr. Mary M. Livingston (318) 257-2292, Mrs. Deby Hamm (318) 257-2924.
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

The following is a brief summary of the project that your child has been asked to participate in. Please read it before you sign the statement below.


PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This study will help us to know how what happens at school affects your child’s test scores (LEAP 21, Iowa) and how well the school rates.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS: Students may complete a 14-item online questionnaire, entitled “Assessment of Learning Environment Survey.”

RISKS/ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS: There are no risks associated with participation in this study. Participation is voluntary.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: None

I, ______________________________, show by my signature that I have read and understood the description of the study, “Assessment of Learning Environment Survey,” and its purpose and methods. I understand that completing this survey is by choice. My child, ______________________________ has my permission to participate in this research study. I am aware that my child will use the Internet to complete this online survey. I understand that my child may stop at any time or refuse to answer any questions. I understand that I may request the results of this study when it is completed. I understand that my child’s answers on the survey will be kept secret and will not affect his/her grades. These are my child’s rights related to this study, and no one has asked him/her to give up those rights.

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian                  Date

CONTACT INFORMATION: The researchers listed below may be reached to answer questions about the research, subjects’ rights, or related matters.

Cynthia Pilcher                                      Dr. Cathy Stockton
Doctoral Student, LEC Consortium                  Major Professor
PO Box 216                                         College of Education
Columbia, LA 71418                                 Louisiana Tech University
(318)649-6343                                      Ruston, LA 71272
                                                    (318)257-3229

Members of the Human Use Committee of Louisiana Tech University may be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the researchers:

Dr. Terry McConathy (318) 257-2924
Dr. Mary M. Livingston (318) 257-2292
Mrs. Deby Hamm (318) 257-2924
STUDENT CONSENT FORM

(Teachers, please read to students as they read along)


PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This will help us to know how what happens to you at school affects your test scores (LEAP 21 and Iowa) and how well the school rates.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS: You will be asked to answer a few questions in a survey on the Internet.

BENEFITS/COMPENSATION: None

I, ________________________________, have read or have been told about the research, "Assessment of Learning Environment Survey," and know that I may stop at any time or leave out answers to any questions. I know that my answers on this Internet survey will be kept secret, and what I say will not affect my grades. My teacher will not know how I answer. No one is making me do this.

_________________________  ______________________
Signature of Student Date

CONTACT INFORMATION: The researchers listed below may be reached to answer questions about the research, subjects' rights, or related matters.

Cynthia Pilcher
Doctoral Student, LEC Consortium
PO Box 216
Columbia, LA 71418
(318)649-6343

Dr. Cathy Stockton
Major Professor
College of Education
Louisiana Tech University
Ruston, LA 71272
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Members of the Human Use Committee of Louisiana Tech University may be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the researchers:

Dr. Terry McConathy (318) 257-2924
Dr. Mary M. Livingston (318) 257-2292
Mrs. Deby Hamm (318) 257-2924
APPENDIX H

Human Use Committee Review
TO: Cathy Stockton
   Cynthia Pilcher

FROM: Deby Hamm, Graduate School

SUBJECT: HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW

DATE: February 3, 2003

In order to facilitate your project, an EXPEDITED REVIEW has been done for your proposed study entitled:

"A study of the implementation of character education, learning environment, and school performance scores in selected parishes in Louisiana"

Proposal # 1-ABJ

The proposed study procedures were found to provide reasonable and adequate safeguards against possible risks involving human subjects. The information to be collected may be personal in nature or implication. Therefore, diligent care needs to be taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to assure that the data are kept confidential. Further, the subjects must be informed that their participation is voluntary.

Since your reviewed project appears to do no damage to the participants, the Human Use Committee grants approval of the involvement of human subjects as outlined.

You are requested to maintain written records of your procedures, data collected, and subjects involved. These records will need to be available upon request during the conduct of the study and retained by the university for three years after the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions, please give me a call at 257-2924.
APPENDIX I

Letters of Support for Study
January 15, 2003

Ms. Cynthia Pilcher
Post Office Box 216
Columbia, Louisiana 71418

Dear Ms. Pilcher:

Representative Francis Thompson was kind enough to share with me the summary of your doctoral dissertation concerning character education. As you may know, this has been a subject of great interest to me, as I believe that good character and respectfulness are just as important as the other skills learned throughout an individual’s educational development, and I firmly believe it should be a vital component to any curriculum in order to become a successful, well-rounded and productive citizen.

I am glad to see that character education is the focus of your dissertation and I believe your findings will be consistent with what you and I believe is an important component of education. Good luck with your dissertation and best wishes in the coming year.

Sincerely,

M. J. “Mike” Foster, Jr.

jm
Cynthia Pilcher, Doctoral Student  
Louisiana Tech University  
P.O. Box 216  
Columbia, LA 71418  

Dear Cynthia:  

It is truly an honor and privilege to write on behalf of your efforts to study character education. I am very pleased to learn about the study and please know that I am in full support of your efforts.  

Although, I have known you both, personally and professionally for many years, since I have been Representative for the 20th District, I have developed a closer working relationship with you. I find that you have the leadership qualities needed to succeed in today's society. You are a team player and able to motivate the people you work with and come in contact with. It has been my experience that you have always gone the extra mile in order to service the needs of my district and constituents. As a result of your dedication and input, I feel that I have been able to serve my District more effectively.  

As a member of the House Education Committee, I am very proud that you have selected Character Education for your study. I feel that education is one of our most important resources. Louisiana has made great progress in raising its level of accountability in education and I feel that this study will only benefit our state and our education program.  

With complete confidence, I am  

Sincerely,  

Lelon Kenney  
State Representative  
District 20
January 22, 2003

Cynthia Pilcher  
PO Box 216  
Columbia, I.A. 71418

Dear Ms. Pilcher:

As per our telephone conversation earlier this week, I understand your doctoral research study will investigate the relationship between the level of implementation of character education, learning environment, and School Performance Scores in the Delta region of northwestern Louisiana. I am pleased to learn that research involving character education is being conducted in Louisiana and am anxious to review the results of the study. I am aware our CHARACTER COUNTS! curricula is the most widely used character education materials in Louisiana schools. It will be interesting to see the impact it is having on learning environment and student achievement.

This doctoral research will make a contribution to the body of knowledge in this field. As you are aware, research is limited nationwide in the field of character education. The Josephson Institute of Ethics supports research projects such as this one and will be interested in reporting the results of the study on their website, www.josephsoninstitute.org.

Good luck in your pursuit of a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Louisiana Tech University. Please keep me informed as the study progresses.

Sincerely,

Julie Dwyer  
National Director  
CHARACTER COUNTS!
February 18, 2003

Cynthia Pilcher
Extension Agent
Community Economic Development
PO Box 1199
Columbia, LA 71418

Dear Cynthia:

Thanks for your commitment to character development as evidenced by your willingness to investigate the relationship between implementation, learning environment and school performance. I am impressed with your objectives and your approach for this study.

Because character education can erroneously refer to mere awareness, I encourage you to measure the results of effective character education strategies... which teach, enforce, advocate, and model good character. All four elements must be in place if real character education is actually going to occur. Effective character education efforts are purposeful (what changes/outcomes are you targeting?); pervasive; repetitive; concrete; consistent and creative. All four strategies and all six descriptors are essentials of effectiveness.

I predict that the degree to which your efforts meet the above criteria will correlate with the excellence of the school climate and with resulting school performance scores. I'll be most anxious to follow your work.

Keep me posted on your investigation! Congratulations on your selection of a needed study.

Sincerely,

Peggy M. Adkins
Extension Specialist, 4-H