Teacher Perceptions of Changes in Middle School Student Behavior After Implementation of a Character Education Program

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT BEHAVIOR AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF A CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

Maria F. Cleary

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education
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Abstract

Teacher Perceptions of Changes in Middle School Behavior After Implementation of a Character Education Program

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the effects of a character education program on student behavior at a New Jersey public middle school for sixth graders. Specifically, the studied examined student behaviors in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, relationship management and social awareness as they were perceived by teachers. The study also investigated the extent to which teachers felt the character education program should continue and be improved upon for the next school year.

In this qualitative study, 13 teachers from a sixth grade middle school in an affluent suburban town in New Jersey were interviewed. Efforts were made to include a representative sample of the faculty in terms of sex, age, and subjects taught. Questions were designed to identify and evaluate student behaviors in each of the four categories listed above. Data were tape recorded and transcribed.

Findings indicated that most teachers saw a minimal positive effect of the character education program on student behaviors, with some indicating that they observed no effect whatsoever. Some teachers were able to cite specific examples where the program was referenced by students in the classroom; others gave examples of instances when they had been able to integrate the program's messages into their lessons. However, they were still reluctant to report that the program had influenced student behaviors in any definitive way.

Nonetheless, all the interviewees felt that the program should continue. Many articulated that they saw a need for character education in their school's curriculum and
that they would like to see the program offered again with improvements. They cited better timing of the program, more professional development opportunities, and increased integration of the program into the school’s curriculum as examples of ways to enhance its effectiveness.

Recommendations for further study included research on other age groups, in schools where the program had been more fully integrated and where faculty had been adequately trained in program implementation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To Barbara Whitehill I offer my gratitude for opening the door to this particular topic of study and for paving the way for the research. Her inspirational teaching philosophy is a gift to both her students and to all of us educators who are fortunate enough to know her.

My thanks also go out to my Seton Hall colleagues who have become cherished friends throughout these years of study. I truly appreciate your presence in my life, and I value the support you have so generously given.

Finally, I acknowledge my family who has cheered me on throughout this
process. Knowing you are proud of what I am doing has helped me immeasurably along the journey.
DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my mother,

Mary Pecorella Finaro.

Mom, we did it.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

DEDICATION v

LIST OF TABLES ix

LIST OF FIGURES x

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem 3
Purpose of the Study 4
Procedures 7
Significance of the Study 7
Conceptual Framework for Character Education 9
   Jean Piaget 11
   Lawrence Kohlberg 12
   John Dewey 14
   F. Matthias Alexander 16
   R.L. Selman 17
   James Rest 18
   Daniel Goleman, Peter Salovey, John Mayer 19
   B.E. Matthews and C.K. Riley 21
   Project Wisdom 21
Limitations of the Study 22
Definitions 23
Outline of the Study 24
   Summary 24

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 26

The Need for Character Education 26
Components of an Effective Character Education Program 30
Character Education and Student Behavior 38
Teacher and Student Perceptions of
   Character Education Programs 41
Summary 45
III. Methodology

Research Design 47
Participants 50
Instrumentation 50
Data Collection 53
Data Analysis 54
Summary 55

IV. Research Findings 56

Presentation of Findings 58
Self-Awareness 58
Self-Management 63
Relationship Management 66
Social Awareness 73
Effectiveness of the Character Education Program 81
Summary 95

V. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations 99

Introduction 99
Summary of Research 100
Self-Awareness 101
Self-Management 103
Relationship Management 105
Social Awareness 106
Effectiveness of the Character Education Program 107
A Model 110
Recommendations 113
Policy 114
Practice 114
Future Research 116

REFERENCES 119

APPENDIXES

A: Goleman's Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence 129
B: Bulach's Selected Character Values and Corresponding Behaviors 131
C: Project Wisdom Values Fostered 138
D: Interview Transcripts 141
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E: Superintendent's Letter</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: Letter of Solicitation</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: Institutional Review Board Approval</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H: Informed Consent Form</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Values Associated with Character Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Demographic Data of Interview Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Comments on Self-awareness and Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Comments on Fairness, Honesty and Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comments on Self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Comments on Civility and Courtesy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Comments on Kindness, Harmony, Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Comments on “Other Awareness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Comments on Bullying and Teasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Comments on Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Comments on Timing of Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Additional Dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Evidence of Effectiveness of Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Program Continuation and Suggestions for Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Suggestions for Teacher Involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Character Education 10
CHAPTER I

Introduction

"I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on the frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words."

(Hesiod Quotes, 2006)

"Kids. I don't know what's wrong with these kids today.... Why can't they be like we were, perfect in every way..."

(Kids, 1963)

"In today's world, we should expect our selfish adult culture that worships money and glorifies violence will beget its good share of aggressive, narcissistic little scoundrels."

(Morcate, 1995, p. 19A)

Since the early recordings of the written word, there has been considerable concern among adults as to the state of morality among young people. Even Plato bemoaned the corruption of manners, values and respect in his time:

What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law. They riot in the streets inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them? (as cited in Flametree, 2006)

Here in the 21st century, things remain uneasy among parents who are concerned about the trends they witness in the moral development of their children. Given the pervasive media culture which exposes young people to much more sophisticated and
even erotic information than in the past, this does not seem to be a baseless worry. In fact, a study published in *Pediatrics* concluded that "for white teens, repeated exposure to sexual content in television, movies and music increases the likelihood of becoming sexually active at an earlier age" (Brown, 2006). Indeed, the author found that 55% of teens who had encountered substantial sexual material had intercourse by age 16. This result reflects the belief of American parents polled by *Newsweek*. Eighty-four percent said that sex plays a bigger role in popular culture than it did 20 or 30 years ago, and 70% said it was a bad influence on young people (Deveny, 2007).

However, sexual mores are not the only concern of those who are caretakers of young people. Among U.S. teenagers, overall violence is down, but one in three high school students reported being in a fight in 2003, and problems such as bullying are widespread; in fact, nearly half of all students who belong to high school organizations report being subjected to hazing. Cheating has steadily increased at every educational level, including high school, in recent decades. Seventy-seven percent have consumed alcohol by the end of high school; 58% of 12th graders report having been drunk at least once in their life; and one in three teens say they engage in binge drinking at least once a month. About 20% of U.S. teens say they have seriously considered suicide in the past year. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year-olds, surpassed only by car accidents and homicide (Lickona & Davidson, 2004).

In a 2003-2004 American Federation of Teachers poll, 17% of teachers reported that they lost 4 or more hours of teaching time per week as a result of disruptive student behavior; another 19% said they lost 2 or 3 hours. In urban areas, the number increased to
21% who said they lost 4 or more hours per week. In urban secondary schools, the statistics increased even further to 24% (Hill, Ramsey & Gresham, 2003-2004).

The state of New Jersey has responded to public reaction to these statistics by creating the New Jersey Character Education Partnership (NJCEP) in January 2000 for the purpose of supporting the adoption of high-quality character education programs by New Jersey public school educators. As part of this initiative, every New Jersey school district, approved charter school, special services school, jointure commission, and educational services commission school received a minimum of $4,000 per year to implement a character education program in at least one school building. According to the New Jersey Character Education Partnership (2005):

Research has shown that character education and related social-emotional learning programs that meet the developmental needs of students can successfully promote pro-social student behaviors and help to create caring, disciplined school environments in which students can thrive both personally and academically. (p. 5)

Given the current status of character education in New Jersey, a study of various programs throughout the state is warranted to evaluate their effects. Therefore, this study examined one character education program at a New Jersey public middle school that attempts to address this situation.  

Statement of the Problem

Based on current data, the state of prosocial student behaviors is a cause for concern among educators. To address this situation, schools have begun to institute
character education programs, either by developing their own curricula, using a model from a successful program in another educational institution, or purchasing a program from an outside vendor. This study examined if a character education program at one New Jersey public middle school resulted in changes in student behaviors after its first year of implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the effects of Project Wisdom, a character education program at a New Jersey public middle school for sixth graders. More specifically, this study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student self-awareness since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student diligence, perseverance, self-discipline, prudence, responsibility to self.)

2. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student self-management since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student fairness, honesty, integrity, confidence, courage, healthy self-esteem.)

3. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student relationship-management since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student cooperation, conflict resolution, nonviolent behavior, civility, courtesy, application of the "Golden Rule," patience, caring,
compassion, empathy, and kindness.)

4. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student social awareness since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: respect, sense of human dignity and self-worth, tolerance, service to others, and social responsibility.)

5. To what extent do teachers think the program should continue and be improved upon for the coming school year to reflect their observations?

These research questions are based on the categories outlined in Table 1. The categories emerged from a number of models: the four domains of emotional intelligence as articulated by Daniel Goleman (Goleman, 2002) (See Appendix A); a research instrument developed at the University of West Georgia that provides 96 behaviors associated with 16 character traits (See Appendix B). This tool was used in a pilot study which examined how teachers describe their perceptions of students' behavior (Bulach, 2002); and Project Wisdom’s suggested list of values fostered (Values Fostered, 1992) (See Appendix C). Multiple sources were used to compile a representative sampling in order to reduce the chance of conflict in identifying core values.
| Table 1 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Values Associated with Character Education** |
| **self awareness** | **self management** | **relationship management** | **social awareness** |
| Diligence/Perseverance/ Self-discipline/ Prudence/ Responsibility to self | Diligence/Perseverance/ Self-discipline/ Prudence/ Responsibility to self | Diligence/Perseverance/ Self-discipline/ Prudence/ Responsibility to self | Diligence/Perseverance/ Self-discipline/ Prudence/ Responsibility to self |
| does work responsibly | does work responsibly | does work responsibly | does work responsibly |
| completes assignments | completes assignments | completes assignments | completes assignments |
| does work on time | does work on time | does work on time | does work on time |
| listens to and carries out directives from teacher | listens to and carries out directives from teacher | listens to and carries out directives from teacher | listens to and carries out directives from teacher |
| takes responsibility for choices and actions | takes responsibility for choices and actions | takes responsibility for choices and actions | takes responsibility for choices and actions |
| trustworthiness | trustworthiness | trustworthiness | trustworthiness |
| encourages others to follow rules speaking out against wrong-doing | encourages others to follow rules speaking out against wrong-doing | encourages others to follow rules speaking out against wrong-doing | encourages others to follow rules speaking out against wrong-doing |
| self-esteem | self-esteem | self-esteem | self-esteem |
| confidence | confidence | confidence | confidence |
| cooperation | cooperation | cooperation | cooperation |
| civility | civility | civility | civility |
| courtesy | courtesy | courtesy | courtesy |
| golden rule | golden rule | golden rule | golden rule |
| patience | patience | patience | patience |
| cooperation | cooperation | cooperation | cooperation |
| conflict resolution | conflict resolution | conflict resolution | conflict resolution |
| non-violence | non-violence | non-violence | non-violence |
| positive relationships with others | positive relationships with others | positive relationships with others | positive relationships with others |
| refrains from put-downs, negative comments | refrains from put-downs, negative comments | refrains from put-downs, negative comments | refrains from put-downs, negative comments |
| apologizes for hurtful or negative behavior | apologizes for hurtful or negative behavior | apologizes for hurtful or negative behavior | apologizes for hurtful or negative behavior |
| sharing resources | sharing resources | sharing resources | sharing resources |
| unsolicited kind actions towards others | unsolicited kind actions towards others | unsolicited kind actions towards others | unsolicited kind actions towards others |
| sympathy in times of trouble | sympathy in times of trouble | sympathy in times of trouble | sympathy in times of trouble |
| helping those in need | helping those in need | helping those in need | helping those in need |
| respect personal property of others | respect personal property of others | respect personal property of others | respect personal property of others |
| respect teachers and administrators | respect teachers and administrators | respect teachers and administrators | respect teachers and administrators |
| respect other school staff (secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, aides) | respect other school staff (secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, aides) | respect other school staff (secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, aides) | respect other school staff (secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, aides) |
| respect school property (desks, walls, bathrooms, buses, buildings, grounds) | respect school property (desks, walls, bathrooms, buses, buildings, grounds) | respect school property (desks, walls, bathrooms, buses, buildings, grounds) | respect school property (desks, walls, bathrooms, buses, buildings, grounds) |
Procedures

This is a qualitative study. Face to face interviews with 13 teachers were conducted to evaluate their perceptions of the effects of the character education program on student behaviors. The teachers represented various departments from the middle school and had varying profiles in terms of age, gender, and subjects taught. Interviews were approximately 45-50 minutes in length.

Data were obtained through notes taken during interviews and transcription of recorded interviews. After each individual interview was recorded and transcribed, the content was hand coded to provide a system for organizing, as well as to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Analysis was done both concurrently with the data collection and at its conclusion. The results of the analysis detected common themes, trends, and patterns of thought that characterize teacher perceptions of the effects of the character education program on student behaviors as well as their recommendations for future implementation of the program.

Significance of the Study

To date, a number of studies have examined character education programs in a variety of school settings. However, in almost every case a recommendation has been made that data be gathered from a large cross-section of school populations. This study examined a sixth-grade student population from a suburban middle school, population 421, District Factor Group I, where A is the lowest and J the highest. The percentage of the student population that speaks English as a first language is 99.8. This represents a
data sample that has not been represented in current literature on this topic.

Another recommendation from past studies of character education was that further research should examine different grade levels. In this case, sixth grade is the focus of the study since it is such a critical stage in terms of student behavior. Sixth grade is traditionally a transitional year for young people, physically, emotionally, and socially. In many school districts, it is also the year they move on from an elementary configuration to a middle school model. This change is often challenging and difficulties arise because of many different factors:

1. academic demands are more rigorous than in elementary school;
2. the middle school population tends to be larger than elementary school;
3. there are different teachers in each subject;
4. many students are experiencing the onset of puberty and awareness of the opposite sex;
5. elementary school friends have often been left behind to be replaced by a group of "strangers";
6. students move from being the oldest students in their environment to being the youngest;
7. behavioral standards are different than among elementary students (Cromwell, 2005).

At the same time, teachers are facing students who are often "in a slump" when it comes to academic motivation and performance. University of Michigan researchers have studied the transition from elementary to middle school and have found the following:

1. On average, children's grades drop dramatically during the first year of middle
school compared to their grades in elementary school.

2. After moving to junior high school, children become less interested in school and less self-assured about their abilities.

3. Compared to elementary schools, middle schools are more controlling, less cognitively challenging and focus more on competition and comparing students' ability (American Psychological Association, 2004, ¶2).

Because the age of middle-schoolers is such a developmental milestone, it is an important time to measure the effectiveness of a character education program that impacts the psycho-social growth of these students.

*Conceptual Framework for Character Education*

The case for character education in schools is grounded in a number of theories that have either long been part of the canon of educational literature or have come to be respected additions to our understanding of human development. A number of educational theorists have created a conceptual framework for the inclusion of character education as part of a school's curriculum. Their work contains key components of the case for character education: a holistic approach to education, stages of development, the critical inclusion of community, multiple intelligences, the evolution of our perspective on social issues.

The following diagram serves as a summary of pertinent educational theories with references to the ways the Project Wisdom model reflects these theories. Relationships between the theorists are indicated as they reflect a movement towards the educational philosophies that would constitute a fertile foundation for character education.
Figure 1.
Conceptual framework for character education
Jean Piaget, **morality as a developmental process.** "Piaget believed that all development emerges from action. People construct and reconstruct knowledge of the world based on interactions with the environment" (Nucci, 2002, ¶1). Therefore, morality is also a developmental process, with specific stages marking a human's progress.

We begin with a "heteronomous" stage of moral reasoning where there is strict adherence to rules and obedience to authority. This stage is derived from two factors: egocentrism and a child's relative social relationship with adults.

Egocentrism in young children is characterized by their inability to consider the perspective of others. Their view of things is the only view of things. Consequently, they project their own thoughts and wishes onto others. At this stage, children are often governed by a "moral realism" where they value the letter of the law above the purpose of the law and are concerned more with the outcomes of actions than the intention of the person committing the act. Moral realism is also associated with the concept of "immanent justice" where the expectation is that punishment will automatically follow acts of wrongdoing.

The second factor that contributes to heteronomous moral thinking in young children is their relationship with adults. These are characterized by a sense of powerlessness for young people. The model they have learned is that power is handed down from above from adults to them, and it demands their adherence to whatever rules have been put forth.

However, once children start to understand the concept of "playing fair" and desire rules that reflect mutual respect and cooperation, they begin to take a critical look at their rules based on those goals. This represents a shift in children's thinking from
egocentric to other-centered as they coordinate their own perspective with that of others to work out a resolution that all consider equitable. This is a move towards the "autonomous" stage of moral reasoning, and marks a progression for the child whose perception of morality now includes the results of their interpersonal interactions (DeVries & Zan, 1994).

Piaget concluded that, to foster autonomous moral reasoning, schools should "emphasize cooperative decision-making and problem solving, nurturing moral development by requiring students to work out common rules based on fairness" (Nucci, 2007a, p6). He suggested that classroom teachers should provide students with opportunities for personal discovery through problem solving rather than indoctrinating them with rules. Introducing character education to the curriculum, replete with decision-making exercises and adequate room for self-exploration, would be one way to accomplish this goal.

*Lawrence Kohlberg, the just community.* Lawrence Kohlberg elaborated on Piaget's work, adding his own modifications and further insights. Kohlberg posited that children's experiences form their ways of thinking, including moral concepts such as justice, rights, equality, and welfare. However, he believed that the process of maturity is much more gradual than what Piaget proposed.

Kohlberg's research on moral development led him to identify six stages of moral reasoning, grouped into three levels. At the preconventional level, Stage One, moral judgments are characterized by a child's concrete, individual perspective; they are egocentric, reflecting a child's inability to consider the perspective of others.

In Stage Two, there is an early emergence of moral reciprocity. One should
follow rules when it is in someone's immediate interest. "Fairness" is described as an equal exchange, a deal or agreement. If everyone has an interest to pursue and these conflict, then "right" is relative.

During Stages Three and on, children start reflecting a more basic understanding of conventional morality as it holds up society. A person is aware that shared feelings, agreements, and expectations often take precedence over individual interests. Being "good" is defined as honoring relationships and living in a manner that manifests trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude. Gradually there is a notion of "right" as it is reflected in the laws and norms of a larger social system (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989).

Kohlberg recognized the value of character education but rejected the traditional methods, where teachers are handed a "bag of virtues" to advocate through example and direct communication (Nucci, 2007b, ¶ 5). He found this approach provides no guiding principle about which virtues are worthy of espousal and might ultimately reflect the ethical relativity of instructors whose beliefs and value systems may vary according to their cultures and background.

Rather, Kohlberg suggested an approach that helps a person develop through the stages of moral reasoning. He based his initial proposals on Piaget's assumption of cognitive development, which recognized that a person moves through a sequence of qualitative changes in thinking. Essentially, children interact with the environment based on their understanding of it at any given stage. However, at some point, they will encounter information that does not fit into their current world view. At that point, the world view will be adjusted to accommodate the new information. This process is called equilibration, and this is where development occurs. A common tool for encouraging this
development in the classroom would be to present a "moral dilemma" to students and ask them to determine and justify a solution.

Kohlberg came to understand, however, that moral education required both individual reflection and experiences for students to act as moral agents within the community (Nucci, 2007b, ¶ 9). He developed a "just community" schools approach which essentially offered students an opportunity to participate in a democratic community. The central activity of this program is a community meeting during which issues are raised, discussed, and democratically decided, moving towards the goal of establishing collective norms, which express fairness for all community members. This approach reflects the cognitive-developmentalist view that the discussion of moral dilemmas can foster moral development.

**John Dewey.** Dewey's call to educate the whole child provided a firm foundation for the concept of moral education. He recognized the interactive relationship between the mind, body, and environment which shapes the internal psychological patterns of individuals, something Dewey called "habits." As Dewey defined it, a "habit" has more to do with internal emotional responses than external conduct. He called a habit a "predisposition to ways or modes of response, not particular acts," which he illustrated with the example of a man who has a habit of giving in to his anger and shows his habit by attacking someone (Dewey, 1922, p. 42).

These habits, which are acquired dispositions, are the building blocks of character. Dewey (1922) stated his theory of moral character when he wrote:

> All virtues and vices are habits which incorporate objective forces.
They are interactions of elements contributed by the make-up of an individual with elements supplied by the outdoor world. They can be studied as objectively as physiological functions, and they can be modified by change of either personal or social elements. (p. 16)

Dewey (1922) recognized that a child is subjected to different and often conflicting schemes of education, and he was sensitive to the fact that a school is only one of many influences on an individual's development. Value confusion may result, and Dewey warns that this may lead to a "disrupted personality" whose conduct is "confused and disintegrated." He made the case for understanding that, in the final analysis, there must be an acknowledgement of the problems that are not only among us but within us as well.

Furthermore, because the environment can condition our internal responses, we must tend to it if we are to achieve a "working harmony" within ourselves, the young, growing individual, and the environment. When speaking of the consequences of an environment that does not provide harmony – which includes some consensus on moral issues – Dewey (1922) was presciently insightful:

It is not easy to exaggerate the extent to which we now pass from one kind of nurture to another as we go from business to church, from science to the newspaper, from business to art, from companionship to politics, from home to school. An individual is now subjected to many conflicting schemes of education. Hence, habits are divided against one another, personality is disrupted, the scheme of conduct is confused and disintegrated. (p. 130)
It is clear that Dewey was aware of the multiple influences on character and conduct and was sensitive to the ecological aspect of character education. He knew that school is only one factor in an individual's moral development. Mass media, peers, family, social culture may run contrary to the agenda established by a school. Minimally, the family and school must work in concert, because the larger aspects of the environment are not within our control.

Therefore, within Dewey's writings, we find a rationale for creating a comprehensive course of study around character education. It can, according to Dewey, be analyzed, learned, and modified, recognizing both the internal and external factors that determine our "habits."

_F. Matthias Alexander, "The Alexander Technique"_. F. Matthias Alexander (1869-1955) was an Australian who made some very important discoveries about human functioning and behavior stemming from his experiences with stage fright as a young actor. He was not able to get any relief for his problem from traditional medical sources, so he embarked on a journey of self-exploration, eventually developing theories and practices unique to his time. Alexander's discoveries, and the practical methods he and his followers developed for teaching them, form the basis of what has become known today as the Alexander Technique. We understand now that this technique of mind-body integration was a predecessor of relaxation therapies such as biofeedback and meditation.

John Dewey met Alexander during World War I when Alexander was visiting New York and he had his first lessons from Alexander at that time. Dewey was then in his fifties, and he continued taking Alexander Technique lessons for the next 35 years.
Dewey attributed his enhanced understanding and further development in the areas of ethics, moral development, and moral education to his work with Alexander: "The technique of Mr. Alexander gives to the educator a standard of psycho-physical health—in which what we call morality is included" (Dewey, 1974, pp. 169-184).

Dewey and Alexander shared the idea that ethical problems are connected to anger and our internal responses to that anger. These become the habits that define our character. They suggested that our habits, both virtues and vices, may be changed by either personal or social elements, by either individual efforts or the impact of the environment.

The Alexander technique was one way of reducing the responses that characterize "stress" or "character-conditioned hate." Dewey described Alexander's contribution as demonstrating that the individual is not a "passive puppet to be played upon by external manipulation." Rather, our internal responses may be brought under "conscious direction" thereby enabling "the individual through his own coordinated activities to take possession of his own potentialities" (Dewey, J, 1974, p. 183-4).

This gives further support to the notion that character education can find a useful place in the school environment by giving teachers the opportunity to lead their students on a journey of self-discovery, as per the recommendations of Kohlberg among others.

R.L. Selman. R. L. Selman's social development stages are viewed as a link between Piaget's logical reasoning stages and Kohlberg's moral reasoning stages. Selman places emphasis on the role of experience and learning, stating that one progresses to higher levels of social perspective through appropriate social experiences.

Selman's stages are as follows (Attwood, 1992):
1. Stage 0 (ages 3-6). Children cannot distinguish clearly between their own interpretation of a situation and another person's point of view.

2. Stage 1 (ages 5-9). Although children realize others may have different views than their own, they are unable to understand such views.

3. Stage 2 (ages 7-12). Older children and preadolescents can reflect on their thoughts and feelings from another person's viewpoint, but they cannot hold both perspectives simultaneously.

4. Stage 3 (ages 10-15). Adolescents can step outside their own viewpoints and those of others and assume the perspective of a neutral third person (McDaniel, 1998).

Selman's stages suggested that a character education program which adapts to a student's capacity to develop a broader social perspective could be an effective tool to acquire social-emotional learning.

James Rest. The work of James Rest (1986) provides a framework for understanding moral behavior. His four component model includes moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral decision-making, and moral action. Moral sensitivity is the recognition that a situation exists in which moral action may be needed and that these actions may have consequences for others. Moral judgment is a judgment about what one ought to do, while moral decision-making involves considering alternatives and weighing pros and cons in light of their probable consequences for self and others. Finally, moral action includes the will and skill to implement the decision (Rest, 1986). Like the work of Selman, Rest's stages of development could also be used as a rationale and a basis for creating moral education programs.
Daniel Goleman, Peter Salovey, John D. Mayer, emotional intelligence. There is considerable research suggesting that a person's ability to identify and manage emotions provides the basis for the social and emotional competencies that are important for success. Persons with high emotional intelligence generally have the following skills that help them manage themselves and interact with others in a positive way: impulse control, self-esteem, self-motivation, mood management, people skills.

Much of the credit for bringing this subject to public attention belongs to Daniel Goleman, a Harvard-trained psychologist whose 1995 book, Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995) was on The New York Times bestseller list for a year-and-a-half, and who popularized the concept of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). However, emotional intelligence was previously studied by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer who defined it as "a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Mayer, 1993, p. 434). The authors say that emotional intelligence subsumes Howard Gardner's inter- and intrapersonal intelligences, and involves abilities that may be categorized into five domains:

1. Self-awareness: Observing yourself and recognizing a feeling as it happens.

2. Managing emotions: Handling feelings so that they are appropriate; realizing what is behind a feeling; finding ways to handle fears and anxieties, anger and sadness.

3. Motivating oneself: Channeling emotions in the service of a goal; emotional self control; delaying gratification and stifling impulses.

4. Empathy: Sensitivity to others' feelings and concerns and taking their perspective; appreciating the differences in how people feel about things.
5. Handling relationships: Managing emotions in others; social competence and social skills (Salovey, 1990).

Daniel Goleman's list is altered somewhat to include only four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Goleman saw a strong connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and the mission of a school (Daniel Goleman on, 2001). He stated that children are facing more dire problems today than ever before, but at the same time, he noted:

They are not getting the key emotional and social skills and competencies they need for life -- being able to handle anxiety and anger, to empathize, to work things out. So they're coming to school more troubled and they're having more troubles at school. And school is the natural place to help a kid whose life is at school deal with these very perplexing issues. (¶ 3)

In addition to the explicit curriculum - math, language, science - Goleman (2001) cited the implicit curriculum - learning how to get along with other people, learning how to motivate yourself, how to persist, how to resist temptation and stay fixed on a goal, how to work together toward a common goal. His theory was that, over the course of life, these implicit lessons turn out to be even more important than the explicit ones, despite our emphasis on the latter. He believed schools should teach students how to manage themselves better, how to handle emotions and other people, how to cooperate, how to get along, and that it is critical for educators to focus on this range of learning.

Matthews and Riley, Community. B.E. Matthews and C.K. Riley (1995) determined that effective ethics education is grounded in community.
We ensure failure if we teach ethics without using a community context to illustrate, nurture, and support ethical development. Without grounding ethics within the particular community and cultural context of the learner, ethics remain abstract, outside the scope of experiences of the learner, and ultimately irrelevant. (Matthews, 1995, p. 17)

A school is a critical and constant environment in the life of a child, and based on the theory of Matthews and Riley, an effective place to create and build a character education program.

Project Wisdom as a reflection of theoretical models. Project Wisdom is a character education program that uses quotes from individuals who have contributed to humanity in a constructive way. These quotes, Words of Wisdom, are read to students each day for the purpose of student reflection. Lesson plans and suggestions for follow-up activities are provided for teachers to enhance the implementation of the program. Project Wisdom was the focus of this research and reflects a number of the theoretical models that have been outlined above. Piaget, for instance, urged educators to nurture an environment where students could use the principles of fairness to develop common rules. He also suggested that teachers create a climate for self-discovery. This program, which introduces character education to the curriculum, replete with decision-making exercises and adequate room for self-exploration, would be one way to accomplish this.

Kohlberg’s theories are reflected in this program in that he recognized that moral education requires both individual reflection and experiences for students to act as moral agents within the community. Project Wisdom encourages students to both reflect on the character development statements they have heard, and then discuss and apply them to
their experiences within school. In that respect it follows Kohlberg’s recommendations for a character education model.

Dewey’s most basic precepts formed a strong foundation for character education. He recognized the interactive relationship between the mind, body and environment. Dewey and his follower Alexander did important work in identifying the importance of educating the whole child, recognizing that there are multiple influences on character and conduct, and thereby supporting the inclusion of some kind of character education in the curriculum. The model in Project Wisdom also recognizes that a student’s exposure to a character education curriculum that is present in the entire school environment can affect behavior in a positive way. Additionally, Goleman’s emotional intelligence theory can be an integral part of the foundation for a character education model such as Project Wisdom since it recognizes his “implicit curriculum” – getting along with others, developing a sense of responsibility, staying focused on a goal, working together for the common good.

In total, Project Wisdom reflects many of the philosophical tenets of the educational theorists who have provided the foundation for the inclusion of character education into the curriculum. It is, therefore, an appropriate program for study of the effects of such a program on student behavior.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study dealt only with sixth graders at one NJ public middle school in a suburban environment. The school is DFG I (with a range from A-J, with A being the lowest.) Families are upper middle class with an active parent-teacher organization.
Therefore, the results of this study would not necessarily be applicable to other school environments.

2. The study examined a character education program after its first year in practice. The degree of enthusiasm about its implementation on the part of administrators, faculty, and parents may be skewed in one direction or another because of that.

3. No attempt was made to empirically demonstrate the program's efficacy in terms of student academic outcomes. The study was limited to classroom behaviors.

4. The study relied on evidence from teachers only. Students and support staff were not interviewed.

5. Implementation of Project Wisdom in the school where this study took place was limited to only one dimension of the program which was the reading of Words of Wisdom in the morning over the PA system.

Definitions

Character education: the deliberate effort by schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. (What is, 1999)

Character education program: a program designed to improve the character traits of those in a learning community.

DFG: The DFG (District Factor Group) represents an approximate measure of a community's relative socioeconomic status (SES). DFGs are calculated using the following six variables that are closely related to SES: (a) percentage of adults with no high school diploma, (b) percentage of adults with some college education, (c)
occupational status, (d) unemployment rate, (e) percentage of individuals in poverty, (f) median family income. (State of NJ, 2004)

Outline of the Study

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature concerning character education including the need for character education, various models which reflect good practices in character education, models which have produced inconsistent results, and the implications for future study, and the perceptions of teachers with regard to the effect of character education on students' behavior.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the current study, including the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 reports the study results with appropriate tables.

Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and implications of the study. Finally, questions for further research are suggested.

Summary

The need for character education in schools has been articulated by members of society at large, educators and experts, and educational theorists and philosophers. To address this need, schools have begun to introduce character education programs to the curriculum.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate one such character education program that was introduced to a New Jersey public sixth grade middle school in an affluent suburb. Specifically, the study examined if the character education program affected
student behaviors after its first year of implementation as perceived by participating teachers.

The study used four research questions based on multiple models and focused on students' self-awareness, self-management, relationship-management, and social awareness. In addition, it examined teacher suggestions for improvement and continuation of the program.

The study was qualitative and involved interviewing 13 faculty members at the middle school. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for patterns and themes.
Chapter II

Review of Literature

The Need for Character Education

The call for character education in our schools has resounded throughout educational literature since the writings of John Dewey; however, with societal changes unleashing a seeming shift in our perceptions of moral behavior, there has been an increase in the number of articles and studies that are devoted to this topic.

The 32nd Annual Poll conducted by Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup reported that Americans believe the single most important purpose of public schooling is to prepare people to become responsible citizens (Rose & Gallup, 2000). Character education, according to much of the literature on the topic, may provide students with skills, knowledge, and positive dispositions to become engaged, conscientious, and active participants in a democracy.

Jonathan Cohen, writer for the Harvard Educational Review, suggested that social, emotional, and ethical education can help children reach the goals their parents and teachers have articulated for them and that social-emotional competencies and ethical dispositions provide an “essential foundation for life-long learners who are able to love and work” (Cohen, 2006, p. 201). His work has led him to define two core processes that promote children’s school success and healthy development: (a) advocating and working to develop children’s social-emotional competencies and ethical dispositions throughout their preK-12 school experience; and (b) creating safe, caring, participatory, and responsive school systems and homes.
The work of Michelli and Reiser discussed the qualities that are found in the citizens of a democratic society: respect for others, ability to collaborate, regard for fairness and justice, concern for the commonwealth and voluntary, and active participation in society (Michelli & Reiser, 2005).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in positive psychology, an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions and character traits. The intent of researchers is to have a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience. Peterson and Seligman, two pioneers in this field, have created a list of character strengths and virtues that enable humans to thrive. These include many of the traits that are found in character education programs: open-mindedness, courage, persistence, kindness, justice, forgiveness, prudence, and gratitude (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

In addition, research indicated that the essential foundation of pleasure and positive engagement in life may be social-emotional competency. In fact, preliminary findings support the notion that social-emotional competencies and well-being are significantly related (Bar-On, 2005).

Positive psychology also suggests that our sense of well-being rests on our ability to use our strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than ourselves. These domains of family, health, spirituality, social justice, or the environment are all socially and emotionally grounded. Actions that are altruistic are also emotional, ethical, and tied to our ability to achieve happiness and satisfaction (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005).

Despite our research on what can lead us to happy and fulfilling lives, America
today once again finds itself caught in a cycle of actions that have as their foundation violence, revenge, and intolerance. Cohen (2006) cites this as yet another validation of the need for character education for our children. He states:

....[D]ifferences, religious or otherwise, are ripping peoples and the world apart. From ancient times to Iraq today, people have tried to solve differences with physical force....What can we do to promote children's understanding of diversity, fear, conflict and community? What we can and desperately need to do is teach children the skills and dispositions that provide the foundation for collaboration and democracy” (p. 239).

These sentiments are echoed by Dr. Thomas Lickona, developmental psychologist and professor of education at the State University of New York at Cortland, who directed the Center for the Fourth and Fifth Rs at this writing and is on the board of directors of the Character Education Partnership in Washington DC. After extensive research, Lickona developed "ten good reasons" for schools to adopt a character education program. He believed that young people are increasingly hurting themselves and others, and are less concerned about others, all of which reflects society in general. Schools, he believes, have always had a responsibility for moral education, but even more so now since church and temple are not as often a regular part of the lives of children. Schools can impart character education based on common ground, the concepts of justice, honesty and civility, and also on our agreement about the value of the democratic process, which emphasizes the rights of all. Lickona (2004) posited that there is no such thing as a values-free education and that all the world’s great questions are morally based. He suggested that values education is a doable job and will attract and keep good
teachers; indeed, there is a broad-based growing support for character education in schools (Lickona, 2004).

The Character Education Partnership also reported that numerous polls show that Americans place issues such as ethics and morality high on their list of concerns. For instance:

1. Research indicated that more than 90% of the population believes schools should teach character traits to students (Ryan, 2007).

2. A 2006 Gallup poll found that 85% of Americans who participated consider the overall state of moral values in this country “only fair” or “poor.” When asked if they thought the state of moral values was, as a whole, getting better or worse, 81% said “worse” (Gallup Organization, 2006).

3. A 1998 poll (The Tarrance Group and Lake Snell Perry & Associates) of 1,000 likely voters showed that Americans want Congress to restore moral values and improve education more than any other issue. A 2006 update indicated that there is widespread distrust of government leaders that illustrates the views of dissatisfied citizens who are calling for change (Lake Research, 2006).

In research that further supported this articulated need for character education, a study was conducted in an urban school district and community near Atlanta, Georgia (Bulach, 2002). It identified the character values that were most important to those surveyed and then measured the extent to which behaviors associated with those character traits were present in grades K through 12.

On the basis of data collected via an instrument to measure the presence or absence of behaviors associated with 16 character values, it was determined that there
was a definite need for a character education curriculum in this district. The greatest need was perceived for the values of respect, courtesy, forgiveness, and humility at the middle school and high school, and for courtesy, generosity, and sportsmanship at the elementary level.

Bulach's study (2002) determined that there were many students who were exhibiting good character values. The researchers also concluded that if the right atmosphere is created, students will serve as role models for each other, and might have an even greater impact on building character among their peers. On the other hand, if they do not see value-centered behaviors modeled by other students and by faculty, they will continue to act the way they have in the past.

As the voices calling for character education are heard in more corners of our society, various models like the one suggested above have emerged. These have led to both positive and inconclusive results in terms of student behaviors and social-emotional growth.

*Components of an Effective Character Education Program*

In a report compiled by the University of Missouri at St. Louis and commissioned by the Character Education Partnership, current research in character education was synthesized and analyzed (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006). In this study, character education was defined as, "any school-based K-12 initiatives either intended to promote the development of some aspect of student character or for which some aspect of student character was measured as a relevant outcome variable" (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006, p. 5).
The researchers analyzed a pool of 69 studies of 33 character education programs, as well as two meta-analyses which accounted for over 100 additional studies. From that documentation, Berkowitz and Bier (2006) drew the following conclusions about character education programs:

1. They work if they are effectively designed and implemented.

2. There are many models of effective character education programs including whole school reform, classroom lesson-based, target behavior (such as bullying) and integrated component models.

3. Character education can affect students’ knowledge, emotions and behaviors. There is ample evidence that it can improve academic performance, as well as social-emotional and prosocial competencies.

4. Character education is more effective when it is fully implemented on a regularly scheduled basis. To support this, most successful models include some kind of professional development and substantial support and resource materials.

5. Effective program strategies include: peer interaction, direct teaching, skill training, explicit agenda, family or community involvement, integration into academic curriculum, multi-strategy approach.

A report by the National Commission on Character Education (Williams & Schaps, 1999) discussed five perspectives on character education which also speak to the components necessary for an effective program:

1. Solomon, Watson and Battistich’s community of care, where research showed clear support for a school model where social-ethical outcomes for students, were mediated by students’ sense of the school as a community (Solomon, 2000);
2. DeVries's constructivist approach to sociomoral development which concluded that the higher the level of interpersonal understanding enacted by the teacher, the higher the level enacted by children (De Vries, 2000);

3. Berkowitz's service-learning perspective where community service/service-learning was recognized as one of the pedagogical strategies utilized in character education best practice sites (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006);

4. Lickona's eclectic approach citing six pillars of character including trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship (Lickona, 2004);

5. Ryan's traditional view where morals are "caught, not taught," and "classroom life is saturated with moral meaning that shapes students' character and moral development" (Ryan 1996, p. 75).

Each of these theoretical perspectives considered the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of character development. All five theorists spoke to the importance of educators serving as models for students and creating school climates that are caring and collaborative. They discussed various teaching strategies that would support this kind of environment including consensus building, cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and service learning.

DeRoche and Williams have also compiled a framework based on their study of effective character education programs. Each of these programs contained some form of the following components: vision; standards; expectations (usually articulated by consensus) or mission; implementation criteria, leadership; resources, both knowledge of and access to; training; partnerships with a wide range of adults (teachers, parents community members); and assessment (DeRoche & Williams, 2001).
The curriculum for a character education program can either be purchased as a package or created by the school community. In all cases, researchers emphasized that the program must be incorporated throughout the school day and become part of the total school environment. Additionally, teachers must have professional development opportunities so they may experience both the personal growth and skills acquisition necessary for the success of this kind of program.

There are a number of models of character education programs that exhibit, to varying degrees, the components that were outlined in the University of Missouri study. In researching character education, it is critical to examine models as they reflect different perspectives and the developmental issues they impact. Mary M. Williams, Professor and Co-Director of the International Center for Character Education at the University of San Diego, California has examined these in some depth (Williams, 2000).

She cited the character education movement as one of the fastest growing reform movements in education today. As such, it is encouraging society to examine the personal values, social interactions, and civic responsibilities that children face as they grow and mature. Placed in the role of developing responsible citizens for the future, she suggested that educators have a critical role in fostering the maturation of responsible adults in the society in which they will live. However, she pointed out that this is not evident in the same way to all educators. Research has shown that some are hesitant for reasons that argue against making values a central focus in schools, including the following:

1. Morality is a private matter and should be taught by the family and the church, not the school.
2. Moral issues are so individual that schools cannot possibly teach about all the ones relevant to the students in the school.

3. Many educators lack the character or the competence to nurture morality in students.

4. Morality comes to us from a divine source and cannot be taught in a secular context.

5. Teaching character education in schools will make religion become part and parcel of public schooling.

6. The time necessary to teach character will come at the expense of what is most essential - the academic subjects (Schaps & Williams, 1999).

However, the reality is that schools do influence student character and that no school is completely values free. Every aspect of the educational experience of school - the curriculum, pedagogies, policies, organization, the teacher and administrators themselves - affect the moral development of students.

Even in the face of this evidence, character education is not a priority in all school systems. In recent years, standardized achievement testing has taken a front seat, gaining much of the attention that other efforts may have garnered in the past. In fact, such testing has become the measure by which schools are judged. Most enlightened educators, however, while acknowledging the need for accountability, will also vouch for the importance of both character development and academic competence, focusing on achieving a balance between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of a child’s development.
A study of a character education program at Cravens Middle School in Atlanta, Georgia illustrated these points (Milson, 2000). Cravens was selected for study because the program was in its first year of implementation, and the curriculum had been created by the faculty and staff. The first year of the program is also likely to be the most instructive regarding problems and suggested improvements.

At Cravens, parents and teachers who were concerned about the critical transition from elementary school to middle school developed a character education program in the hope of creating a more welcoming environment among the community of students at the middle school. They decided on a "home-grown" program which reflected three major influences. First, the work of Thomas Lickona served as its primary conceptual orientation. Second, a character education program in a neighboring county influenced the organizational structure. Finally, the teachers at Cravens largely developed the curriculum content. According to Milson (2000), the final product was built on the following premises:

In a free and democratic society, every citizen has personal and civic responsibilities, as well as unalienable rights.

1. Only a virtuous people are capable of sustaining a free and democratic type of government.

2. Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning, and practice.

3. Developing good character in children is primarily the responsibility of families. It is also the shared responsibility of communities, schools, religious institutions and youth service groups.
4. Creating civil and caring school communities is indispensable to developing good character in students and to effective academic teaching and learning.

5. Effective character education helps make schools more civil and caring communities; reduces negative student behavior such as violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, and disrespect for teachers, parents, and peers; improves academic performance; and prepares young people to be responsible citizens and productive members of society. (Milson, 2000, p. 91)

The two problematic aspects of the program were its "trait of the week" approach and its lack of staff training. In the former, critics argue that this model does not allow for discussion of conflicting values and, therefore, does not always transfer accurately to real life situations. The lessons of a character education program may be fleeting if it has not included a component that teaches character throughout the day and connects school life with life outside of the building.

The program was also cited for its inadequacy in terms of professional development for faculty. Teachers were given a simple binder and a 30-minute training session, which most found inadequate preparation for successful implementation. As Lickona has noted,

Character education is far more complex than teaching math or reading; it requires personal growth as well as skills development. Yet teachers typically receive almost no pre-service or in-service training in the moral
aspects of their craft. Many teachers do not feel comfortable or competent
in the values domain. (Lickona, 1993a, p.10)

If, in fact, it is incumbent upon schools to accept the responsibility for character
education, how can teachers effectively transfer the messages of ethical decision making
and the importance of good character to their students?

Martinson suggested that they will not be able to teach ethics in a vacuum
(Martinson, 2003). The Hastings Center defined the key to impacting the moral decisions
of young people as "stimulating moral imagination" (Jaksa & Pritchard, 1994). These
findings translated into a recommendation to present students with real-life situations and
to ask them to consider the ethical and moral consequences. In this way, ethics are
brought to a level to which they can relate. The goal is to provide them with examples so
that ethical behaviors become an everyday habit.

A person who has a "habit" of behaving well and responding in an ethical manner
to situations that call for personal judgments can be called a person of good character. As
Fagothey stated, "The only way of assuring ... that ... [one's] acts will be morally good is
by turning them into a habit. Virtue and vice are only names for morally good and
morally bad habits" (Fagothey, 1976, p. 168).

Stimulating the imaginations of young people can teach them that everyone is
susceptible to pain, suffering, disappointment, and injustice. Once they recognize this,
they can then consider their own actions and behaviors in light of how those decisions
may impact others.
Character Education and Student Behavior

Effective character education programs may result in a change in student behaviors once the program has been implemented. A number of studies have attempted to demonstrate this relationship, most with positive but some with inconclusive results.

A study at the University of Central Florida conducted by Tattner (1998) examined the effects of a character education program on fifth through eighth grade students and reported successful outcomes. Data showed an improvement in students' respect and self-control after the administration of the program. In addition, students developed an increased awareness and appreciation of the thoughts and feelings of others, of rules and authority, diversity and differences.

The study pointed out the need for an effective combination of the various components that are essential for a successful character education program: strong leadership, rigorous academics, a consistent school-wide discipline policy, and a climate that fosters school spirit and concern for others (Tattner, 1998).

Another study that examined a character education program at a non-denominational, college-preparatory day school found that there were positive and significant results for the fourth graders who were studied. There was an increase from pre- to post test in the measurement of students' growth in their understanding of ethics, specifically in the areas of courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty, and love (Tucker, 2000).

Further positive effects of a character education program were examined in a study of third and fourth graders in a rural, southern public school. The purpose of this study was to determine how character education affected the behavior of students through
the observation of student behavior, interviews with teachers, students, and parents, and
the review of disciplinary records to identify behavioral patterns (Thompson, 2002).

The findings from this study suggested that character education programs may have a positive effect on student behavior. Based on the data that were gathered, student behavior improved in this elementary school following the implementation of the character education program. All parents and almost half the students credited the teachers with the positive changes in behavior; all the teachers credited the actual program.

This indicated that the character education program may not have been the sole contributor to improved student behaviors. In addition to the teachers themselves, additional factors included the maturation process from the beginning to the end of the school year and the extrinsic rewards and incentives which were part of the program. Although the findings were not conclusive, they seem to indicate that the implementation of a character education program can lead to positive changes in student behaviors.

Different results were garnered from a study of the relationship between the institution of a formal character education program and reported incidences of student violence in the public middle schools in Pennsylvania during the 1999-2000 school year (Purvis, 2002).

The results of this study indicated that there was, in fact, no clear difference in the reported acts of violence between schools that instituted a formal character education program and those that did not. There was also no difference between schools that implemented a formal program and those that teach values and morals in a less structured way. The two factors which seemed to influence the incidence of violence were the
school size and poverty level of the students' families. This would support the contention of Susan Black (1996) who stated in her article in the *American School Board Journal*:

Kids seldom practice what their schools' character education programs preach. As much as educators, parents, and politicians might yearn for children to grow up with a strong "moral compass," and as much as schools are being pressured to take on a responsibility many say belongs more rightly to parents and religious institutions, the fact remains that most school-based character education programs simply don't pay off. (p. 29)

In yet another study whose results regarding character education efficacy were inconsistent, qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to evaluate a program developed and implemented in a suburban elementary school (Sheppard, 2002). This particular program reflected a collaborative effort by various groups within the school. When teachers were asked about the influence of the character education program on student behaviors, they reported in the positive. According to their feedback, students emulated good behavior and recognized the positive behavior of their peers. In addition, they showed increased support for one another, and there was evidence of a greater sense of community.

However, when the School Wide Behavioral Expectations Plan and report card data were examined to assess the program's impact on student behavior, the results were mixed. There were trends of positive behavioral change, but these results were not consistent. Although there were indications of decreases in behavioral infractions, they were not statistically significant. Patterns indicated
that student outcomes differed based on the teacher’s level of program implementation.

The divergent results of studies of character education programs and their influence on student behaviors indicated, as this study recommends, that further research is needed to compare other middle schools in other states. According to Posey (2000), “The future impact of character education is dependent on educators, researchers and developers collecting solid evidence of effectiveness based on quality preparation, implementation, and evaluation” (p. 6).

**Teacher and Student Perceptions of Character Education Programs**

As schools implement character education, much of the responsibility for its success rests upon the classroom teacher. Data from teachers who have experienced a character education program in their schools have proven very helpful in understanding how and why these programs are effective in varying degrees.

A study that examined teacher perceptions of the relationship between a character education program and student behaviors found that, after the implementation of the program, teachers did report a change which the author terms “dramatic” (Olsen, 1995). Using a survey tool, the researcher found that the character education program worked in tandem with teachers’ high social expectations of students, and it helped to develop cooperative relationships, social skills, and development of a sense of community. Other results of the program included enhanced self-control and positive student-teacher relationships. Students’ relationships with each other improved as they took more
responsibility for their behaviors. They began to view their classmates as potential collaborators rather than competitors.

In addition, as teachers taught the language of personal responsibility to their children, they experienced a renewal in their own sense of mission, took the opportunity to re-examine their own values, and modeled the behavior they expected. Teachers emphasized that the whole community must participate in a character education program, and that children need to develop a sense of self and responsibility to their families, schools, and neighborhoods.

In a review of seven character education program studies (Leming & Yendol-Hoppey, 2004), teachers reported that they believe the primary purpose of a character education program is to help children prepare for becoming contributing members of society. They feel character education should include teaching all students manners and improving student behavior in the classroom. In addition, an effective character education program can help all students name their own feelings and hear those of one another. Teachers felt strongly that students who do not live in an environment which supports character development need to be surrounded with a curriculum and context that support it within the school. They believed that teachers should be able to seamlessly integrate a character education curriculum into their instructional day.

Teachers also reported that character education programs enabled them to see students in different ways than they had in the past. They came to know them better, became more empathetic and thus, more effective in meeting their needs. These teachers believe that a character education curriculum provides them the space to explore issues of character in authentic ways that they did not have available to them previously. In
addition, teachers felt that teaching a character education curriculum impacts their own behaviors and character-related professional growth. They value character education because it increases their feelings of greater competence and closeness to students.

Teachers also came to appreciate that teaching character is a complex and long-term process that requires a community of support. They especially recognized the important role that the family plays in the formation of character.

Results of this study also demonstrated that moral motivation is critical to an effective character education program. Teachers recognized that the challenge for character education is not so much to teach students what behaviors exhibit good character, but to motivate them to engage in these behaviors.

A study that supported these findings presents experienced high school teachers' understandings, concerns and suggestions regarding character education (Romanowski, 2005). Every teacher interviewed agreed that the character education program that had been implemented at their school produced positive results. It broadened the perspective of students by asking them to consider character issues in different contexts.

As students became more immersed in character education, teachers also reported an increased student awareness of the inconsistencies of the administration's discipline policies and treatment of athletes or other favored students. The program provided them with opportunities to question their own morality and ethical decision making. In fact, teachers reported that it gave them more opportunities to reflect on these issues with their students and to evaluate their own character traits and behavior as it related to their teaching.
Teachers believed that any inadequacies of the program could be attributed to the administration's lack of support and its inconsistency in implementing the program. They felt that this undermined the students' perception of the seriousness of the program. Teachers also felt that only major problems were recognized by the administration and that character issues such as lying and cheating were overlooked.

For most teachers in the study, parental support was regarded as critical to the effectiveness of character education. Teachers thought that there was too much pressure directed at schools to improve the character of children, and that many other institutions, including the family, media, business, and our political system, play a role in shaping the moral perspectives of our children.

Teachers also believed that too many educators see the goal of character education as improving the behavior of unruly and undisciplined students. On the contrary, they felt that character education is more effective when students with good behaviors are encouraged to continue developing, and to model for others while being affirmed by the school community.

The researchers in this study added their voices in support of continued study of character education programs, and especially those which are qualitative in nature. They stated:

Since a criticism of character education is the lack of reliable and valid assessment, studies that evaluate the effectiveness of character education would be beneficial....[I]t is [also] vital to continually assess the faculty's thoughts and viewpoints. There is little doubt that the use of ideas and input from a variety of teachers will certainly aid in the success
of any CEP. In an era driven by standards and assessment, assessment is critical to the success of character education. It is nearly impossible to measure the results of a CEP in a quantitative form because character education is a long term plan that materializes in students' adult lives. Assessment is one of the key issues in character education and will be the key to future funding. Therefore, educators need to be creative and provide multiple assessment tools including various qualitative assessments. (Romanowski, 2005, p. 22)

Previously mentioned studies also echo this recommendation. The Tattner study encouraged further research to concentrate on the implementation of a character education program on one grade level, which this study will do, focusing on sixth graders (Tattner, 1998). The Tucker study also recommended further study with larger, public school populations, and again, this study will answer that with its target group a mid-sized public middle school (Tucker, 2000). The research of Leming and Yendol-Hoppey also underscored the need for more qualitative studies in character education. The authors stated that it is necessary to further investigate how students and teachers make sense of their own experience while participating in a character education program so as to inform theory and curriculum in the field. In fact, a teacher's experience in teaching character education can also impact the student's experience (Leming & Yendol-Hoppey, 2004).

Summary

Both professional literature and respected polling organizations have documented a compelling need for character education in our schools. Our obligation to educate our
children to be responsible citizens mandates the inclusion of morals and values in their courses of study.

Much has been written about the components of a successful character education study, and it is the goal of many studies, including this one, to produce data that will provide further answers to that question. However, there are some elements that have appeared repeatedly in current research and that seem to contribute to the effectiveness of a character education program: (a) good design, (b) consensus of expectations, (c) full implementation on a regular basis, (d) professional development opportunities for faculty, (e) family and community involvement, (f) excellent leadership, (g) multi-strategy approaches, and (h) assessment.

Numerous character education models have been studied with mixed results. A number have shown a positive relationship between the implementation of a character education program and improved student behaviors. Other results have been inconclusive. This points to the need for further research, which has been suggested in a majority of the literature cited.
Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding a character education program that had been newly implemented in their school, with a view towards assessing the impact of the program and improving it for the following school year. The study was conducted at a sixth grade middle school in an upper middle class suburban district in New Jersey.

Research Design

It was determined that a qualitative approach would be the most appropriate research method because the goal of the study was to identify the participants’ perceptions and recommendations regarding the character education program. Researchers choose a qualitative design because they assume that the perspective of the participants will be meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2001). Although the various studies that were referenced in Chapter Two have examined many different kinds of character education programs, this particular study will add a dimension to our understanding of what makes them effective. This is supported by Stake’s statement that the intent of qualitative research is “not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it” (Stake, 1995, p. 23).

Krathwohl further defined “sophisticate” to include: (a) humanize problems and data; (b) make people, problems, and situations “come alive”; (c) portray phenomena in context; (d) describe complex personal and interpersonal phenomena that would be impossible to portray with quantitative research’s single dimensional scales; (e) provide a
holistic view of a phenomenon; and (f) help to attach emotions, feelings, and sometimes faces, situations and context to the phenomena (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 229).

In a qualitative study, meaning is derived within the context of the activity (Merriam, 1998). The place where the phenomenon being studied occurs and how the participants made sense of what happened provide the basis of the research.

The key concern in qualitative research understands the participants’ perspectives, not the researchers’. This understanding is an end to itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting…. (Merriam, 1998, p. 6)

Therefore, a qualitative approach is an appropriate methodology to investigate teachers’ responses to a program which they have experienced in their own classrooms for an entire school year.

In this current study, the program, Project Wisdom, was utilized in its most minimal form, with a component of the program, Words of Wisdom, being read each morning to the sixth graders in the school. Words of Wisdom quotes from a variety of historically notable people including Confucius, Ghandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Albert Einstein, and Jimmy Carter were designed to inspire and motivate the students to at least think about character issues and at best be
inspired to action by them.

In keeping with the qualitative nature of this study, face-to-face interviews with 13 teachers at the sixth grade middle school were conducted to evaluate their perceptions of this character education program that was in place for one year. This approach is supported by the Milson (2000) study previously cited which suggests that the first year of a character education program is also likely to be the most instructive regarding problems and suggested improvements. The teachers who were interviewed for this current study represented various departments from the middle school and had varying profiles in terms of age, gender and subjects taught.

Data were obtained through notes taken during interviews and transcription of recorded interviews. The interviews took place in a comfortable environment, either in classrooms after school or off campus, which was intended to encourage participants to share their perceptions without encumbrance. Interviews lasted approximately 45-50 minutes on average.

A letter formally explaining the study was sent to the superintendent of schools who gave his approval. Letters were also sent to the school principal and faculty to request volunteers who were willing to speak about their perceptions of the character education program and its effects on their students' behavior. All participants were asked to sign a release form so their comments could be used in the study and, in addition, so that they could be recorded during the interview process. They were informed of location possibilities for the interviews as well as time of arrival, date and length of the appointment, and an offer of refreshments as appropriate.
Participants

The participants for this study were faculty members who teach at a sixth grade middle school in suburban New Jersey. Out of a total number of 43 faculty members, 13 teachers volunteered to take part in the interviews. The invitation went out to the entire faculty from both the researcher and the school principal. Selection depended on teacher interest and availability; however, all attempts were made to obtain a representative group of faculty members with varying profiles, including age, gender, and subjects taught.

Instrumentation

Face-to-face, semi structured interviews were used to investigate the perceptions of these teachers regarding the effects of the character education program on their students’ behavior. Interviews centered on the teachers’ voices as they described their experiences. This allowed information that was important to the respondent to emerge and reduced the possibility of the results being solely determined by the interviewer’s questions.

Interviews consisted of questions based on three separate models of character formation and character education expectations: the four domains of emotional intelligence as articulated by Daniel Goleman (Goleman, 2002); a research instrument developed at the University of West Georgia that provides 96 behaviors associated with 16 character traits (Bulach, 2002b); the values listed by Project Wisdom and their application to every day life (Values Fostered, 1992). (See Appendixes A, B, C)

Using this information, the research questions were divided into four categories:
self-awareness, self-management, relationship management, and social awareness.

Behaviors associated with each category were identified. Teachers were given a copy of Table 1, Values Associated with Character Education at the beginning of the interview process as part of their interview guide. They were asked to consider the behaviors listed and whether or not they observed new or increased instances of those behaviors after the character education program was implemented.

The interview questions consisted of the following:

1. To what extent has the level of civility, courtesy, and forgiveness among students changed since the implementation of the character education program? Can you characterize that change? Can you give specific examples?

2. To what extent have you noticed any change in the attitude of students towards one another resulting in increased acts of kindness, compliments, sympathy in times of trouble, offers of helpful advice, or a general sense of friendliness evidenced by pleasant waves, acknowledgements, smiling? Can you give examples of how this change might relate to the character education program?

3. To what extent have you perceived a reduction in the number of bullying and teasing incidents or angry outbursts since the character education program began? Can you give examples of how this might relate to the program?

4. Since the implementation of the character education program, to what extent have you perceived a change in students’ respect of the personal property of others, the classroom, and school building in general? Can you cite some examples? Can you relate it to the program?

5. To what extent have you perceived any change in students’ level of respect
towards teachers, administrators, and the school staff? Can you cite some examples? Can you relate this to the character education program?

6. Since the character education program was implemented, to what extent have you noticed any change in the incidence of students’ cheating on homework or exams? Can you characterize that change? Can you relate this change to the program?

7. To what extent have you noticed any changes in the sense of community among students? To what extent has there been a change in their willingness to compromise or seek out peaceful solutions to disagreements? To what extent has their ability to work as team members changed? Can you characterize that change? Can you give specific examples? Can you relate this to the character education program?

8. In your perception, to what extent has there been a change in students’ awareness of the needs of others? Can you characterize that change? Can you give specific examples? Can you relate this to the implementation of the character education program?

9. Since the implementation of the character education program, to what extent have there been any changes of students’ perceptions of their responsibilities to themselves, especially in terms of their self-discipline, perseverance, or wise decision-making? Can you characterize this change? Can you give specific examples?

10. Since the implementation of the character education program, to what extent have you noticed any change in students’ self-esteem, especially as it relates to their willingness to take on leadership roles, participate in classroom activities, or speak out in the face of wrong-doing? Can you give examples of this behavior?

11. Can you offer any suggestions to improve the character education program for
the coming school year? How might those suggestions impact student behaviors?

Based on the information presented by the teachers, I used additional questions to further probe, allowing these questions to emerge from the context, and thereby extending the data. This permitted a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions.

The instrumentation devices were sent to a jury of experts for their input, comment, and revision to insure validity and reliability. These professionals are experienced in both middle school and character education and verified the soundness and appropriateness of these questions in terms of the focus of the study. The researcher determined that it was not necessary to modify the interview questions based on the feedback provided by the jury of experts.

Data Collection

I collected all data through the interview process and personally engaged in this process as well as the analysis of the data. Interviews were scheduled at a specific time that did not interfere with student instruction or the professional preparation time of the teachers. Every effort was made to conduct the interviews in a comfortable environment either in school or off campus where teachers felt at ease in discussing the character education program. Participants were assured that their identities would be known only to the researcher to insure confidentiality and unbiased results. The length of time for the interviews was approximately 45-50 minutes and that was communicated to the interviewees prior to the session. Each teacher signed a consent form which specifically outlined the parameters of the interview.
The qualitative approach offered flexibility in pursuing emergent themes as the interviews progressed. Teachers were provided ample opportunity to expound upon their answers as they saw fit.

All interviews were tape recorded. I also maintained a journal for the purpose of keeping notes regarding thoughts and impressions of the interviews as well as information that may have been communicated through the participants' body language. Interviews were transcribed. All notes from the sessions including the interview transcriptions and observations are included in the data collection.

Data Analysis

The interview topic and questions were narrowly focused to assist me in analyzing the responses of the participants. After each individual interview was recorded and transcribed, the content was hand coded to provide a system for organizing, searching for recurring themes, cross-referencing themes, diagramming relationships and creating a template for examination. Coding emerged from the data and was informed by the purpose of the study.

Analysis was done concurrently with the data collection. This improved the process as questions were modified to include information from previous interviews as well as my reflection. Inductive analysis was used to interpret data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results of the analysis identified common perceptions and themes that characterize the responses of participants and indicated patterns of thought that could illuminate and enhance the evaluation of the character education program and improve its implementation for the future.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers at one New Jersey sixth grade middle school regarding the first year of a new character education program with a view towards assessing the impact of the program on student behaviors.

A qualitative approach was utilized based on the recommendations of experts and past researchers who advocate this methodology because it provides a holistic view of phenomena and presents a faithful recording of the meanings and understandings of the research participants.

Interviews were conducted at the middle school with 13 teachers who volunteered for the study, and attention was given to vary their profiles in terms of age, gender, and subjects taught.

Interview questions were based on the research questions which were divided into four categories: self-awareness, self-management, relationship management, and social awareness. Behaviors associated with each category were identified.

Data were collected via notetaking during the interviews and transcription of recorded interviews. Data were handcoded for organizational purposes.

The results of the analysis identified themes and patterns of response which informed suggestions for future policy and practice.
Chapter IV

Research Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research findings of a study examining the impact of a new character education program on student behaviors at a sixth grade middle school. It will present an account of the data that were collected based on the results of 13 teacher interviews conducted at the school. To create a summary of the major findings, I examined and organized the data, then synthesized it in order to determine patterns of response.

This qualitative study utilized interview questions that reflected its four research questions:

1. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student self-awareness since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student diligence, perseverance, self-discipline, prudence, responsibility to self.)

2. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student self-management since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student fairness, honesty, integrity, confidence, courage, healthy self-esteem.)

3. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student relationship-management since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student cooperation, conflict resolution, non-violent behavior, civility, courtesy, application of the "Golden Rule," patience, caring, compassion, empathy and kindness.)

4. To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student social awareness since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would
include: respect, sense of human dignity and self-worth, tolerance, service to others and social responsibility.)

5. To what extent do teachers think the program can be improved upon for the coming school year to reflect their observations?

The 13 interview participants were members of a faculty of 43 teachers at a sixth grade middle school. They represented both genders, although heavily favored females (12-1), and were a cross-section of both regular and special education departments. Ages varied from the 22-32 range to the 52-62 range. They were all very familiar with the character education initiatives at the middle school and worked directly with students so as to be able to accurately identify behaviors. Table 2 depicts their demographics.

Table 2

Demographic Data of the Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52-62</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42-52</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22-32</td>
<td>Science/Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42-52</td>
<td>Social Studies/Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42-52</td>
<td>Language Arts/Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42-52</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32-42</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22-32</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22-32</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presentation of Findings

Self-awareness. Research Question 1 was: To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in student self-awareness since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student diligence, perseverance, self-discipline, prudence, responsibility to self.) To elicit evidence-based responses to this question, interviewees were asked the following:

1. Since the implementation of the character education program, to what extent have there been any changes of students’ perceptions of their responsibilities to themselves, especially in terms of their self-discipline, perseverance, or wise decision-making? Can you characterize this change? Can you give specific examples?

2. Since the character education program was implemented, to what extent have you noticed any change in the incidence of students cheating on homework or exams? Can you characterize that change? Can you relate this change to the program?

In the area of students’ responsibility for their actions, self-discipline, wise-decision making, perseverance and self-esteem, teacher responses were diverse. Some teachers stated that students had matured from the beginning to the end of the year, perhaps in part from listening to the Words of Wisdom of the character education program. Others saw students as lacking a sense of responsibility with no change in this behavior as a result of the program.
Table 3 includes a summary of the general content of the teacher comments in the area of self-awareness and responsibility and their perception of the effectiveness of the character education program in these areas.

Table 3

*Comments on Self-Awareness and Responsibility*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>CE program effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students have little or no responsibility to themselves</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are not at level of maturity to be responsible for themselves</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have no sense of responsibility</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students take the easy way out</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have no responsibility because others are there to pick things up for them.</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started to see some sense of self-awareness</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The choice is yours&quot; has made a difference.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments from the interviews with the teachers regarding self-awareness and responsibility:

"Do I think they have a sense of responsibility to themselves or make wise decisions? At that age, I don’t think that’s developed yet. They try. Sometimes what they hear in the morning might affect them."

"By the end of the year -- and it’s maturity -- there were kids taking responsibility -- there were kids who really understood that you didn’t leave things all over the place. This is really a cognitive edge of awareness..."
the beginning of adolescence — a self-awareness — and hopefully the resolution of self-centeredness.”

“They have no sense of responsibility — nothing is their fault. If they don’t turn something in, it’s my fault. Overall the majority do not take responsibility for their actions. I can watch a kid hit another kid and say, ‘Why did you hit him?’ and he’ll say, ‘I didn’t hit him.’ And I’ll say, ‘I just saw you hit him.’ and he’ll repeat, ‘I didn’t hit him.’”

“They like to take the easy way out so it’s a battle to try and fight that and show them the long term benefits of doing the hard work and reaping the rewards.”

“They don’t bring in a permission slip, they call their moms and have it faxed in so they can be a part of it. There’s a deadline and you missed it, but they’re still going on the trip. Their work — they don’t turn it in on time. All of a sudden parents are emailing — can he turn it in? — when are you available? I was available when we did this project, when your child was there and we did it and he didn’t complete it. They don’t have to have that responsibility because someone is there to pick it up.”

One teacher who worked with a small group of students saw the Words of Wisdom as a teaching opportunity in her classroom with positive results in the area of self-awareness:

“I started to see some of that [increase in self-awareness] but I think it was more because I personally found the character education
program very interesting and worthwhile and something that I could utilize as a teaching moment. So what would happen is that there would be some incident in the classroom and I would say, ‘Let's stop and think about this. What did we hear this morning about speaking, and allowing others to express their opinions without interrupting? And we'd have a little discussion about that and then we'd say, ‘What do you think about that? How could you have said that differently?’ I’d like to think that what we heard each morning was a little trigger in class and then I used it as a teachable moment.”

Another teacher felt that the self-awareness component was contained in the final statement of the Words of Wisdom that were read every day. After the quote of the day, each announcement ended with the following thought: “Make it a great day or not. The choice is yours.” Regarding this message, she said:

“I think we need to tell the kids, ‘The choice is yours,’ and that’s how we give them confidence and make them more responsible. That’s our goal here, to make them more responsible. ‘The choice is yours’ is the most important message of the Words of Wisdom. I’ve used ‘the choice is yours’ and I use it all the time, and I think that has made a difference.”

Similarly, the subjects of fairness, honesty, and integrity elicited divergent responses from the teachers, although most alluded to a culture change which now allowed actions that were previously deemed dishonest to be regularly accepted practices. In the area of cheating, this was most obvious. One, however, stated that the overall sense of honesty of the current group of students was still intact. No respondents felt that the
character education program had any impact on the students’ behaviors relating to these values.

Table 4 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding fairness, honesty, and integrity and the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the character education program in these areas.

Table 4

Comments on Fairness, Honesty, and Integrity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Comments</th>
<th>CE program effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism is a problem</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying homework is a problem</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying from the internet is a problem</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating is a problem</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating has stayed the same</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating may happen</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are a few students who are trying to cheat</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheating is minimal</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments from the interviews with the teachers regarding fairness, honesty and integrity:

“Kids will plagiarize from the Internet and then say, ‘What did I do?’ if you call them on it because they see nothing wrong with it. We see this more and more every day...I feel like I’m constantly seeing them looking at someone else’s work. Words of Wisdom hasn’t changed that.”

“I walked down the hall one day and a boy passed a paper to
another boy. I asked him, ‘What was that all about?’ and he got really sheepish and white. He said it was a math assignment that he didn’t have time to do the night before, so his friend printed it out for him. I said, ‘So he was just doing you a favor by passing this math to you?’ It wasn’t a big, big deal to him. He asked his friend to make him an extra copy and he was just going to hand it in as his own.’

“Cheating? It’s almost gone the wrong way. They almost think that any way to get the right answer is OK. Getting it done - not getting it done the right way - is what’s important. The cheating has a life of its own. The least work for the biggest reward – the biggest shortcut. It’s alive and well. I think it has to be addressed in a much better way than we’ve done. They have to understand intellectual property, plagiarism. There has been no change in that area.”

“Cheating has stayed the same. Tests, homework, homework in the lunchroom, plagiarism – we’ve been going crazy with that.”

“Cheating drives me nuts. I can see the wandering eyes, the paper on the back, the writing on the hand. I’m sitting there watching them copying.”

“Every year we have an isolated cheating incident, but it’s very minimal. We don’t generally have a problem with that.”

Self-management. Research Question 2 was: To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in student self-management since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student confidence,
courage, healthy self-esteem.) To elicit demonstrable responses to this question, interviewees were asked the following:

Since the implementation of the character education program, to what extent have you noticed any change in students' self-esteem, especially as it relates to their willingness to take on leadership roles, participate in classroom activities, or speak out in the face of wrongdoing? Can you give examples of this behavior?

Teachers' perceptions in the area of self-management indicated that whatever positive inclinations students had in this area may have been present before the implementation of the character education program. Some felt that students showed little evidence of self-management behaviors because they were developmentally immature in this area. Most were not able to point to any examples of a specific impact of the program on student self-management behaviors.

Table 5 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding self-management and the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the character education program in this area:

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments on Self-Management</th>
<th>CE Program Effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good self-esteem, questionable perseverance</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most kids say, &quot;What's in it for me?&quot;</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued). Comments on Self-Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Comments</th>
<th>CE Program Effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, they cover for friends and sell out their foes</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembered students who wanted to make things right</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More inclined to speak out by the end of the year</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmentally, they don’t realize there is any wrong-doing</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, they are willing to speak out</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments from the interviews with the teachers regarding self-management, including self-esteem and speaking out in the face of wrongdoing:

"I think they have pretty good self-esteem overall. Perseverance – I don’t know about that. They’re used to people coming to their aid."

"Do they have a sense of their responsibility to themselves – to be their best selves – speak out against injustice? There are kids with that kind of self-righteousness, but for the most part, kids at this age say, ‘What’s in it for me?’"

"They did speak out against wrongdoing at the beginning of the year when there was an incident. They went into the office and said, ‘This is what we saw. We don’t want to get in trouble.’ Overall though, they love to get each other in trouble. They cover for their friends and sell out
their foes.”

“In terms of righting a wrong, I remember a couple of girls who wanted to make things right. Some people were being treated unfairly. I worked with them to see what they could do to right the wrong. They knew that in the end it would work itself out and there would be some kind of closure, but they wanted to see how it would work itself out and if they could influence that.”

“I saw at the end of the year that kids were more inclined to speak out, but I don’t know if that was because of the program.”

“They put a positive note to telling on each other. They see virtue in it. But at this level developmentally, unless it affects them they don’t realize there is wrongdoing happening. You need to point it out to them, and then you can have a good discussion on it.”

*Relationship management.* Research Question 3 was: To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in student relationship-management since the inception of the character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: student cooperation, conflict resolution, non-violent behavior, civility, courtesy, application of the "Golden Rule," patience, caring, compassion, empathy and kindness.) To elicit demonstrable responses to this question, interviewees were asked the following:

1. To what extent has the level of civility, courtesy, and forgiveness among students changed since the implementation of the character education program? Can you characterize that change? Can you give specific examples?

2. To what extent have you noticed any change in the attitude of students
towards one another resulting in increased acts of kindness, compliments, sympathy in
times of trouble, offers of helpful advice, or a general sense of friendliness evidenced by
pleasant waves, acknowledgements, smiling? Can you give examples of how this change
might relate to the character education program?

3. To what extent have you noticed any changes in the sense of community
among students? To what extent has there been a change in their willingness to
compromise or seek out peaceful solutions to disagreements? To what extent has their
ability to work as team members changed? Can you characterize that change? Can you
give specific examples? Can you relate this to the character education program?

While the areas relating to self-development seemed to yield few results in terms
of the impact of the character education program, there was evidence that relationships
among students may have been affected by the program.

When questioned about student behaviors regarding relationship management,
many teachers prefaced their remarks by noting that this particular sixth grade was an
especially well behaved and respectful group of students. A number of them noted that it
might be difficult to discern if any changes in behaviors could be attributed to character
education because the group had started above the norm of previous classes.

Table 6 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding
civility and courtesy, and the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Character
Education program in these areas:
Table 6

Comments on Civility and Courtesy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Comments</th>
<th>CE Program Effective?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>courteous group of students</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nicer, kinder group than in the past</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectful and kind group</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fewer discipline problems this year</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always say thank you, excuse me</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments from the interviews with the teachers regarding civility and courtesy:

“In terms of their courtesy and civility, I thought in the beginning of the year that they were a fairly nice bunch of kids. I don’t know that I noted a great change there.”

“This particular group for whatever reason seemed to be a nicer group. Is it because we’ve done this [character education program]? It’s the synergy of the class personality, the principal, maybe this kind of information.”

“We’ve been very fortunate. We have a nice group of kids who came in respectful and kind. The kids who came in respectful and kind continue to be; the kids who have more frustration continue to be.”

“I think there might have been fewer discipline issues this year although that could be related to many different factors – like the
community that was here this year – maybe it was the combination of both.”

“They always say thank you, excuse me, have a nice day. I wouldn’t say that anything would inspire them because they have always been like that.”

The middle school where the study was conducted places heavy emphasis on community, harmony, teamwork, and service. Teachers stated that the students were well primed to respond positively to calls for action in these areas and made specific reference to behaviors that evidenced their overall sense of kindness to one another.

Some teachers indicated that the Words of Wisdom may have reinforced these ideals, but no one was able to point to a specific instance that supported that speculation. Other teachers pointed to behaviors that were unkind and exhibited a lack of teamwork and respect among students. On the subject of community, teachers saw positive evidence that it existed but were reluctant to attribute it to the program.

Table 7 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding kindness, harmony, and community, and the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the character education program in these areas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>CE Program Effective?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different group of students, didn’t see improvement</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small class, no big change</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are sweet, atmosphere is warm</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More aware, more polite to one another</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice culture in school</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive interaction with one another</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave friendship rewards to those who were kind</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40% are disrespectful</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasty, malicious students, immature frenetic</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls are catty, act immature</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less kindness this year</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology encourages rude interactions</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School structure created sense of community</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community is created by adults using common vocabulary to enforce ideas</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at working as a team</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community is part of school personality</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following are verbatim comments from the interviews with the teachers regarding kindness, harmony and community:

“This was a different group of kids. The kids before never had Words of Wisdom. But throughout the year, I really didn’t see an improvement [in acts of kindness or compliments].”

“Since my class is very small, I couldn’t see any big change from September to June in the ways the kids treated each other.”

“Your first impression here is that everybody is lovely. It’s nice that it’s small. That makes it warm. The kids are courteous for the most part. Last year, I wouldn’t have said that. The group that I was with when the Words of Wisdom came on was a very sweet group.”

“In the structure of the classroom, I see a lot of that [compliments]: ‘He made a really good point...That’s a good idea.’ We train them to positively interact with one another. That’s fostered positive interaction more than the character education program.”

“Kindness and sympathy...that did go on. I know of at least five kids to whom I gave friendship reward bracelets. They weren’t aware anyone was watching them. Someone would see them doing something kind in the cafeteria or another place in school. They were caught being kind. That was my way of reinforcing what we heard in the Words of Wisdom.”

The teachers who cited behaviors that were not kind or sympathetic indicated that either their specific group of students, or students in general, were lacking in maturity or the ability to relate to one another in a supportive way. The role technology plays in
negative interactions was also noted.

"The students on our team are very disrespectful. They would not hold the door for a teacher, little courtesies, ‘thank you,’ ‘have a nice day,’ you wouldn’t see that. What percentage don’t have good manners? I would go with 40%. But we also had a bad group this year.”

“We are such strong voices…the second we see someone being rude we’re all over them…that’s so different from when we’re not around…they’re nasty, malicious…there’s that whole immature, frenetic way that they act with each other…then they have their school faces.”

“When they’re not in the structure of the classroom, they act like they’re 12 or 13 years old. The girls are very catty. They say, ‘What is she wearing? Who does she like?’”

“The role technology plays in their lives is so different. You Tube gives them a shared culture. They do a lot with the Internet socially, and it’s different from what we know. And there are no rules for it which is the dangerous part. It’s so open to them and they type their nasty words into cyberspace and don’t really realize that someone else is reading them and what the impact will be.”

For the most part, teachers who commented on students’ ability to work as part of a community credited the team structure of the school, rather than the character education program, as fostering this attitude.

“Do the students have a sense of community? Yes. It’s the
structure of the program that forced this. Teams encourage camaraderie.
The teachers do a lot of peer work and group learning with them. They
don’t always go for an individual project. They put them together in
groups and I think that forms the community feeling.”

“They start to buy into a greater sense of community when the
adults are using common vocabulary enforcing ideas that would build
each other up. Then you start to see the ‘aha’ moments.”

“In general they’re good at working as a team and having a sense
of community.”

“They do have a sense of community and work things through. It’s
part of the personality of the school. Overall this year has been better, but
it’s hard to say if it’s just a good group, or if something else influenced
them.”

Social awareness: Research Question 4 was: To what extent have teachers and
administrators witnessed a change in student social awareness since the inception of the
character education program? (Indicators of behavior would include: respect, sense of
human dignity and self-worth, tolerance, service to others, and social responsibility.) To
elicit demonstrable responses to this question, interviewees were asked the following:

1. In your perception, to what extent has there been a change in students’
   awareness of the needs of others? Can you characterize that change? Can you give
   specific examples? Can you relate this to the implementation of the character education
   program?

2. To what extent have you perceived a reduction in the number of bullying and
teasing incidents or angry outbursts since the character education program began? Can you give examples of how this might relate to the program?

3. Since the implementation of the character education program, to what extent have you perceived a change in students’ respect of the personal property of others, the classroom and school building in general? Can you cite some examples? Can you relate it to the program?

4. To what extent have you perceived any change in students’ level of respect towards teachers, administrators and the school staff? Can you cite some examples? Can you relate this to the character education program?

Table 8 includes a summary the general content of faculty comments regarding other-awareness, and the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the character education program in these areas:

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>CE program effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are aware of their advantages, are generous</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger push towards community service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students very generous</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who are more aware are more mature</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students understand they need to help others, many</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collections take place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware but need more</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Living in a somewhat affluent area, the students at the middle school seemed to bring an awareness of the needs of others from their home environments, and this was supported at the school through a variety of functions and programs. Most teachers felt that the students’ other awareness was not attributable to the character education program.

The following are verbatim comments from interviews with teacher regarding other awareness:

“A couple of kids are aware of how blessed they are. They know there are people who don’t have the kinds of food or clothes they have. Those kinds of things start to click. The school is very good about collecting things for the poor and the kids are good outside - working at a clinic or doing a ‘mitzvah’ – good deeds.”

“At the middle school and high school levels, I’ve noticed much more of a push towards community service - money for the poor, eyeglasses, writing letters to soldiers – these activities have been far more stressed in the past few years, and the kids are very involved in that. It seems to be separate from character education.”

“The kids are very generous.”
“The kids who are aware of the greater needs of others are that same group who are becoming more aware, more mature, who are more global.”

“The student council collected food and there were other drives. I do a collection for cancer, Relay for Life. Social studies classes collected money for Darfur; they dressed up as historical characters and stood on boxes. If you put money in the box and pressed the button, the character would speak and say who they were. In town, there are a lot of drives for people who need help. Even when a cafeteria worker needed help, they took up a collection. They get that.”

Other teachers, although in the minority, did see a lacking in the students’ awareness of others’ needs and their subsequent actions. One postulated that Words of Wisdom had potential to make a difference in this area.

“They’re aware, but they need a whole lot more. They think that everybody has what they have. They do service projects for the Heart Association or the food bank, but we need more than that. ‘Words of Wisdom’ can help build on that.”

“There are some kind ones, but they are very individualistic.”

“A lot of students are doing things because they’ll look good on a college resume. I can’t say all of them....”

In the area of bullying and teasing, most teachers acknowledged that there had been significant attention paid to these subjects by the school district within the past few years, and that in fact, this had made a somewhat positive difference. As with other
behaviors, however, teachers differed in their perspective of the incidences of bullying and teasing in general, and in their estimation of the effect of the character education program on these acts. Most felt that the Words of Wisdom had little or no impact in this area, or they were unable to accurately assess its effect. However, some still acknowledged the possibility that the character education program may have influenced the students positively.

Table 9 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding bullying and teasing, and the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the character education program in these areas:

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments on Bullying and Teasing</th>
<th>CE program effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are more conscious, less likely to let it go</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May have been reduced over the past year</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change, students hide it from adults</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students don't do it in classroom</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students mentioned that there seemed to be less bullying</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less bullying and teasing</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in last few years</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying hasn't changed; people need to push each other around</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer acts of bullying and teasing; nicer group</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments by teachers on the subject of
bullying and teasing:

"I would say that in the last few years since the whole bullying theme has been given more attention; teachers are much more conscious of it. They are less likely to let it go."

"[Bullying] might have been a little bit less because we did have a severe incident at the beginning of the year. Even up to the last day, we had parents calling up saying, 'Please don’t let my child and so-and-so sit together because they’re picking on each other.'"

"There has been no change in bullying and teasing. Kids are very good at hiding that from adults. Two girls may look innocent but they may be grabbing each other in a way that’s bullying. I did see with some boys some outright bullying with one boy who has throughout the years been a victim."

"They don’t do it [bullying and teasing] in the classroom."

"This year’s class was unusual. They were very nice to each other. I had them write a letter in the classroom and one thing that came up was there didn’t seem to be as much bullying. Was that a result of Words of Wisdom? I don’t know. Classes come with personalities."

"I think overall there was less bullying and teasing, but I don’t know if I can attribute it to Words of Wisdom."

"It [bullying and teasing] is hidden. When they’re in the classroom, they know they can’t get away with it and it’s not going to happen there because they’ve been so inundated. So now it’s much
more underground, maybe even higher than the previous level because
they recognize who their victims could be.”

“The last couple of years I’ve seen a change in bullying and
teasing, but I don’t know why.”

“We still have that [bullying and teasing]. I don’t know if it’s ever
going to be eliminated. It’s the nature of certain people. They feel they
have to push people around a little bit. I didn’t notice that it was any
worse this year.”

In evaluating the level of student respect towards teachers and administrators, the
interviewees made constant reference to the fact that disrespect has never been part of the
culture at this middle school. Profane or abusive language is not tolerated and students
are aware of this.

Respect for school property is slightly different, and there have been instances
where students have been involved in minor acts of vandalism. But for the most part, it is
not an issue, nor is it something that was influenced by the Words of Wisdom in the
estimation of the teachers who were interviewed. One did acknowledge that a positive
change may be attributable to the principal who was a strong advocate of the character
education program.

Table 10 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments
regarding respect and the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the character
education program in this area.
Table 10

*Comments on Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>CE program effective in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect is not a problem</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students generally respectful of each other’s property</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of respect is good in school</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of respect is same as in the past</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect is same as other years</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect of property is a little better this year</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect of school environment was no problem</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional group when it came to respect</td>
<td>no opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole class was cooperative</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments by teachers on the subject of respect:

"Disrespect towards teachers or administrators is not an issue, now or in the past."

"The kids are generally more respectful of each other’s property. I don’t know if they are respectful of the school building. There is littering for instance. Is that the outcome of kids who live in a subculture where they have everything done for them?"

"My kids are very respectful towards me, but I don’t think it has to do with character education. I think it’s because I’m working with kids"
who are coming from other cultures. I'm lucky with respect to that.”

“I think that it [respect of property] is a little better this year. I think that comes from the principal's expectations. I see him picking up things from the floor. He makes announcements. I think he values it. Now they're more inclined. I don’t recall hearing 'Words of Wisdom' about property.”

“The kids are very respectful. If it [profanity] did happen, they wouldn’t be in the classroom again. There will be rolling of eyes and clicking of the tongue, or mutterings like “Are we doing this today?” but no outright disrespect.”

“This class was different from last year. I don’t know if it was because of the ‘Words of Wisdom,’ but the whole class was cooperative. I had that 5% that wasn’t, but it wasn’t so much that they were disrespectful, but it was ADHD or their personality.”

**Effectiveness of the character education program.** Research Question 5 was: To what extent do teachers think the program should continue and be improved upon for the coming school year to reflect their observations? The final interview question for teachers was: Can you offer any suggestions to improve the character education program for the coming school year? How might those suggestions impact student behaviors?

Despite the fact that this question was reserved for last, many teachers answered it in various ways throughout the interviews, with critiques of the dynamics and effectiveness of the program as they observed it among their students. They offered their own personal suggestions based on their experience with the program during the past
Many comments about the dynamics of the program focused on the time of day during which the Words of Wisdom were read, which was the first thing in the morning. Opinions varied as to the effectiveness of an early morning time slot for students to focus on important messages. However, teachers were hard pressed to suggest another time that would be preferable, since the current schedule did not allow for homeroom time to reflect or do more than day-to-day business. There was a period during the day called an “advisory” which many teachers suggested might be a natural time slot for the Words of Wisdom, but they also observed that this period was currently used for many other activities that had little to do with its original advisory intention.

Table 11 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding the timing of the Character Education program as it impacted its effectiveness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Comments</th>
<th>Should a change be made in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People are most alert in the morning</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include Words of Wisdom into the day’s schedule rather than morning</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students were asleep first thing in morning</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Wisdom in advisory period</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there were a five minute homeroom time, it could make a difference</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too hectic at the beginning of the day; do it during team time in the middle of the day or at end</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 (continued).

Timing of Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>Should a change be made in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words of Wisdom are what an advisory period is designed to discuss</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team time should be after lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not necessary to do it every day; do it during the last period</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Wisdom may be overkill since students have their own issues</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher verbatim comments on the subject of the timing of the character education program are as follows:

"I think most people are most alert in the morning."

"If they put in into the day, I think it would be interesting. But the teachers have an issue teaching another period. During team time or lunch time - it wouldn’t have to be another period."

"It [Words of Wisdom] wasn’t very effective. The timing was wrong. The kids are asleep the first thing in the morning. I don’t have an answer for that."

"The ‘Words of Wisdom’ might key topics in the advisory period, but if you have [them] in the beginning of the day, and you don’t have the advisory till the end, it’s hard to make the connection."

"The first period – that impacts how much time we spend on it ['Words of Wisdom']. If there were a five minute home base, that could be different, but the teachers need to start, so they’re more focused on
their lessons. I think that would make a difference."

"The timing doesn’t lend itself as well as it could. The time should change. It’s too hectic at the beginning of the day. The middle of the day is team time. That’s when ‘Words of Wisdom’ should be. Or, at the end of the day, you can reflect on the day."

"Timing is a problem. Teachers want to get started. They say, ‘They went into my time’ if Words of Wisdom goes too long. [It] should be during team time. That would make sense. We have an advisory period but we don’t have an advisory program. What Words of Wisdom is supposed to be is what that advisory period is for."

"If I were king, we’d have a thing called ‘team time’ after lunch. I’d probably deliver it [Words of Wisdom] before team time. I’d deliver a thought they could express at lunch. There’s the opportunity where they are unfettered and undirected by adults."

"It’s not necessary to do it every day – maybe twice a week. Maybe during independent reading, the last period of the day."

Aside from the time considerations, there were additional factors concerning the dynamics of the program that teachers believed impacted the its effectiveness, including teacher intervention, the speakers who delivered the actual Words of Wisdom each day, teacher training, an already full curriculum and various methods of follow-up.

Table 12 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding additional dynamics of the character education program as they impacted its
Table 12

Additional Dynamics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>Should a change be made in this area?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher support is important to the success of the program</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic speaker needs to get students’ attention first thing in the morning</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a friend was speaking they’d listen and make connections</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers should be identified</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers were upset that they weren’t trained</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adds more curriculum to be covered, increases pressure</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans that were sent as part of the program should be used by teachers</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim comments by teachers on additional dynamics of the program:

"A lot of it [the success of the program] depends on the support you get from the teacher. Some keep them quiet and they listen, and others don’t."

"If it didn’t hook them right there in the morning, and you don’t have a dynamic speaker [it’s not effective]. They’ll say, ‘Oh, it’s Joey. Joey was on the air!’ It has to do with the personality, who’s delivering the information. The timing and the delivery are important and the
dynamism of delivery.”

“If a friend was speaking, they’d listen and make the connection. The speakers should also be identified...so and so’s Dad or the DARE officer or the owner of the pizza place down the street...”

“Teachers were upset that they weren’t trained. I teach three subjects. I don’t have time to figure out what I’m going to do with all my students on any given day.”

“We fit 10 pounds of curriculum into a 5-pound bag, and this asks us to put 10 1/2 pounds of curriculum.”

“If we had the ability to let go of some of the curriculum...instead of doing 500 things let’s do 100 more deeply....we’d get the bang for the buck. We could address issues like character education.”

“With Words of Wisdom, the teachers got an e-mail every week, and I noticed there was a whole lesson plan for different age groups and subjects. And I thought they were really nice ideas. It’s too bad that they aren’t utilized. Teachers would roll their eyes because it would be one other thing that teachers would have to add to an already packed schedule.”

Follow-up in the classroom and beyond was a recurring theme in terms of suggestions for the future. However, almost all teachers made reference to the lack of time in any given school day for additional activities. A few were not even aware of the resources and lesson plans that they were sent for follow-up activities.
“It would good if we had a short discussion. How do these Words of Wisdom affect you? That would make an impression.”

“I’d love to follow up in guidance if we could find a way. But in the short term, even a minimal follow up during team time would be good. A one shot – people don’t internalize. We could be provided with lessons. There’s a lot of wonderful material out there.”

“They should give us [teachers] options of what we could do with the Words of Wisdom – discussion, activities – rather than put it on us. You could really do a lot with it.”

“We don’t need to do those activities. It’s too much. It takes away from the school work.”

“That kind of information [Words of Wisdom] being delivered with a bit of time to muse about what it meant is probably crucial.”

Although teachers suggested that the program needed additional follow-through and a re-working of its scheduling, some did report hearing or seeing evidence that the students had, in fact, heard the Words of Wisdom and were affected by them. Some saw it as a function of their development at this point in their students’ lives; others thought the Words of Wisdom built on strong character traits that the students had already acquired. Most believed the effects were subtle but in some cases, noteworthy. Others could not identify any instances that pointed to an effect of the character education program on students’ behavior.

Table 13 includes a summary of faculty comments regarding evidence of the character education program’s effectiveness on student behaviors.
Table 13

_Evidence of Effectiveness of Program_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>Effective outcome of program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student made comment about Words of Wisdom as relating to social outreach program</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only subtle direct causal effect, if any</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another little piece of information being thrown out at students</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students were grateful for the smallest of things</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started out with good sense of responsibility; program may have supported that</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program was well received by students; they took pride in making announcements</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably didn’t have results that the principal wanted, but school must be realistic</td>
<td>maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never had any trouble getting students to sign up to do Words of Wisdom on PA system</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day there was something about character education; this made students know it was important</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed teacher’s behavior</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The choice is yours,” seemed to impress students</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students learned “The choice is yours” and they say that to each other</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students haven’t referenced Words of Wisdom in their advisories</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some students mentioned Words of Wisdom</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reference to Words of Wisdom in conversations with students</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher comments</td>
<td>Effective outcome of program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students would recognize the names of those who were quoted in Words of Wisdom in their social studies classes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students would respond; were positive about it</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They talk about what they heard in the morning; get in conversations about it</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a general sense of what was heard in the morning</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are teachers’ verbatim comments regarding evidence of the character education program’s effect on their students’ behavior:

“Once or twice, when we were doing something like collecting money for the poor, one student in particular did listen and then said something like, ‘That’s kind of like the Words of Wisdom from two days ago.’ It’s where they are in psychological development. They’re starting to see how the puzzle fits together.”

“If there was any direct causal effect, it was subtle. If the Words of Wisdom generated any conversation, it was out of my earshot.”

“I don’t see it sticking because it’s just another little piece of information that’s been thrown out at them.”

“In the past years, students just expected things and weren’t grateful. This year, they were grateful for the smallest of things – a special day when they got to play a game. But I don’t think it had anything to do
with the Words of Wisdom.”

“They started out with a good sense of responsibility. Maybe the program helped to keep it there.”

“The character education program was very well received by the kids. They seemed to enjoy being the ones who were going to be on the PA system in the morning. The kids seemed to take a lot of pride in doing that.”

“Do I think the program had the results that the principal wanted it to have? Probably not, but we have to be realistic about it.”

“The kids that I worked with [on Words of Wisdom] were kids that didn’t shine in other places. The kids loved doing the PA in the morning. I’ve never had trouble getting kids to sign up.”

“Even if they just heard them [Words of Wisdom], even if it was just words, the fact that every day there was something that was character education made them know at some level that this must be important.”

“Words of Wisdom have actually changed my behavior. There have been a couple of days when the day has started badly, and I think, OK, I can change this. It’s my choice. So it has made a difference. But not always.”

“The only thing they would probably remember is, ‘Make it a great day or not. The choice is yours.’ And they mock this. When I say, ‘You can do your homework or not. The choice is yours,’ they look at me because they know they heard that in the morning’
"I teach about other parts of the world and talk about Gandhi and Confucius to get them to know that there are other influential people in the world. I would make a connection with Words of Wisdom. They recognized Gandhi and Confucius when they heard it on the PA."

"The kids would respond, and they would remember Words of Wisdom when I asked them, ‘What did you hear this morning?’ They didn’t make fun of it. They were positive about it."

"They’ll talk to me about what they heard in the morning. They’ll ask me what I thought of it. They reference what they heard in the morning and get in conversations about it."

"When you talk to kids about something that happened and you refer to the Words of Wisdom, there are two things that come out: ‘the choice is yours’ and ‘be nice to others’. They usually can’t pick a specific [quote] out, but...you can refer to that in a generic sense and it gives you a reference point."

Despite the teachers’ extremely varied perceptions about the effectiveness of the character education program as it related to student behaviors, they were unanimous in their opinion that it should continue. Their ideas about additions and modifications to the program were equally diverse, but they all agreed that the program was of adequate value to warrant more attention.

Table 14 includes a summary of the general content of faculty comments regarding the continuation of the program and suggestions for its future.
Table 14

*Program Continuation and Suggestions for Future*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>Continue program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program hasn’t had a full opportunity; should decide if messages are getting through before continuing</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives the students a chance to be heard and an esteem-building experience in making announcements</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any opportunity to pass along good messages to young minds should be continued</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worth the investment; rather see other subject matter dropped</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have it at a different time; have planning time; decide what we want to get out of it</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for students to hear messages; they may think about it in later life</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had basis in historical fact; interdisciplinary; have someone who is committed to program; be more surgical in who delivers program</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are verbatim teacher comments on program continuation and suggestions for the future:

"There were a lot of positive things [about the program]. Should it continue? It would be nice. I don’t know how. I think it needs a time for the kids to hear the message when everyone is listening. We can’t intensify it until we know if it has an effect. We should decide if these messages are getting through to them, what they’re getting from it. It hasn’t had a full opportunity yet."
"I think it should be continued because I think it gives the kids a chance to be heard, literally. It gave them a certain esteem-building experience to actually make an announcement that was important. They seemed proud of it."

"Generally, I think that any chance we as adults get where we are able to pass on Words of Wisdom to young, malleable minds and try to urge them to behave in ways that would make this a kinder and more compassionate society should be taken advantage of."

"Is it worth doing? Yes, absolutely. I think the kids need it and we need to get back to the basics. It's worth the investment. I'd rather see other subject matter being dropped, even if it were my own. The benefits are worth it. We'd see more ethical choices being made. How do you evaluate that?"

"I think it should continue. I think any piece of moral, ethical education is good. And it wasn't hokey. It had a basis in historic fact. It was interdisciplinary. We can hang our hat on it. We need to be very aware of what keys kids' conversations. If we find something that they can get hooked by, we should pursue that. How? In an advisory? Big commitment. You have to have someone who is committed to this."

Many suggestions were made in terms of teacher follow through. Interestingly, this would involve more teacher preparation, which they previously indicated they wanted to avoid. However, most interviewees cited increased teacher involvement as a requirement for improving the program."
Table 15 includes the general content of faculty comments regarding increased teacher involvement in the program.

Table 15

*Suggestions for Teacher Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments</th>
<th>Continue program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have monthly themes; simplify quotes; follow-up activities</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletin boards; programs; library books</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make the connections; put words into actions</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devote enough time to program; follow-up discussions; more visuals; simplify information</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take five minutes to ask, “What was today’s message?”; make posters</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk immediately after; need time to follow up</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find teachable moments to use as reminders; constant reinforcement for students each day</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow up with Guidance or Student Assistance Counselor</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce it differently; more than just a read passage; routine was good</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are teachers’ verbatim comments regarding suggestions for teacher involvement in the character education program:

"Some of the examples that were given – the quotes – could be brought down to their level. It would be good to have themes throughout the year and break them down monthly. We should have bulletin boards about the themes and advisories to have teachers more conscious of it.”
“Follow through – bulletin boards, programs, books.”

“If it stays, we need to make the connections. Learn to put the words into action.”

“There has to be a time devoted to it. There’s no time to follow up to discuss it if half the kids haven’t heard it. Half the time I don’t even hear it. There’s no visual, nothing else to tie it in.”

“If the teachers would take five minutes to say, ‘What was today’s message? Could one person tell me how you could apply it?’ that’s all it would take to make it more effective.”

“If the kids just hear something, it’s one thing. I think that it becomes the class’s responsibility to take it and try to find teachable moments to use the nuggets – reminders to be kind, civil, courteous – and then use them during the day as examples.”

“Follow up with Guidance or the SAC [Student Assistance Coordinator].”

“They weren’t invested in a read passage. It was just another person telling them what to do. It’s not like there was rolling of the eyes. Some of them actually enjoyed the routine. But it was more that they like standing up, doing the flag salute and then hearing blah, blah, blah.”

Summary

The research findings presented the thoughts, opinions, reflections and recommendations of teachers in a sixth grade, upper middle class middle school at the
end of the first year of a character education program. Thirteen teachers of a faculty of 43 were interviewed representing various ages and subjects. Gender highly favored females. The teachers were asked to share their evaluation of the program, Project Wisdom, in terms of its effect on student behaviors. They were also asked if they favored the continuation of the program, and if so, their suggestions for its future.

Questions targeted a number of specific behaviors that fell within four categories: self-awareness, self-management, relationship management, and social awareness. There was ample opportunity for teachers to offer additional comments outside these four areas as they related to the overall scope of the study.

Teachers varied considerably in their evaluation of the impact of the program on student behavior. In all four areas, there were many teachers who stated that Project Wisdom had little or no impact. Others stated that it was possible that the program built on some proclivities of the student body, which was perceived by most to be an exceptionally polite and well-behaved group, “nicer kids” than they had experienced in the past. No one expressed the opinion that Project Wisdom was responsible for any discernible change in a specific behavior that could be directly attributable to the students’ experience with the program.

However, it was noteworthy that the teachers unanimously spoke in favor of continuing the program, despite their doubts as to its efficacy. Each reported that the process of character education was both worthwhile and necessary, and although they disagreed on how the program should proceed the following year, they all concurred that it should.

Most of the teachers expressed frustration at the amount of curricular material
they were asked to cover in any given school day, and they were wary of any additional
duties that would come with character education. To a person, they all spoke of
scheduling problems, and the optimal time to offer this program. Many expressed a desire
to be trained, or to have the opportunity to follow up the Words of Wisdom, which were
the messages the students heard each morning. Interestingly, the teachers had all been
sent e-mails with suggestions for follow-up activities as part of the program, but none had
opted to use any of the lesson plans that had been described. Some attributed that to lack
of time; others were not even aware that they had been sent the material.

Despite the teachers' overall beliefs that the program had little effect on student
behavior, many were able to cite instances where students had quoted the Words of
Wisdom or made reference to it in their daily school activities. They also pointed to
instances where they themselves had utilized "Words of Wisdom" to illustrate or
underscore a point they had made in their own classes. One teacher even discussed her
own personal growth that she felt was influenced by the program.

The interviews elicited either negative, neutral, or uncertain responses regarding
the program's actual effect on student behavior, but nonetheless positive responses to the
idea of its being continued the following school year. Teachers indicated that they
perceived a need for character education at their school and saw value in it. Despite their
often tepid evaluation of the Project Wisdom program, they were willing to continue and
enhance its implementation the following school year. Suggestions for improvement of
the program included better timing, more professional development opportunities, and
increased integration of the program into the curriculum and overall culture of the school.
However, most teachers indicated that they had little time in their own schedules to
accommodate many of these changes. They had no answers to this seeming conundrum.
Chapter V
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a new character education program on student behaviors at a sixth grade middle school in a New Jersey public school district, DFG I. To gather data, 13 sixth grade teachers were interviewed and were asked to describe their perceptions of Project Wisdom, the newly introduced character education program at their school, and its effect on student behavior. They were also asked for recommendations regarding the continuation of the program during the coming school year and suggestions for modifications or improvements.

Chapter One presented the problem to be studied: How does a character education program at a New Jersey public middle school result in changes in student behaviors after its first year of implementation? Chapter Two contained a review of literature that focuses on a number of key areas: the need for character education as articulated by educators and other experts, as well as by society; the components of an effective character education program; the relationship between character education and student behaviors; teacher and student perceptions of character education programs. Chapter Three described the methodology used in this study to gather and analyze the interview responses. Chapter Four presented an analysis of the data collected. Chapter Five offers a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

The study focused on five research questions:

1. To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in
student self-awareness since the inception of the character education program?
(Indicators of behavior would include: student diligence, perseverance, self-discipline, prudence, responsibility to self.)

2. To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in student self-management since the inception of the character education program?
(Indicators of behavior would include: student fairness, honesty, integrity, confidence, courage, healthy self-esteem.)

3. To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in student relationship-management since the inception of the character education program?
(Indicators of behavior would include: student cooperation, conflict resolution, non-violent behavior, civility, courtesy, application of the "Golden Rule," patience, caring, compassion, empathy, and kindness.)

4. To what extent have teachers and administrators witnessed a change in student social awareness since the inception of the character education program?
(Indicators of behavior would include: respect, sense of human dignity and self-worth, tolerance, service to others, and social responsibility.)

5. To what extent do teachers think the program should continue and be improved upon for the coming school year to reflect their observations?

Summary of Research

The research which has been cited indicated that character education is widely perceived to be of value; however, opinions vary as to the most effective way in which to implement it within a school setting. Literature has suggested that successful programs
can take the form of casual messages intertwined within the school culture, formal, packaged programs that are adopted and practiced by the entire school community, or home-grown programs which develop as a product of group efforts among students, faculty, administration, and parents. Literature also indicated that, no matter what the form, there is no guarantee that a character education program will be successful in a way that can be conclusively measured; in fact, most studies have not produced definitive results about the perceived effects of character education on student behaviors and attitudes. For this reason, past studies on character education almost unanimously recommended further research in a variety of settings. This would serve a two-fold purpose:

1. To further increase the database of information regarding character education that will, in turn, enable more in-depth analysis of these programs;

2. To augment our knowledge about ways to implement character education programs to achieve maximum success in the area of student behaviors.

To answer this recommendation, this study was conducted on a student population that has not been examined in prior research studies, a sixth grade middle school in an affluent (DFG I) suburb of New Jersey.

*Self-awareness.* Research Question #1: To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in students’ self-awareness since the inception of the character education program?

For Research Question 1 and its related interview questions, teachers’ responses focused on two areas connected with self-awareness: mature sense of responsibility and cheating. In general, teachers perceived their students in one of two ways:
1. growing in maturity from the beginning to the end of the school year, and therefore exhibiting more positive qualities relating to self-discipline, perseverance or wise decision-making;

2. immature and lacking responsibility, with no perceived change over the course of the year.

In both cases, teachers indicated that they felt the character education program had little or no impact on this area of self-awareness. This supports the findings from the Thompson (2002) study in a rural, southern public school that cited among its conclusions that the maturation process from the beginning to the end of the school year, and not simply a character education program, may have contributed to students' improved behavior.

With regard to the cheating issue, teachers concluded that a culture change had occurred, and that old norms relating to the question, "What constitutes cheating?" had given way to a new standard that tolerates a broader spectrum of behaviors in this area. The work of Thomas Lickona echoes these sentiments when he stated that there are changes in our current society that are, in his perception, eroding the morals of its citizens. He suggested that schools can impart character education that is based on some common understanding of what is honest and just (Lickona, 2004).

However, teachers interviewed for this study did not seem to feel empowered to address the cheating question. Their responses indicated that the definition of an ethical society had changed significantly in recent years, and that it was increasingly difficult for them to have a significant influence on their students' perceptions of honesty and integrity. They consistently spoke of the responsibility of parents and the influence of the
community at large as being integral to the character development of children. They commented, “Parents are the biggest influence on the kids,” and “The people in this town don’t accept that level of defiance or that kind of response.” This echoes the results of the Olsen (1995) study where teachers cited whole community participation as a necessary factor in successful character education. If the community reflects the values that are taught, the program will have a much better chance for success.

The research by Leming and Yendol-Hoppey (2004) also supports this conclusion. Teachers who were interviewed for this study believed that teaching character is a multifaceted process that will happen over time and requires the support of the entire community. They especially noted that the family plays a critical role in this process.

Similarly, the Romanowski (2005) study of a high school character education program pointed to parents as critical to the success of character education. These teachers felt that too much pressure had been exerted on the school to improve the character of children, when, in fact, many other factors in society were cited as very influential in developing children’s values.

An interesting note is that the Romanowski (2005) study cited that although teachers felt their character education program had been largely successful, two areas that had been generally overlooked were lying and cheating. This may underscore teachers’ and even administrators’ lack of confidence relating to a school program’s ability to impact any real change when it comes to honesty.

*Self-management. Research Question #2: To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in students’ self-management since the inception of the character*
education program?

For Research Question 2 and its related interview questions, teachers' responses focused mainly on their perceptions of students' self-esteem and their willingness and ability to speak out against wrongdoing.

Teachers generally reported that students' self-esteem was very healthy, and this had been instilled in their environments at home, at school, and in their social lives. This confirms the results of the Bulach (2002a) study, which determined that many of the students who participated in the research exhibited good character values. The authors stated that this was a result of modeling value-centered behaviors that they had observed at school and at home. The Bulach study also found that for middle school students, there was a need for more humility, which points to the maturity factor as it affects the development of self-esteem (Bulach, 2002a). Teachers in this current study support that conclusion. They noted that, although students were willing to speak out against injustice, adults often had to point out the wrong-doing. The students' worlds were so ego-centered that they were more self-righteous than self-asserted, often exhibiting a "What's in it for me?" attitude. Martinson's (2003) research supports the need for adults to stimulate the moral imagination of young people by pointing to specific situations and asking them to consider ethical and moral choices.

The results of this current study differed from the Olsen (1995) study in the area of student self-management, where one of the outcomes of a character education program was improved student self-control. However, the program in the Olsen study was administered in a K-6 environment, and was evaluated after 6 months of multi-grade, weekly 30-minute character education lessons. It is possible that the difference in grade
levels and the intensity of focus on the program were factors which would account for this varied result.

Teachers in this current study also felt that students were willing to speak out against wrongdoing, but questioned their motives in doing so. They postulated that students reported incidents because they “don’t want to get into trouble.” Conversely, they added, students “love to get each other in trouble. They cover for their friends and sell out their foes.”

Teachers also noted a certain self-centeredness regarding students’ reporting wrongdoing. They said that students do not pay much attention to misconduct unless the fallout affects them personally. Again, these results resonate with the findings of the Thompson (2002) study that point to the maturation process as a critical factor in determining the success of a character education program.

*Relationship management.* Research Question #3: To what extent have teachers witnessed a change in student relationship management since the inception of the character education program?

For Research Question 3 and its related interview questions, teachers’ responses focused mainly upon kindness, courtesy and a sense of community.

In this area of relationship management, the importance of the school environment, including modeling by teachers and a supportive team-related work ethic, became clear. Teachers reported that this particular group of sixth graders, with some notable exceptions, had come with a very cooperative class “personality.” However, they attributed the behaviors that were fostered within the school setting as reinforcing these
positive attitudes.

The teachers pointed to their own training, their strong teamwork, and their reinforcement of school rules with regard to courtesy and civility as significant factors in this area. The Bulach (2002a) study again validates this concept with its finding that value-centered behaviors modeled by faculty will have an impact on building character. The Williams and Schaps (1999) report for the National Commission on Character Education cited five character education theorists, (Solomon, DeVries, Berkowitz, Lickona, Ryan), all of whom speak to the importance of educators serving as models for students and creating caring and collaborative school environments. The curriculum content at Cravens Middle School, the site for the Milson (2000) study, stated that good character is not formed automatically, but is the result of a sustained process of teaching, example, learning and practice.

Although the effectiveness of the character education program in fostering student civility, courtesy, and willingness to speak out was not clearly defined in this current study, the results indicate that values develop more fully when students have good role models at home and at school. This validates the findings of the previously cited studies.

*Social awareness. *Research Question #4: To what extent have teachers noticed a change in student social awareness since the inception of the character education program?

For Research Question 4 and its related interview questions, teacher responses focused on the following: respect for people and property and awareness of the needs of others.

The majority of teachers interviewed for this study indicated that their students
exhibited a sensitivity to the needs of those less fortunate, and that they were generous by nature when it came to sharing their resources. They did not feel that the character education program Project Wisdom had any significant impact in this area.

This is in contrast, however, with the findings of Lickona (2004) who postulated that young people are increasingly hurting themselves and others, and are less concerned about the needs of those around them. This difference may be related to the socioeconomic status of the students who were the focus of this current study. This middle school is a DFG “T” which indicates that their families are relatively affluent, and according to teacher reports, generous in their contributions to the community at large. Again, this echoes back to the importance of modeling good values at home, cited in the previous section. This is supported by the results of the Purvis (2002) study that attributed the economic health of students’ families as being a significant factor in influencing the development of values and morals.

The same conclusion resulted with regard to respect, with the majority of teachers in this study stating that disrespect seldom, if ever, occurs at this particular middle school, and that infractions in this area, including the use of profanity or destruction of school property are not tolerated. As the Bulach (2002a) study found, if the school environment is supportive of good character values, students will not only exhibit these values, but serve as role models for each other. The Tattner (1998) study also points to the necessity of a school climate that fosters concern for others as being essential to effective character education.

*Effectiveness of the character education program.* Research Question #5: To what extent do teachers think the program should continue and be improved upon for the
coming school year to reflect their observations?

For Research Question 5 and its related interview questions, teachers' responses focused on scheduling and preparation. Their comments regarding professional development, program follow-up, integration into the curriculum and program timing all supported results of previous research. In this study, almost all teachers reported that, ideally, they would like to be able to spend more time on the messages of the Words of Wisdom, but that the demands of the school schedule did not permit that. Almost unanimously, they agreed that this factor detracted from the potentially positive results of the program.

In addition, many teachers felt they had not been adequately trained and/or had not been provided with ample resources to follow up the Project Wisdom program in the classroom. Some noted that even though resource material was distributed, it was sparsely used, if at all. Again, this was attributed to lack of time.

A few teachers mentioned that the program could have been effectively integrated into the current curriculum without adding time to the schedule, but with one exception, could not cite any examples of that practice occurring. This expectation is consistent with the findings of the Leming and Verdol-Hoppey (2004) study in which teachers indicated that they should be able to seamlessly integrate a character education curriculum into their instructional day.

Much of the literature on effective character education supports the total integration of these programs into the daily school schedule. The Character Education Partnership study notes that implementation of a program on a regular basis and integration into the academic curriculum are essential components of an effective
program (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006). Another study supports this recommendation and points out that student behavior outcomes are determined by the teacher’s level of participation in the character education program (Sheppard, 2002).

The professional development factor emerged as critical both in this current study and the related literature. Berkowitz and Bier (2006) cite the most successful models of character education as containing professional development opportunities, substantial support and resource material. DeRoche and Williams (2001) concur in their study of effective character education programs, stating that training and resources are necessary components to success.

The Cravens Middle School program in the Milson (2000) study cited lack of staff training as one of its most problematic aspects. This is substantiated by Lickona’s (1993a) research which concluded that character education requires pre-service or in-service training because teachers do not always feel comfortable or competent in these areas.

These results create a conundrum for this study. Teachers agreed that character education is important and that it requires time and commitment; however, they are either unwilling or unable to dedicate the amount of time it would take to give the program a fair chance for success. This produces a real dilemma for educators who want to develop policies and practices that align with the research recommending character education program development in our schools. How can a school follow the recommendations of researchers regarding character education and still honor teachers who feel the constant pressure of a full schedule and overloaded curriculum?
A Model

One answer to this question can be found at Liberty Corner School in Liberty Corner, NJ, a K-5 elementary school, DFG “J”, with a student population of 585 and a faculty of 57. Liberty Corner School is a National School of Character and has received this citation each year since 2002 (2007 National, 2007).

The following are components of Liberty Corner’s character education program that could serve as an outline for schools which are developing a protocol for their own programs:

1. The school has adopted “Character Education” as its theme. Just as some schools will target “Writing Across the Curriculum” or “Interdisciplinary Education,” Liberty Corner has embraced character education as the goal for the entire school.

2. The character education program was initiated and developed by two faculty members who remain committed to its success. These faculty members volunteered to bring the rest of the teachers on board the program, thus reducing the chances for failure due to any perceived pressure from the administration.

3. The character education committee includes teachers, students, and parents in recognition that buy-in and ownership of the program were critical to its success.

4. The entire program is infused into the curriculum. There is no separate character education time. All special areas including physical education, art and music are included.

5. Each grade adopts a “Pillar of Character” based on the Lickona model of six pillars of character (Lickona, 1993b). Teachers develop most activities independently as they decide how to translate their pillar (e.g., trustworthiness) into day-to-day living.
They use plays, poems, bulletin boards, and projects among other activities.

6. There is guided reading in a literature circle where students and teachers use the common language of the character education program to talk about book characters. A book is also selected for a school-wide book club. All students read the same book and older and younger students work together with a common piece of literature.

7. Each class connects its pillar of character to a service-learning project. The school has a relationship with 20-25 charitable organizations and students select the group which they would like to help.

8. Teachers are trained and receive an implementation binder of resource materials. This includes games, writing prompts, and other suggested activities to support the program.

9. The principal writes "The Principal's Journal" every day, which is a character education journal that contains quotes of wisdom. The journal entry is read each morning over the PA system.

10. Parents are integrally involved in the program. They are members of the character education committee. Newsletters suggest ways for parents to support the character education curriculum at home. The guidance counselor also sends Home Pages with more resources and parent information.

11. Older students understand that they are role models for younger students. There is a fourth and fifth grade "Peace Patrol" that works with the guidance counselor.

12. When the program was evaluated using a survey instrument distributed to teachers, students and parents, the results indicated that children overwhelmingly felt safe in the school, did not feel there were any instances of bullying, and supported those who
they feel are oppressed. Many of the students surveyed referenced the quotes they had heard and books they had read.

13. Both longevity and faculty willingness to modify the program have contributed to its success (Character Education, 2007).

The Liberty Corner model can serve as one answer to a significant problem identified by middle school teachers in this current study. This problem concerned their lack of time and energy to institute the changes they felt were necessary to make Project Wisdom more effective. These changes included better timing, more professional development opportunities, and increased integration of the program into the curriculum and culture of the school.

In the case of Liberty Corner, the entire school was immersed in the character education program as opposed to the middle school program in this current study where “Words of Wisdom” were only read at the beginning of the day. Since teachers at Liberty Corner had a significant role in the development and implementation of the program, they enthusiastically participated in a project for which they felt ownership. Therefore, professional development was something for which they volunteered, since the success of the program was a personal priority for each faculty member.

On the other hand, the middle school faculty in this current study was presented Project Wisdom as a fait accompli without any input before its implementation. Timing of the Liberty Corner program was not problematic, since it was fully integrated into the school day and was included in regular classroom and school-wide activities. At the middle school, there was no integration except in the few cases where teachers expended the effort to do so, and therefore the time at which the Words of Wisdom were offered
became critical.

In contrast to the middle school in this current study, Liberty Corner School made character education an integral part of its curriculum and culture, and every element of its profile reflected the commitment of the entire school community to its implementation.

**Recommendations**

In terms of implications for policy and practice, the results of this research substantiate the findings of past studies on the subject of character education. Teacher comments during the interviews validate that character education has the potential to make a significant contribution to a school and to the growth and development of its students.

All teacher responses in this study are echoed in the findings of past research. Williams (2000) cited that character education can prepare children to be responsible citizens. DeRoche and Williams (2001) pointed to the need for vision, standards, leadership, resources, training, and partnerships with a wide range of adults. Solomon, Watson, and Battistich emphasized the need for creating a community of care (Solomon, 2000). DeVries (2000) pointed to the importance of educators serving as models for students. Berkowitz (2006) also cited the need for caring a collaborative school environment that includes conflict resolution and service learning.

Based on prior research and the results of this current study, the following are recommendations for policy and practice regarding character education.
Policy.

1. State departments of education should consider adopting character education requirements in their schools. Since research has shown that both packaged and self-developed programs have beneficial results, schools can be given options as to the format of the character education program. They can also be allowed ample time to phase in the levels of student and teacher involvement with the ultimate goal of integrating the program into the entire curriculum and culture of the school.

2. As character education programs are implemented, they should be regularly evaluated at various stages of development. Assessment results should inform the future progress of the programs so that successful practices could be further enhanced and professional development activities could be improved.

3. As studies suggest, research into character education’s impact on student behaviors should be mainly qualitative, with teacher, student, administration, parent, and community feedback measured through in-depth conversations and subsequent analysis.

Practice. The following guidelines can be used by a school that is planning a character education program to assist in articulating a successful strategy for its implementation:

1. Character education programs need a structure and a vision. It is a good idea to either adopt one that has been developed, or to create one with a committee that represents all appropriate parties.

2. Character education programs need a leader, one who supports the goals actively, who is prepared to act as a catalyst for change, and who is willing to do the
necessary work for smooth program operation.

3. The most successful character education programs create a framework for the culture of the school. The entire school environment is permeated with messages and behaviors that encourage the development of good character.

4. Character education programs stand the best chance for success if they are infused into the curriculum of the school. If teachers creatively apply the character education messages to lessons within their own disciplines, the positive effect of the program will likely be further increased.

5. Teacher, parent, student, and administration buy-in will also increase the likelihood of the program’s success. Regular communication with all members of the character education committee and the learning community will greatly enhance the program’s effectiveness.

6. Teachers, students, parents, and administrators should be constantly reminded that they are role models for one another and should be aware of the responsibility that holds.

7. Professional development for faculty is an essential component of an effective program. However, it should be structured so that teachers will not feel overburdened with yet another curricular responsibility. In a time when faculty are already stressed with pressures of standardized testing and burgeoning curricula, this is a sizeable challenge. One key would be to allow ideas for character education to emerge from within the faculty ranks so as to maximize the teachers’ conviction about the need for the program and their commitment to its success.

8. The program should be regularly evaluated. Statistics documenting its success
will encourage those who are program developers and regular participants. They will also provide direction for modifications.

9. There should be a component of the program that connects outside the walls of the school building. This will enhance the program and allow children to see the fruits of good character as their kindness, courtesy, responsibility, and other-centeredness enrich the lives of others.

10. There should be recognition that all educators do not see values and character education through the same lens. As the Williams (2000) study pointed out, there are many who feel moral issues do not belong in a school or that certain values are attached to particular groups, religious or otherwise. In implementing a character education program, facilitators must be sensitive to all parties and make every effort to support the values included in the program with data that prove they are accepted by mainstream society.

*Future research.* This study presented findings which add to the body of research on character education. However, as noted by others who have studied this area, continued qualitative research is necessary to provide more complete data in assessing its effectiveness and its influence on student behaviors (Posey, 2000).

In light of this, the following recommendations are offered for future research in this area:

1. Since feedback from teachers indicated that although they felt the character education program was not especially effective, they would still like to continue and improve it, further study of this group might investigate these seemingly contradictory results. Why would teachers want to continue a program that they felt was ineffective?
Was their perception that the need for character education that strong? Why would they suggest improvements and then immediately articulate their inability to make those improvements in their current school circumstances? What might make them willing to embrace a new or enhanced program model? A qualitative study examining teacher attitudes regarding these questions could provide results that would inform future research in the area of character education implementation.

2. This study was administered in a sixth grade middle school over the course of one year which was the first year of the character education program. It would be instructive to study this same school with another group of sixth graders during the next school year to determine if there are different results based on the personality of the class and the teachers’ comfort level with the program.

3. Since this study focused on a single grade in a middle school, it would be beneficial to follow up with this same class in subsequent years, whether or not the character education program was continued, to discern if there were any lasting results.

4. Since this study was limited to sixth graders, further studies could focus on other grades both at the elementary and middle school levels since, as the literature review has indicated, additional data regarding all age groups will be useful in determining the effect of these character education programs.

5. The character education program that was studied was minimally implemented, with a brief announcement made to the students in the morning. Further studies could focus on a program that utilized the resources of Project Wisdom more completely and integrated it more fully into the curricular activities of the school.

6. Teachers in this school were not directly trained for the character education
program; rather, they were given materials that they could use at their discretion. It would be informative to conduct a study in a school where the faculty had engaged in professional development activities to prepare and support them in implementing the character education program.
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51.


Appendix A

Goleman's Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence
Daniel Goleman's Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence


2. Self-Management includes the competencies of emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism.

3. Social Awareness includes empathy, organizational awareness, and service.

4. Relationship Management includes inspirational leadership, influence, developing others, being a catalyst for change, conflict management, and teamwork/collaboration (Goleman, 2002).
Appendix B

Bulach's Selected Character Values and

Corresponding Behaviors
Bulach's Selected Character Values and Their Corresponding Behaviors

Respect for Self/Others/Property

Students think about the feelings of other students.

Students take care of school property.

Students are positive about themselves.

Students act to improve the appearance of the school or other property.

**Students do things that are not good for themselves.**

**Students think that sexual activity is OK.**

**Students use tobacco.**

**Students use drugs and/or alcohol.**

Students believe that keeping your body clean is important.

Honesty

**Students think it is okay to do something as long as they don’t get caught.**

Students take things that don’t belong to them.

Students turn in money or things that have been lost if they find them.

Students tell the truth.

Students can be trusted.

Self-Control/Discipline

Students control themselves/behave when they need to.

Students do what the teachers ask them to do.

Students resist those things that are not good for them or that will get them in trouble.
Students are able to wait to get what they want.

Students pay attention in class.

Students let other students tell them what to do.

Students control their anger.

Responsibility/Dependability/Accountability

Students can be trusted to do what they say they will do.

Students make excuses for their actions/argue about the consequences.

Students do what the teacher asks without having to be reminded.

Students complete their classwork on time.

Students turn in their homework on time.

Students accept the consequences of their decisions/actions.

Integrity/Fairness

Students go along with the most popular student instead of those who are not popular.

Students do what they are supposed to do.

Students let other students talk them into doing something that is wrong.

Students take advantage of other students if given a chance.

Students treat others the way they would want to be treated.

Students stand up or speak out for what they believe is right.

Perseverance/Diligence

Students show determination when faced with a problem.

Students think about and plan their work.

Students give up when they fail or do not succeed.
Students finish an assignment within the allotted time.

Students are distracted when doing their work.

Students daydream, doodle, stare out the window.

Cooperation

Students help each other.

Students help the teacher.

Students fight with each other.

Students work well in groups.

Students argue with each other.

Students compromise to solve a conflict/problem.

Compassion/Empathy

Students feel sorry for students who are having a problem.

Students pick on each other.

Students say/do things that hurt other students.

Students help a student who is being picked on.

Students listen to each other's problems.

Students comfort/console other students who have a problem.

Kindness

Students are nice to each other.

Students are nice to teachers and other adults.

Students say things about others that are harmful.

Students give compliments to each other.

Students are cruel to each other.
Students help students who have physical or mental disabilities.

Forgiveness

Students try to get even.

Students accept the mistakes of others.

Students are mean to someone because of something that person did to them in the past.

Students accept an apology to end a problem.

Patriotism/Citizenship

Students are positive about their country.

Students are positive about the police.

Students are positive about the need for rules and laws.

Students care about their community.

Students care about their school.

Students volunteer their services to help where needed.

Tolerance/Diversity

Students accept students who have a different religion.

Students make fun of ideas that are different from theirs.

Students accept differences of opinion.

Students make fun of students who are different.

Students accept students who are from a different race.

Students make a effort to understand students who are different.

Courtesy/Politeness

Students interrupt when others are talking.
Students use cuss words or bad language.

Students call each other names.

Students say things like thank you, pardon me, etc. when appropriate.

Students listen when someone is talking to them.

Students ignore other students.

Students talk back to teachers and other adults.

Generosity/Charity

Students are more concerned about themselves than they are of others.

Students want to help the less fortunate.

Students are willing to share what they have with others.

Students want to know what is in it for them.

Sportsmanship

Students get mad when they lose.

Students congratulate their opponents whether they win or lose.

Students quit trying if they know they are going to lose.

Students will cheat to win.

Students agree that “how the game is played” is more important than winning.

Humility

Students care too much about their appearance, e.g. having the right clothing, looking just right, etc.

Students brag about themselves.

Students want to be the center of attention.
Students put down other students.

Students act as if they are better than other students.

Students admit when they are wrong (Bulach, 2002).

(Underlined statements are negatively stated for purposes of the study.)
Appendix C

Project Wisdom Values Fostered
Project Wisdom Values Fostered

Caring
Civility
Compassion
Confidence
Cooperation
Courage
Diligence
Education, Love of Learning
Empathy
Fairness
Forgiveness
Golden Rule
Gratitude
Honesty
Human Dignity and Worth
Human Excellence
Integrity
Kindness
Love
Nonviolence, Conflict Resolution
Patriotism
Patience
Perseverance
Positive Attitude
Positive Work Ethic
Prudence
Respect
Responsibility, Individual and Social
Service to Others (Values Fostered, 1992)
Appendix D

Interview Transcripts
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

PW – Project Wisdom
WW – Words of Wisdom

Interviewee #1

If it didn’t hook them right there (in the morning) and you don’t have a dynamic speaker... Who delivers and how they deliver... Oh, it’s Joey... Joey was on the air. It has to do with the personality who’s delivering the information. The timing and the delivery are important and the dynamism of delivery.

The WW might key topics in advisory but if you have the WW in the beginning of the day and you don’t have advisory till the end, it’s hard to make the connection.

Because of my personality and because of my subject I can be a little more probing... so I have that rapport and I can pursue things like that.

The ideal would be to have the WW come up during the advisory. The kids come with their own issues. Presenting something like WW daily may be overkill.

Frankly, kids haven’t referenced what they heard in WW in their advisories.

I don’t see it sticking because it’s just another little piece of information that’s been thrown out at them.

Level of civility – This particular group for whatever reason seemed to be a nicer group. Is it because we’ve done this [WW]? It’s the synergy of the class personality, the
principal, maybe this kind of information.

Bullying, teasing — The last couple of years I've seen a change.

Respect of personal property, building — Over at [7th and 8th grade school] they're having an incredible problem with theft. Do you have magic drawers at home? Do your clothes automatically jump into the drawers when you're finished with them? Then don't do it here. I don't have the time to clean all this up. They hired me to teach you art. By the end of the year — and it's maturity — there were kids taking responsibility — there were kids who really understood that you didn't leave things all over the place. This is really a cognitive edge of awareness — the beginning of adolescence — a self-awareness — and hopefully the resolution of self-centeredness.

Attitudes towards teachers and administration — We really don't have that level of defiance. Most people in town don't accept that kind of response [obscenity]. There really isn't that kind of belligerence or verbal abuse.

Cheating — It's almost gone the wrong way. They almost think that any way to get the right answer is OK. Getting it done - not getting it done the right way - is what's important. The cheating has a life of its own. The least work for the biggest reward — the biggest shortcut. It's alive and well. I think it has to be addressed...they have to understand intellectual property, plagiarism.

Sense of community, compromise, seek out peaceful solutions — The more mature ones, more socially aware, they're the peacemakers. Direct causal effect — if it was anything it was subtle. If it [WW] generated conversation it was out of my earshot. That
kind of information being delivered with a bit to time to muse about what it meant is probably crucial.

Greater needs of others – That same group – the one that’s becoming more aware, mature, who are more global.

Sense of their responsibility to themselves – be their best selves – speak out - There are kids with that kind of self-righteousness, but for the most part, kids at this age say “What’s in it for me?”

Should program be continued? Suggestions? I think it should continue. I think any piece of moral ethical education – and it wasn’t hokey, it had a basis in historic fact, it was interdisciplinary – can we hang our hat on it – we need to be very aware of what keys kids’ conversations – if we find something that they can get hooked by, we should pursue that. How? In an advisory? Big commitment. You have to have someone who is committed to this. I think the principal is. Be more surgical because our time is valuable...more surgical in who delivers the program – readers should be chosen more carefully.

If I were king, we have a thing called team time after lunch, I’d probably deliver it before team time. I’d deliver a thought they could express at lunch. There’s the opportunity where they are unfettered and undirected by adults.

It would probably be easier for me ... I would much prefer to have a piece of paper (than have it on the computer).
Interviewee #2

Courtesy, forgiveness – They are more aware, more polite holding the door, they’ll come to me and tell me if someone has done something that isn’t right, behaviors that aren’t tolerable, helpful.

Kindness, civility - Teachers are good role models. Kids are a nicer group than what we’ve had. They know that certain things aren’t going to be tolerated and that has to be enforced. The hard part is that they hear the announcements in the morning, but there’s no follow up.

They’ll talk to me about what they heard in the morning; they’ll ask me what I thought of it; they reference what they heard in the morning; get in conversations about what they heard. Follow up with guidance or SAC.

Bullying, teasing, angry outbursts – I’d like to think there are fewer. It also could be just the group we had this year…nicer than the group we had….hasn’t been too much...there was less bullying this year...

Level of respect towards teachers, administrators – For the most part that’s not a problem – it’s corrected and dealt with.

Cheating – they haven’t shared anything about it.

Sense of community, compromise, work as team members – in general they’re good…they can do projects for me, if we do a health project and I take a random group, they do nicely…problematic behaviors are identified and addressed at the time.
Aware of needs of others – They’re aware but they need a whole lot more…they think that everybody has what they have…when you do service projects, heart assn, food bank, but we need more than that. WW can help build on that.

Change in self-esteem, willingness to take on leadership roles, speak out – towards the end of the year you can see progress, but because they’re only here for one year, you don’t have any way of following through. You definitely can see how they’ve grown and changed, but one year is not enough. I think that’s a drawback of this model (6th grade).

Suggestions – We should do it again. We should see how this group behaves at the next level. It was worthwhile. Time to do it might be an obstacle. There are so many other curriculum agendas.

Kids are not being parented. You really have to go back to all these programs.

Interviewee #3

Civility, courtesy, forgiveness – We’ve been very fortunate. We have a nice group of kids. They came in respectful and kind. The kids who came in respectful and kind continue to be; the kids who have more frustration, continue to be.

We’re a collaborative team and we’re modeling good behaviors. We’re consistent in our expectations and that makes a difference.

We have referenced what the kids heard in the morning in WW. They remember
or they need classification - "What does that mean – everyone has their idiosyncrasies?"

A lot of time the WW has called in Martin Luther King and Gandhi and leaders who have had influence and we cross over a lot of those topics in Social Studies and recognize them.

Timing doesn’t lend itself as well as it could. Time should change. Too hectic at beginning of day. Middle of the day they have team time...that’s when WW should be. Or at the end of the day you can reflect on the day. We move the kids so quickly. To stop at the end of the day and look at the WW, when you have some context - "I couldn’t find my stuff and I was short with the people around me and I was frustrated and anxious that I wasn’t prepared...maybe I really need to think about when I’m feeling stressed what’s the best way to manage it."

It’s not necessary to do it every day...maybe twice a week. Maybe during independent reading...last period of the day...The morning is very difficult...late buses...getting things out of their lockers...what’s on their minds is getting to the first period...teachers are anxious to get started during first period...

Emails...we haven’t really had the opportunity to use them...we have so many things that we’re trying to merge at the same time...until we say this is a priority and we’re going to focus on it and this is how we’re trying to do it...

Liberty Corner is a great place for character education...it is the focus of their school...you can feel the culture is very warm...there are posters...it doesn’t feel to me that they’re also trying to work on many other things...they’ve made it a priority and
they're seeing the benefits of it.

We talk about (interdisciplinary) all the time...if we had the ability to let go of some of the curriculum, instead of doing 500 things, let's do 100 more deeply, we'd get the bang for the buck...we could address issues as character education...it needs to be a shared focus and people need to buy into it.

Interviewee #4

We have a school wide objective – writing. Every school has to have a school wide objective so ours is to focus on writing across the curriculum. Perhaps it's easier to do character education on the elementary level because the kids are so interested. In middle school, they don't want all this "niceness" as they do in the elementary school. The culture is more "sophisticated." They want to separate themselves from the younger kids so they can feel more "grown up."

We are such strong voices...the second we see someone being rude we're all over them...that's so different from when we're not around...they're nasty, malicious...there's that whole immature, frenetic way that they act with each other...then they have their school faces.

Kindness, compliments, sympathy – In the structure of the classroom I see a lot of that - "He made a really good point...that's a good idea." We train them to positively interact with each other. When they're not in the structure of the classroom, they act like they're 12 or 13 years old....the girls are very catty. "What is she wearing...who does she like?"
Interviewee #5

Bullying, teasing – it’s hidden... when they’re in the classroom they know they can’t get away with it and it’s not going to happen... because they’ve been so inundated... we do assemblies and discussion... so now it’s much more underground. Maybe even higher than the previous level... because they recognize who their victims could be... they’ve met a lot more people since this school combines 6 schools... they might see someone who’s shorter than they are...

Respect of property – I think that’s a little better... I think that comes from the principal’s expectations... I see him picking up things from the floor... he makes announcements... I think he values it... Now they’re more inclined. I don’t recall hearing WW about property. It’s more about the expectations you have for yourself and the consequences.

Respect towards teachers, administrators – Kids are very respectful. If it did happen [obscenity], they wouldn’t be in the classroom again. There will be rolling of the eyes and clicking of the tongue or “Are we doing *this* today?” but no outright disrespect.

Cheating – I think kids now are just copying things from the internet, and handing it is as their own. The role technology plays in their lives is so different... you tube gives them a shared culture... they do a lot with the internet socially and it’s different from what we know... and there’s no rules for it which is the dangerous part. It’s so open to them and they type their nasty words into cyberspace and don’t really realize that
someone else is reading them and what the impact will be. Another level of education for them is the parameters of how you manage cyberspace. I walked down the hall one day and passed a paper and I asked "What was that all about" and he got really sheepish and while. It was a Math assignment and I didn’t have time to do it last night and he printed it out for me. So he was just doing you a favor by passing this Math to you? It wasn’t a big, big deal to him. He asked his friend to make him an extra copy and he was just going to hand it in as his own.

Generosity – kids are very generous.

Parents are the biggest influence on kids.

It’s good that they were hearing WW – they make think of them in high school or as adults.

Interviewee #6

I think there might have been fewer discipline issues this year although that could be related to many different factors – like the community that was here this year – maybe it was the combination of both.

Civility, courtesy, forgiveness – less this year.

Kindness, sympathy – did go on...I know of at least five kids to whom I gave friendship reward bracelets...they weren’t aware...someone would see them in the cafeteria...you were caught being kind
Bullying, teasing – I think overall there was less but I don’t know if I can attribute it to WW.

There was no reference to WW in conversations with me. If there was the time to talk to them immediately after...but there was no time for follow up...even if it was one or two things it would help to ingrain the idea.

Timing – the first period – that impacts how much time – if there were a five minute home base, that could be different, but the teachers need to start so they’re more focused on their lessons...I think that would make a difference.

Personal property, classrooms, level of respect – it’s pretty good here...other years it’s been good as well.

Level of respect to teachers and administrators – not an issue, now or in the past.

Cheating, stealing – every year we have an isolated cheating incident but it’s very minimal...we don’t generally have a problem with that.

Sense of community, work as team members – they do work through things...it’s part of the personality of the school...overall this year has been better...but it’s hard to say if it’s just a good group, or if something else influenced them.

Usually as a classroom teacher, you only have one year to make an impression on them.

It is a very nice culture here...very warm...teaming creates a bond among students and teachers.
Awareness of needs of others – there are some kind ones… but they are very individualistic.

Self-discipline, perseverance, wise decision making – I think they have pretty good self-esteem overall. Perseverance – I don’t know about that… they’re used to people coming to their aid.

Willingness to take on leadership roles… speaking out… participating actively – Yes, they will speak out… it depends… sixth grade is so development… some are assertive some aren’t there yet… student council are more likely

Greater good – A lot of the students are doing things because they’ll look good on a college resume… I can’t say all of them….

A short discussion – how do these WW directly affect us… that would make an impression on them.

Follow up – I’d love to in Guidance if we could figure out a way. We’re looking at the scheduling of advisories. It would be ideal if we could all be together for an advisory program. But in the short term, even a minimal follow up during team time, it would be good. A one shot, people don’t internalize. Provide lessons – there’s a lot of wonderful material there.

Interviewee #7

Courtesy, civility – Everybody is lovely – first impression – nice that it’s small –
makes it warm – kids are courteous for the most part. The students on our team are very disrespectful. But they would not hold the door for a teacher, little courtesies, thank you, have a nice day, you wouldn’t see that. What percentage don’t have good manners – I would go with 40%...but we also had a bad group this year. Last year I wouldn’t have said that. I know that when we were at Camp Mason, simple things, could you quiet down, could you wait till someone finishes before you speak...The group that I was with when the WW came on was a very sweet group...

Timing – it’s at a horrible time...kids are rushing, if they get caught in the hallway for the Star Spangled they have to stop there...half the time they probably don’t even hear it...the only thing they would probably remember is “make it a great day or not... the choice is yours” and they mock this...When I say “You can do your homework or not, the choice is yours” they look at me because they know they heard that in the morning...I use that “the choice is yours” And with a few of them they say, “Yeah it is actually” That’s the one thing I got from it actually make it a good day or not, the choice is yours and there have been a couple of days when the day has started badly and I think ok I can change this it’s my choice, so it has made a difference. Not always. They could get something out of it if it were done properly. There has to be a time devoted to it. There’s no time to follow up to discuss it half the kids haven’t heard it. Half the time I don’t even hear it. Some of it is too much information for them to digest without following up on it. There’s no visual –nothing else to tie it in – they don’t see the people saying it – I have things to do – I have to get to first period. Team time – when we’re supposed to do announcements – we could write something on the board so they could see something and tie it into something. If you’re gonna do something you have to give it
a time for discussion so we could say, “Tell us what it means.” The speakers should also be identified. So and so’s Dad or the DARE officer or the owner of the pizza place down the street...

If they put it into the day, I think it would be interesting. But the teachers have an issue teaching another period. During team time or lunch time it wouldn’t have to be another period. Teachers were upset that they weren’t trained. I teach three subjects. I don’t have the time to figure out what I’m going to do with all my students on any given day. Give us options of what we could do with the WW, discussion, activities. Rather than put it on us. Doesn’t have to be every day. You could really do a lot with it.

Interviewee #8

Bullying teasing – It started at the beginning of the year. It partly changed but I don’t think it went away. It might have been a little bit less because we did have a severe incident at the beginning of the year. Even up to the last day, we had parents calling up saying please don’t let my child and _____ sit together because they’re picking on each other.

Building respect, classroom, personal property – In the upper levels there’s a lot less of that.

Cheating, stealing – cheating drives me nuts – I can see the wandering eyes, the paper on the back, the writing on the hand. I’m sitting there watching them copying. Then they say, “What did I do” because they see nothing wrong with it. More and more every year. That is a problem. Stealing – I haven’t heard of that. I feel like I’m constantly
seeing them looking at someone else’s work.

Responsibility to themselves – do what should be done – They have no sense of responsibility – nothing is their fault – If they don’t turn something in it’s my fault – Overall the majority do not take responsibility for their actions – I can watch a kid hit another kid and say “why did you hit him?” and he’ll say “I didn’t hit him.” “I just saw you hit him.” “I didn’t hit him.”

Responsibility to outside themselves – needs of others – I don’t think they do because I don’t think they’re being held accountable. They don’t bring in a permission slip they call their moms and have it faxed in so they can be a part of it…there’s a deadline and you missed it…but they’re still going on the trip. Their work – they don’t turn it in on time – all of a sudden parents are emailing – can he turn it in – when are you available. I was available when we did this project, when your child was there and we did it and he didn’t complete it. They don’t have to have that responsibility because someone is there to pick it up.

Leadership, speaking out against wrongdoing – they did it in the beginning of the year when there was an incident – they went into the office and said this is what we saw - I don’t want to get in trouble. Overall, they love to get each other in trouble. They cover for their friends, and sell out their foes.

Continued? Changes? There are a lot of positive things – it would be nice – I don’t know how – I think it needs a time – hear the message when everyone is listening – we can’t intensify till we know if it has any effect – we should decide if these messages
are getting through to them, what they’re getting from it – it hasn’t had a full opportunity yet. Time – teachers want to get started – they went into my time. WW should be during team time – that would make sense. We have an advisory period but we don’t have an advisory program. What WW is supposed to be is what that advisory period is for.

Interviewee #9

If a friend was speaking they would listen and make the connection.

Courtesy, civility – They always say thank you, excuse me, have a nice day. Good team. I wouldn’t say that anything would inspire them because they have always been like that.

Kindness towards one another, compliments – My class in one where we get to do social activities, discussions, there are positive and negative comments - it comes to them naturally.

Bullying teasing – They don’t do it in the classroom.

When they announced something, something relating to it would be come afterwards, and they might be held accountable…somebody would talk about it and they would listen to it.

Respect of school environment – no problems this year

Cheating stealing – Cheating may happen – if they get a chance to look at somebody else’s paper they will – They understand plagiarism – Those for whom writing
doesn’t come easy, they were cutting and pasting.

Sense of community – I think so. I teach about other parts of the world; we did a fundraiser to Africa; Gandhi, Confucius, to get to know there are other influential people in the world. I would make a connection with WW – They recognized Gandhi and Confucius when they heard it on the PA – They would bring me little bits of info about Confucius. “Did you hear they talked about Confucius” - the kids would recognize the names...

Speaking out – Put a positive note to telling on each other...They see virtue in it...but at this level developmentally unless it affects them, they don’t realize there is wrong-doing happening anywhere. You need to point it out to them and then you can have a good discussion on it.

Next year: Different time. Planning time. What do we want to get out of it? It shouldn’t be just five minutes in the morning. “The choice is yours.” Some of them have learned this. They say this to each other. Repetition - When you do it over and over...they’ll get it.

Interviewee #10

Courtesy, civility – I thought in the beginning of the year that they were a fairly nice bunch of kids – I don’t know that I noted a great change there...maybe the program helped to keep it there.

Compliments, sympathy, advice – They are sympathetic – If you said it to them
(they hurt someone’s feelings) they would see it.

Bullying, teasing – We still have that I don’t know if it’s ever going to be eliminated. It’s the nature of certain people they feel they have to push people around a little bit. I didn’t notice that it was any worse this year.

Once of twice WW were brought up.

Respect of personal property school building – not worse than any other year every once in while kids write in the bathrooms. I didn’t notice anything especially disrespectful.

Respect towards teachers administrators – This was an exceptional group. They were polite for the most part. They were an exceptionally needy group, much more used to adults being around and helping them. That may have made them subliminally more receptive to WW.

Sense of community – Yes. It’s the structure of the program that forced this – teams encourage camaraderie. The teachers do a lot of peer work with them, group learning; they don’t always go for an individual projects – they put them together in groups that I think forms that community feeling.

Cheating – stayed the same, tests, homework, homework in the lunchroom, plagiarism - we’ve been going crazy on that, very difficult. I don’t think they get enough practice in elementary school – they take articles off line and copy and paste them.

Students’ perceptions of needs of others – student council collected food, other
drives; I do a collection for cancer, relay for life, social studies classes collected money for Dafar, dressed up as historical characters and standing on boxes – put money on box and press the button and the character would speak and tell them who they were. In town, there are a lot of drives for people who need help. Cafeteria worker needed help and they took up a collection. They get that.

Responsibility to themselves, wise decisions – At that age, I don’t think that’s developed yet. They try. Sometimes what they hear in the morning might affect them.

Suggestions – I think in the beginning I liked it. Doing it every single day it loses its effectiveness; a few people would make more of a difference than every day – maybe twice a week. Towards the end of the year they just weren’t listening at all. I don’t know if there is a better time. Lunchtime they don’t want to listen – just want to chat. If you make advisory in the middle of the day it might have a different impact. End of day is bad. In the morning, some kids aren’t even in their classrooms yet. Every day it loses its punch. Follow through – bulletin boards, programs, books in library – That would never happen here (Liberty Corner) - they’re so locked into the curriculum...teachers may take initiatives on their own. As a school-wide project you’d have to buy 400 books and make sure it was covered in another part of the curriculum.

It could have much more of an impact if it weren’t being read every day...kids and teachers tune it out. Takes away from significance of message.

Interviewee #11

Civility courtesy – They did not remember the WW - students for the most part
didn't seem to pay attention. In the future they could introduce it differently. There
needed to be some follow up ...they weren't invested in a "read" passage...it was another
person telling them what to do. There was no rolling of eyes...some of them actually
enjoyed the routine, but it was more that they like standing up doing the flag salute and
hearing blah blah biah...

Acts of kindness, compliments - different group of kids - kids before never had
WW and these kids had it...throughout the year i didn't see an improvement...

This group of teachers are harsh critics, but these kids were a much nicer kinder
group than in the past.

Bullying teasing - no change - kids are very good at hiding that from adults. Two
girls may look innocent but they may be grabbing each other in a way that's bullying - I
did see with some boys some outright bullying - one boy who has throughout the years
been a victim. The team handles it first, guidance counselors are made aware,
administration was made aware - don't know if parents came in.

Respect for personal property - same but there were incidents in the boys room
urination on the floor problem but that was about it. Some kids wrote on desks...I made
them clean it...not bad.

Respect towards teachers - very good - they had a good sense of please and thank
you, even handing you a piece of paper they said thank you - lots of appreciation
expressed by students - consistent throughout the year. When they were praised they did
it more. In past years, students just expected things and weren't grateful - this year they
were grateful for the smallest of things - a special day when they got to play a game. I don't think it was anything with the WW.

Cheating, plagiarism - couple of students where cheating was problematic. I think teacher intervention in terms of placing them in the room where they had less access to cheat curbed that. The few students who were trying to cheat - that didn't change.

Sense of community, willingness to compromise - They started to buy into the sense of community. They did buy into a greater sense of community when the adults are using common vocabulary enforcing ideas that would build each other up. You start to see the “aha” moments - one girl in particular when she felt that a member of the school community who happened to be an adult was treated poorly, she voiced her opinion and she said that the administration often speaks of our being a family and I feel that a member of our family is being treated unfairly. So she used that vocabulary to try to get an administrator to change an action. WW could have reinforced this idea - even if they just heard them - even if it was just words - the fact that every day there was something that was character education, they knew at some level that it must be important.

Righting a wrong - a couple of girls who wanted to make things right - people being treated unfairly - I worked with them to see what they could do to right the wrong. They knew that in the end it would work itself out and there would be some kind of closure but they wanted to see how it would work itself out and if they could influence that.

A couple of kids who are aware of how blessed they are...people who don't have
the kinds of clothes or food they have...those kinds of things start to click. The school is very good about collecting things for the poor and the kids are good outside of school, working in a clinic or doing a "mitzvah," good deeds for their Bar Mitzvah...did WW fit into this...I would say once or twice. One student in particular did listen and then said something like, "That's kind of like the WW from two days ago." Towards the end of the year they made a connection. It's where they are in psychological development. They are starting to see how the puzzle fits together.

Responsibility to themselves, self discipline, self esteem - They like to take the easy way out so it's enough of a battle to try and fight that and show them the long term benefits of doing the hard work and reaping the benefits.

Suggestions - If it stays, we need to make the connections - learn to put the words into action. We fit ten pounds of curriculum into a five pound bag and this asks us to put 10 ½ lbs of curriculum - not very effective. Timing - are kids asleep first thing in the morning - I don't have the answer for that.

Is it worth doing - yes, absolutely - I think the kids need it and we need to get back to the basics. It's worth the investment. I'd rather see other subject matter being dropped even it were my own. The benefits are worth it - we'd see more ethical choices being made - how do you evaluate that?

Interviewee #12

Civility courtesy forgiveness - since I only teach there one period a day and my class is very small, I couldn't see any big change from September or October to May or
June in the way the kids treated each other.

Acts of kindness compliments - I started to see some of that but I think it was more because I personally found the character education program very interesting and worthwhile and something that I could utilize as a teaching moment. So what would happen is that there would be some incident in the classroom and I would say let's stop and think about this. What did we hear this morning about speaking, allowing other to express their opinions without interrupting, and we'd have a little discussion about that and then we'd say, "What do you think about that? How could you have said that differently?" I'd like to think that what we heard each morning was a little trigger in class and then I used it as a teachable moment and as the year went on I'd see that the kids had internalized it.

The kids would respond and remember when I said, "What did you hear this morning?" I had them first period. They didn't make fun of it. They were pretty positive about it. If the kids just hear something it's one thing. I think that it becomes the class's responsibility to take it and try to find teachable moments to use the nuggets - reminders to be kind civil courteous and then use them during the day as examples. It comes down to concrete awareness of the kids. It generally takes 21 days for a habit to change. I think that kids need to have this constant reinforcement every day. It had to be heard. Here's an example - how can we rephrase this? Is there a better way to do this? With WW, the teachers got an email every week and I noticed there was a whole lesson plan for different age groups and subjects - and I thought they were really nice ideas. It's too bad that they aren't utilized. Teachers would roll their eyes because it would be one other
thing that teachers would have to add to an already packed schedule. It could be presented...in Language Arts especially - how did kindness fit in with this particular character in a story?

Bullying, teasing - I am the affirmative action officer and as a result I get reports of bullying and harassment. I would say that generally speaking in the last few years since the whole bullying theme has been given more attention, teachers are much more conscious of it. They are less likely to let it go with "kids will be kids." They are more conscious that it is hurtful and we are liable for the kids well being and safety, so there is more reporting. It gives the perception that there is more going on, but I'm not sure it is.

Personal property, classroom - kids are generally more respectful of each other's property. I don't know if they are respectful of the school building like littering. Is that the outcome of kids who live in a subculture where these kids have things done for them?

Respect for teachers - my kids are very respectful towards me but I don't think it has to do with character education. I think it's because I'm working with kids who are coming from other cultures - I'm lucky with respect to that.

Sense of community - the character education program was very well received by the kids. They seemed to enjoy being the ones who were going to be on the PA system in the morning – they would have to do it in conjunction with another student -the kids seemed to take a lot of pride in doing that.

Awareness of needs of others - at the middle school and high school levels I've noticed much more of a push towards community service - money for poor, eyeglasses,
writing letters to soldiers. These activities have been far more stressed in the past few years and the kids are very involved in that. It seems to be separate from character education.

Self discipline, perseverance - That's more difficult to measure because my children have a personality and set of skills and these behaviors tend to remain fairly stable over time. So I don't know if anything can influence them to make different choices. The ESL kids in particular know how important it is to advocate for themselves. In terms of deep down issues and whether their own consciences are more acute and aware I don't know.

Self esteem, willingness to take on leadership roles - I saw towards the end of the year that the kids were more inclined to speak out but I don't know if that was because of the program.

Suggestions - It should be continued because I think it gives the kids a chance to be heard literally. It gave them a certain esteem building experience to actually make an announcement that was important. They seemed proud of it. Some of the examples that were given - the quotes - could brought down to their level - some language was over their heads. It was only in the explanation that the kids were able to hear some kind of a concrete message. It would be good to have themes throughout the year and break them down monthly - theme for this month is kindness or awareness of environment - bulletin boards, advisories - to have teachers more conscious of it - trying to use instances where ever possible to emphasize that particular themes - or an activity where you could talk about it
Timing - I think most people are most alert in the morning

Generally I think character education - any chance that we as adults get where we are able to pass on WW to young malleable minds and try to urge them to behave in ways that would make this a kinder and more compassionate society should be taken advantage of. Do I think the program has the results that the principal wanted it to have? Probably not, but we have to be realistic about it.

Interviewee #13

The kids that I worked to write with were kids that didn’t shine in other places. The kids loved doing the PA in the morning. I’ve never had trouble getting kids to sign up.

A lot of it depends on the support you get from the teacher...some keep them quiet and they listen and others don’t. I had a couple of kids mention some WW. We have to give it more time in the morning. If after it was done the teacher would take a few minutes to say, “What did the WW mean today?” But we don’t have the time to do that. However, if the teachers would take five minutes to say, “What was today’s message...could one person tell me how you could apply it?” that’s all it would take to make it more effective. Make a bunch of posters and put them throughout the building. More than the message is what the message says. I think we need to tell the kids “the choice is yours” and that’s how we give them confidence and make them more responsible. That’s our goal here...to make them more responsible. “The choice is yours” is the most important message of the WW.
Civility – I’ve used “the choice is yours” and I use it all the time and I think that has made a difference.

Bullying teasing – This year’s class was unusual...they were very nice to each other. I had them write a letter in the classroom and one thing that came up was there didn’t seem to be as much bullying. Was that a result of WW? I don’t know. Classes come with personalities.

Property – no difference

Respect towards teachers, etc. – It was good – Was that the nature of the class? They were very respectful.

Cheating – I must have had maybe two kids. That’s what the teachers reported to me but they’re more attuned to that than I am.

Sense of community, willingness to compromise – They are willing - this class was different from last year. I don’t know if it was because of WW, but the whole class was cooperative. I had that 5% that it wasn’t because of lack of respect than it was ADHD or their personality or they couldn’t deal with noise.

When you talk to kids about something that happened and you refer to the WW there are two things that come out – the choice is yours and be nice to others. That’s said in different cultures and words of songs. They usually can’t pick a specific one out but there’s a general aura and you can refer to that in a generic sense and it gives you a reference point. It won’t be a specific one like Homer said or Roosevelt said but there’s a
general sense that kids refer to.

If we focus more on it maybe the theme of the school it would be more effective.

We don’t need to do those activities. It’s too much...it takes away from the school work.
Appendix E

Superintendent’s Letter
April, 2007

Dear [Supervisor]:

I am a graduate student at Seton Hall University's College of Education and Human Services in the Department of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. Currently, I am doing research for my doctoral dissertation.

The focus of my study is to investigate teacher perceptions of the effects of a character education program on the behavior of middle school students. Literature in the field of character education continually calls for further research in this area, and it is my goal to increase the understanding of the effect of character education programs on the behavior of middle school students as seen through the eyes of teachers with a view towards improving these programs.

I am hoping to do the study at [name of school] where [name of character education program] was implemented this past year. The research I am proposing will involve 12-14 teachers who will be asked to review a brief student behavior table and then be interviewed for approximately 50 minutes at a time and location that is convenient for them. I do not plan to include any students in this particular study.

The questions will concern teacher perceptions and will not request any information about specific individuals. Their content is based on a table outlining student behaviors that was created using a number of models: the goals of [name of character education program]; the four domains of Emotional Intelligence as articulated by Daniel Goleman; a research instrument developed at the University of West Georgia and used in a pilot study which examined how teachers describe their perceptions of students' behavior.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents will be preserved. The only identifying information in the survey will be of a demographic nature. All information will be kept in a locked file in my home, and will be destroyed three years after the end of the study. It is my aim to complete my research and present my findings before April, 2008.

At no time will any participation pose a risk or benefit to job security on the part of any of the subjects.

The participation of any subjects in the study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties,
June 7, 2007

Dear Faculty Member:

I am a graduate student at Seton Hall University’s College of Education and Human Services in the Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy. Currently, I am doing research for my doctoral dissertation.

The focus of my study is to investigate teacher perceptions of the effects of a character education program on the behavior of middle school students. Literature in the field of character education continually calls for further research of this area, and it is my goal to increase the understanding of the effect of character education programs on the behavior of middle school students as seen through the eyes of teachers with a view towards improving these programs.

I am planning to do the study at [name of school] where Project Wisdom was implemented this past year, and hoping that you might be willing to volunteer as a participant in my research. It will involve a brief review of a student behavior table and then an interview of approximately 45-50 minutes at a time and location convenient for you.

The questions will concern teacher perceptions and will not request any information about specific individuals. The research will be limited to teacher input; I do not plan to include any students in this particular study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. The confidentiality of all respondents will be preserved and the subjects’ identities will be known only to the researcher. The only identifying information in the study will be of a demographic nature. All information will be kept in a locked file in my home, and will be destroyed three years after the end of the study. It is my aim to complete my research and present my findings before April, 2008.

At no time will any participation pose a risk or benefit to job security on the part of any of the subjects.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at 973-313-6314.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 973-316-2430 or by email at clearymf@optonline.net. I thank you in advance for your consideration, and hope that you will agree to participate in this research project.

Sincerely,

Maria F. Cleary
Appendix G

Institutional Review Board Approval
June 5, 2007

Maria Cleary  
23 Ogden Place  
Parsippany, NJ 07054

Dear Ms. Cleary,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled “Teacher Perceptions of Changes in Middle School Student Behavior after Implementation of a Character Education Program”. Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval and the stamped original Informed Consent Form. Make copies only of this form.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.
Thank you for your cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final discussion and the vote.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Rudicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc Anthony Colella, Ph.D.

Please review Seton Hall University IRB's Policies and Procedures on website (http://www.provost.shu.edu/IRB) for more information. Please note the following requirements:

**Adverse Reactions:** If any untoward incidents or adverse reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to immediately notify in writing the Seton Hall University IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, please communicate your request in writing (with revised copies of the protocol and/or informed consent where applicable and the Amendment Form) to the IRB Director. The new procedures cannot be initiated until you receive IRB approval.

**Completion of Study:** Please notify Seton Hall University's IRB Director in writing as soon as the research has been completed, along with any results obtained.

**Non-Compliance:** Any issue of non-compliance to regulations will be reported to Seton Hall University's IRB Director, your sponsor and any federal regulatory institutions which may oversee this research, such as the OHRP or the FDA. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the IRB.

**Renewal:** It is the principal investigator's responsibility to maintain IRB approval. A Continuing Review Form will be mailed to you prior to your initial approval anniversary date. Note: No research may be conducted (except to prevent immediate hazards to subjects), no data collected, nor any subjects enrolled after the expiration date.
Appendix H

Informed Consent Form
Informed Consent Form

Researcher's Affiliation

The researcher is a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services, Department of Education, Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding their sixth grade students' behaviors after the first year of implementation of a character education program at their school. The expected duration of each subject’s participation in the study is approximately one hour depending on the amount of time dedicated to reading the interview guide prior to the actual interview. The interview itself will last for approximately 50 minutes of that one hour.

Description of Procedures

This qualitative study will use the interview as a method of gathering data. Twelve to fourteen teachers who have been solicited by the researcher and the school principal will be interviewed. Prior to the interview, the participants will receive a "values table" that outlines the student behaviors to be examined.

The interview questions are attached. There are no experimental procedures associated with this research.

The interviews will be recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed, coded and analyzed by the researcher. Audio taping will ensure that no critical statements made during the interview process will be lost. Transcriptions will be stored on a CD to be kept by the researcher who will maintain permanent possession of the information in a secure location for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Instruments

No questionnaires or surveys will be utilized in this study.

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

JUN 05 2007
Approval Date

College of Education and Human Services
Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy
Tel. 973.761.9397
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

Expiration Date
JUN 05 2008

A HOME FOR THE MIND, THE HEART AND THE SPIRIT
Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study will be completely voluntary. There will no penalty or loss to a subject who refuses to participate or discontinues participation at any time.

Anonymity

The identities of the interview subjects will be known only to the researcher. Identifying data will be coded to protect each individual's privacy.

Confidentiality

After the interviews have been tape recorded and transcribed, the data will be coded by the researcher to ensure confidentiality. Only the researcher will have access to the collected data. The information may be shared with the researcher's mentor and committee members only when necessary. Collected data will be stored in a locked and secure place, to which only the researcher will have access.

Foreseeable Risks

There are no anticipated risks for participation in this study.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits that subjects may expect from their participation in this study. The results of this research may provide valuable data to help guide the efforts of educators in future character education efforts.

Remuneration

Subjects will not be paid or given any type of remuneration for their participation in this study.

Compensation

This research does not involve any risk to the participants and no compensation will be offered.

Contact Information

The researcher is available to answer any questions about the study or the rights of the research subjects. The researcher, Maria Cleary, can be contacted by mail at 23 Ogden Place, Parsippany, NJ 07054, by telephone at 973-316-2430 or 201-602-3554, or by email at clearymf@optonline.net. If you prefer, you may contact the researcher's mentor at Seton Hall University, Dr. Anthony Colella at 973-761-9397. You may also contact the Office of the IRB, President's Hall, Seton Hall University, So Orange, NJ 07079 or call 973-313-6314.

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

JUN 05 2007

Expiration Date

JUN 05 2008
Permission to Use Audio Tape Recorders

Tape recording equipment will be used for these interviews to preserve the accuracy of the conversations. Subjects will be identified by code number on the tape. Subjects have a right to review all or any portion of the taped recordings and request that it be destroyed. All collected data will be locked in a secure cabinet that will only be accessible to the researcher. The data will be included in the dissertation and will be destroyed three years after its completion.

Consent

Consent to participate in this study is indicated by returning this letter, signed and dated below to Maria Cleary. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this Informed Consent Form as required by the IRB at Seton Hall University.

_________________________________  __________________________
(Subject’s Signature)                (Date)

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

JUN 05 2007

Expiration Date
JUN 05 2008

Approval Date