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IMPACT OF CHARACTER EDUCATION ON A THIRD GRADE INCLUSION  
CLASSROOM

by  
Christina M. Barbato

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Science in Teaching Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Susan Browne

Date Approved July 16, 2007  
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## ABSTRACT

Christina M. Barbato  
IMPACT OF CHARACTER EDUCATION ON A THIRD GRADE INCLUSION  
CLASSROOM  
2006/07  
Dr. Susan Browne  
Collaborative Education

The purpose of this study was to implement a character education program with a third grade inclusion classroom at Cooper's Poynt School in Camden, New Jersey. This study was conducted in efforts to improve relationships and interpersonal skills using qualitative action research. Character education is a concept that describes implementing moral conduct in schools in order to encourage positive behaviors. Several benefits to character education programs include reduced negative behaviors, a more positive school environment conducive to learning, and higher academic achievement. This study conducted discusses the impacts of a character education program initiated in a third grade inclusion classroom. The use of surveys, students' artifacts, student discussions, students' journals, and the teacher researcher journal pointed to improvement of students' behaviors. The data collected and the implementation of an initial and final survey acknowledged an impact on improvement in a positive nature over the course of the instructional unit.

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank God, for the creative abilities He has given me and the abundant blessings I have been provided with throughout my life. Above all I am extremely fortunate for the people in which have been brought into my life. Primarily, I am grateful for my family who has stood by my side with unconditional love and support. In particular, I owe greatest gratitude to my mom and dad who have supported me with pep talks, shoulders to cry on, words of encouragement, and financial means. I also would like to thank my friends who have helped me through the last five years of school. My Rowan girls along with my co-teach buddies who I have the fondest memories of that I will truly cherish always. Last but not least, I appreciate the wonderful professors I have had along the way who have helped me become the teacher I hope to be. In particular I thank my thesis advisor and mentor Dr. Browne for seeing me through. The completion of this thesis and the last five years of school would not have been possible without these wonderful people guiding me along.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

First day in a new placement, I sit in the multi purpose room on a folding chair with students all at my feet. The whole school is in attendance, Kindergarten to fifth grade. I am detached from the assembly because I do not even know who each teacher is and what grade they teach, nor do I know any of the students in the assembly. I am a general spectator, an outsider. Aretha Franklin's *Respect* is playing over the speakers. I sit there and watch as the students are pumped up and clapping while they wait for the assembly to start. I think to myself I remember these days in school, assemblies were exciting and a good excuse to be out of class. I wonder what this assembly will be all about. The assembly begins with the *Pledge of Allegiance* and the *Woodcrest School Pledge*. Students start talking about Respect, their character education word of the month. Students are quietly engaged on the floor as they watch their peers performing skits about Respect. A power point presentation shows the importance of Respect at home, at school, and in the world. A key theme I would later see throughout my stay. The assembly concludes with the *Woodcrest School Song*, each student with grins, shouting the lyrics with excitement. I am impressed with the gathering of the entire school community for an engaging assembly around character building.

This assembly was just the beginning of character education things that I would see while I stayed at Woodcrest School. The entire school community was engaged in a character education program that was seen throughout various aspects of the school.

Monthly assemblies were just one of the many activities the school did to promote character education. Every morning the students recited the school pledge together, “I pledge to be respectful of others and responsible for my words and actions. I pledge to have the courage to stand up for my self and others. I pledge to always try my best in school, at home and in the world” (Woodcrest, 2007). As a class the students were initiated in a character education program called *Lions Quest*. The program, *Lions Quest*, is a character education program provided through Lions Club International Foundation. It is designed with hands on activities and writing prompts for the students that foster individuality, group dynamics, working together, friendship, and other positive behaviors. The students enjoyed the activities and working with one another. I observed not only a fostering educational community but an enriching character development environment that left an impression. The next assembly I witnessed at the school had an entirely new meaning. The word of the month this time was “Thankful.” The presentation by the students and enthusiasm of the entire school community, being somewhat a part of it now, gave me goose bumps and had really opened my eyes to what an impact a character education program can make in a school... and *I* was *thankful* for that.

### Story of the Question

After a great debate of what topic to research, character education seemed to suffice. Over time though, as I researched and read more and more articles I became intrigued and enthusiastic about my topic of choice. Character is an important virtue that should be upheld by all people in society. A moral, efficient society should be based upon the character of the people in which runs it. In order to build character one must

start with young children, to sculpt their naïve minds early and leave impressions and interpretations of what is right versus wrong. Children have two places which have the most impact on their young lives; their home, and the classroom. During the week days students spend as much if not more time with their teacher and fellow classmates than with their own parents and families. As a future teacher this means I have a tremendous responsibility to impact a child and prepare them for the future. Not only do teachers need to uphold their responsibility to teach and acquire students to learn knowledge of subject matter, but they must also find a responsibility to provide a pupil with morality and a strong sense of character. It is important to not only be taught but be shown through example the necessary virtues one needs to help prepare them to go through life. As Theodore Roosevelt once said, “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society” (Bruce, 2004). As a teacher I hope to create an enriching learning environment full of character, where being responsible and doing what is right becomes second nature to me and my students. In addition, our class can be seen as a positive model for the importance of not only learning subject matter, but also the key virtues that compose character.

### Purpose Statement

Standards in education have progressively changed over the years, new legislation enacted, such as *No Child Left Behind*, and fresh curriculum development have refocused the key subject matter teachers must teach. Standardized tests have become a dominant emphasis in the classroom, allowing classroom instruction to focus on Mathematics, Reading and Writing. Teachers have less teaching time to devote to other subject matters



such as Science or Social Studies, and especially areas such as character education. Walker Percy once stated, “Some people get all A’s but flunk life” (Lickona, 2004). Students benefit from being taught all aspects of life in order to succeed, a brilliant man can be a waste if he has no morals and lives corruptly. Future national leaders and CEOs must have a basis of strong character in order to be effective, these foundations of virtues must be taught early.

The quick paced American society in which children are constantly exposed to adult themes points to the need for an emphasis on morality and character . Character education in classrooms can help children negotiate many of the difficult things that confront them daily. “What used to happen to tenth graders is now routine among eighth graders. Trouble with the law. Promiscuity. Pregnancy. Parties with alcohol and without adults in attendance. Drugs’ – A Middle School Counselor” (Lickona, 2004, p. 33). Criminal acts are becoming common occurrences in youths as seen by teachers and counselors. The cause for such young criminals is partially due to example. Students see violence and immoral actions on television, video games, and sometimes in their own neighborhoods. In 2004, Camden, New Jersey was named the “most dangerous city in America due to its high crime statistics of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary and auto theft” (MSNBC, 2004). Children are easily influenced and model from adult figures in their lives. If they witness these wrong actions from parents, siblings or neighbors then what other knowledge of these actions do they have. Students come into school with attitudes and behavioral problems that stem from home life. They need role models and examples set forth for them in schools by educators to see positive moral decisions being made. In 2007, Diane Sawyer awakened the nation into the

devastation behind the poorest, most crime filled city in the nation, Camden, New Jersey, through her special, "Waiting on the World to Change." The special highlighted three different children from separate families in Camden whose family lives were struggling and therefore had a significant impact on their education. (Sawyer, 2007) These types of real life situations demonstrate the need for children to receive character building and moral example throughout schools. Character education must be embedded into the curriculum in order for students to positively grow not only academically but emotionally and morally.

#### Statement of Research Problem and Question

According to the Josephson Institute for Ethics' *2002 Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth*, which takes a national survey on thousands of high school students, the following troublesome data was collected; "Three out of four students admitted to cheating on an exam in school during the past year, nearly four in ten students said they had stolen something from a store during the past year, and nearly four in ten said they 'would lie to get a good job'" (Lickona, 2004, p.13). Startling data demonstrates the need for virtues to be recognized and taught.

In 2000, an evaluation of a South Carolina character education initiative reported a dramatic improvement in students and adults. Based on the character education initiative surveys, data revealed, "91 percent reported improvement in student attitudes, 89 percent reported improvement in student behavior, 60 percent reported improvement in academic performance, and more than 65 percent reported improvement in teacher and staff attitudes, since implementing character education" (Character Education

Partnership, 2007). Studies do show a positive impact in schools when a character education program is initiated.

With moral dilemmas facing our society daily one can only hope that the best decisions will be made by our leaders. The future of society is in the children in which we teach today. I hope that I can make a difference by instilling strong ethical virtues in students. By implementing a character education initiative students will make good judgments for not only themselves but for others.

Based on the research problem at hand, the question I address in this study is as follows: What is the impact of a character education program on a third grade inclusion classroom?

#### Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two focuses on reviewing the related literature of this research study. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methodology. Chapter Four presents the data collected and connects the information to the other research studies. Chapter Five describes the results of this study and the implications for further research.

## Chapter Two

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

This review of the literature will explain and define the purpose of the research study within the educational community. This section will define the meaning of character, followed by what is meant by character education. Also, to be discussed is the historical context for character education. In addition, the importance and rationalization for character education in schools will be argued followed by research findings showing the implications of previous character education initiatives. Furthermore, various character education program models will be outlined.

#### Historical Context

First regard to the character of man was emphasized in Ancient Greece. The word character in Greek is, “*charassein*, which means ‘to engrave,’ such as on a wax tablet, a gemstone, or a metal surface” (Ryan, 1999, p. 5) and such as character is an impression marked upon a person. Ancient Greece taught that the, “character of the person is the primary product of education. Good character is the product of good judgments made everyday. Good character is a reflection of someone with good judgment, seeking wisdom, acting virtuously. Good character becomes the second nature of the person who values truth, wisdom, hard work, compassion empathy, and enlightenment” (Paige, 2003). These principles guided the teachings in Ancient Greece and served for famous philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato, all of whom are key models in society today.

Although, character education is a rising topic in school systems today, it has its roots in the earliest schools in America, also. The term character education may not have been prevalent in the 1600 and 1700s but the concept was evident in schools. Schools not only were to teach students' their academic subjects but were also expected to produce moral pupils for society. Children were to learn ethics and values in school in order to grow and be sound citizens of the community. Originally character education was taught through the use of religious concepts and texts in schools. Over time legality issues have pushed religious ideas from school communities thus taking away some moral building education from students (Davis, 2006). Despite religious concepts being forbidden from schools, children can still be taught a valuable lesson on character education. Many programs have developed that implement and model core values of character to teach to students.

Today character education is becoming more of a focus in schools as politicians and educators recognize the need for it in society. Politicians realize that character education is more of a concern because previously parents were left to render values, but since the collapse of family life, schools now must take control. Evidence that this shift in attitude is apparent is through governmental funding and political advocacy. In 1996, President Clinton, in a State of the Union address, proclaimed, "I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship" (Ryan, 1999, p. 189). Nearly a decade later, character education is still being advocated by the government. "In the first three years of his presidency, George W. Bush requested that Congress triple funding to character education to \$24 billion" (Davis, 2006, p.11). Mrs. Laura Bush is also a strong supporter for effective character education programs and

initiates conferences on character and community (Hertz, 2003). In 2003, U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, “kicked off the Character Education Partnership’s 10<sup>th</sup> National Forum, ‘A National Call to Character: Capitalizing on our Strengths,’ by saying that the United States must do a better job of educating children not just academically but also by fostering good character in order for the nation to sustain its prominence on the world stage” (Hertz, 2003). Former president of the National Education Association, Bob Chase, makes a forceful stance towards character education, “We must make an explicit commitment to formal character education. We must integrate character education into the fabric of the curriculum and into extracurricular activities. We must train teachers in character education- both pre-service and in-service. And we must consciously set about creating a moral climate within our schools” (Benninga, 2006, p. 448). Therefore with the support of government agencies and funding character education is an important concept that should be implemented in schools.

Throughout time character has been an essential aspect of education and continues to remain so today. The earliest roots of character education date back to even Ancient Greece. Our nations beginning schools instilled character education to students. With rapid troubling changes in society, today it is as critical as ever.

#### Definition of Character

*Character is doing the right thing when nobody's looking.* – J.C. Watts

Character may be a difficult word to clearly define. Each person may have their own ideas of what virtues exhibit character in a person, but ultimately the virtues that compose character are all positive in nature. To be a person of character one must exhibit virtues that are consistently moral. Therefore what are the virtues that compose

character? Dr. Derek H. Davis, professor at Baylor University, states “Most agree on what a moral person should look like. Everyone agrees that a moral person should be marked by honesty, self-control, friendliness, decency, selflessness, fairness, respect, responsibility, compassion, loyalty, empathy, and a cooperative spirit. In short... *good people*” (Davis, 2006, p. 6). According to Dr. Thomas Lickona, developmental psychologist and professor of education at the State University of New York at Cortland, there are “Ten Essential Virtues” that are important for strong character. These virtues include; wisdom, justice, fortitude, self-control, love, positive attitude, hard work, integrity, gratitude, and humility. These ten essential virtues are considered Aristotle’s life of right conduct which means, “this life of character has two sides: right conduct in relation to other persons and right conduct in relation to oneself” (Lickona, 2004, pp. 8-11). No clear cut definition exists for character, but it can be agreed that similar virtues compile what it means to encompass character.

#### What is Character Education?

After discussing the meaning of character, what then does character education mean? “Broadly defined, character education is a comprehensive school-based approach to fostering the moral development of students” (Berkowitz, 2005). Character education defines program initiatives developed and implemented in educational settings in order to teach students morality and ethics. “Character education is commonly defined as the process of developing in students an understanding of, commitment to, and tendency to behave in accordance with core ethical values” (Milson, 2002). As already previously stated, there are a number of core ethical values that students should be taught and modeled in their educational experiences. “Character education is an attempt to prepare

individuals to make ethical judgments and to act on them, that is, to do what one thinks ought to be done... character education is a vital tool for preparing our young people in our schools” (Howard, 2004, p.189). Through character education we present students with virtues that prepare them for their future to make their own moral decisions.

### Why Character Education?

*Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education.* –Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Despite widespread support for character education... it is not currently a high priority in the curriculum of teacher education” (Milson, 2002) With today’s array of vast knowledge needed to be taught and pressures from standardized testing, why then add another stress to the pile of items to be emphasized in schools? Character education is critical in schools because of the nature of society. There are various reasons why character education has become an essential focus. “Concern about teen crime and sexual promiscuity and a realization of the need for basic human values, which other methods of moral education such as values clarification and cognitive developmentalism do not address because they are not focused on particular virtues and character qualities. A concern about the ongoing problem of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, and school shootings and other forms of violence among teens has also awakened many to the benefits of character education. The decline of a family as a force for moral education is tied to this troubling youth behavior. Citizens are realizing that a society cannot operate unless its citizens follow certain moral principles, and schools are realizing that without character education, which can help establish a good learning environment, education itself may not be effective” (Davis, 2006). Character education is being seen as a necessity in order to help positively impact students, especially in the troublesome



environments around them. “As we engage in preparing children and youth to answer and respond to these and difficult personal issues and societal issues, their character development takes on growing importance” (Howard, 2004, p.189). Creating schools with an emphasis on morality and virtue promotes character in its students, hopefully influencing their decision making positively even when not in the school realm. By creating these virtues in students it provides hope for society’s survival and prosperity. Students start to feel safe; not because of the metal detector they walk through in the morning, but because they are in character enriched schools that promote respect and responsibility. “While character education is not a panacea to ridding schools of violence, it is a long- term solution to creating environments where negative and anti-social behaviors are less likely to flourish or go unnoticed and unreported” (Character Education Partnership, 2007). Character education creates a positive moral culture and sense of community. “The principal provides leadership in developing a school-wide approach to discipline, a school-wide sense of community, meaningful student government, and a respectful and cooperative moral community among adults” (Bruce, 2004). This sense of community, responsibility, and respect established in schools can then be used as skills for students when they are in their own communities and homes. The virtues they see modeled and discussed will then be applied to their daily lives and decisions, ultimately, allowing for better decision making when it comes to issues such as sexual promiscuity, violence, drugs or alcohol. Nevertheless, character education must be seen as an essential initiative to be implemented in schools. “Focusing on character education in our families, schools, and communities will make a difference- has already made a difference- for those involved. If the effort becomes widespread enough, it will

make a difference for our whole country and perhaps, to the extent that we become a better people, for the rest of the world” (Lickona, 2004, p.30). Realistically we all aspire for a better future, thus let character education be a stepping stone in the right direction.

### Does Character Education Work?

“Schools can not make up for what parents aren’t teaching, of course, or override negative values communicated through the media. Still, progress is possible” (Lord, 2001, p.51). Ideally character education appears to be a solution to some problems facing society, but does it really work? “Children cannot enter the educational system at age four and stay until age sixteen or seventeen without having their character and their moral values profoundly affected by the experience. Children are impressionable, and the events of life in school affect what they think, feel, believe, and do” (Ryan, 1999, p.22). Various research and studies have been conducted to determine if character education is effective in schools.

Character education has been seen as a force for positive behavioral changes. In the early 1990s, Hilltop Elementary School in Lynnwood, Washington implemented a character education initiative due to the “rude and disrespectful behavior of its students,” and was later noted a National School of Character (Lickona, 2004, p.30). Despite skepticism from teachers the initiative made a tremendous turnaround in the school. One teacher stated, “I was opposed to doing character education at first. But then I saw the change in the kids. I saw the change in how staff related to each other. We’re a different school now. I look forward to coming to work” (Lickona, 2004, p.30). In addition other schools have seen improvement in school morale since adapted character education programs. After implementing a particular character education program, four schools

reported, “the average number of behavioral incidents (including violence and substance abuse) requiring discipline referral dropped by 74 percent after the program was implemented for one year and by an average of 80 percent during the next six years. Additionally absenteeism decreased between 30 to 60 percent” (Character Education Partnership, 2007). A significant correlation can be observed between a character education program and its affects on its students’ behaviors.

Positive correlations have not only been found in students’ attitudes and behavior but also in academic achievement. Based on studies in California schools, it was found, “In our sample, elementary schools with solid character education programs showed positive relationships between the extent of character education implementation and academic achievement not only in a single year but also across the next two academic years” (Benninga, 2006, p.450). Also the same study showed, “Over a multi-year period from 1999 to 2002, higher rankings on the API and higher scores on the SAT-9 were significantly and positively correlated” (Benninga, 2006, p.450). Additional schools have also noted improvement in academic achievement. Longitudinal studies reported that a program emphasizing social skills and good character “have shown increased academic performance across several grade levels. Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores rose 22 percent for the classroom in the program and only 3 percent for the control group. The classroom has also resulted in above average academic growth between grades four and eight” (Character Education Partnership, 2007). Therefore, academic achievement in schools can be improved with implementation of character education programs.

Furthermore, research and studies demonstrate the positive effects character education has in schools. Character education shows improvement in behaviors and

attitudes of students and faculty which allows for a positive, safe community. In addition, character education improves academic success in students. Therefore, character education is essential for positive growth in schools.

### Problems Facing Character Education

Nothing is perfect, thus character education also has some issues to be ironed out. Despite the positive improvements and effects of character education a few other factors must be considered. One concern of character education is the amount of time that should be factored in to implement. “Comprehensive and quality character education is critical. Character education can not be covered in ten minutes a day. It must be the heart of the entire education program. Character can’t be taught in a course, it is a way of living” (Paige, 2003). Character education must be put into practice all the time, everyday in order for it to be successful. Occasionally, it becomes a difficult, and time consuming task to integrate character education across subject matter. This task leads into another issue for character education; teacher training. In order to implement a strong character education program, faculty must be advised and well on board. Teachers must serve as models for students, in order for students to understand the difference between what is right and wrong, moral and immoral. Strategies must be used by teachers that will foster development and positive changes in students’ character. “One of the stumbling blocks preventing schools from embracing character education is that few teachers have been prepared for this work. Although there are stirrings within the teacher education community to give character education greater prominence, the great majority of teachers are very unsure of what they can and should do as character educators” (Ryan, 1999, pp. 152-153). Teachers may feel overwhelmed and

unknowledgeable about how to correctly apply a character education program. “Lickona observed that, ‘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’” (Milson, 2002). In order for character education to become effective school wide, faculty and teachers need to be knowledgeable of the strategies and techniques that should be implemented.

In addition, another matter to be considered in regards to character education is its sustenance. Critics remark that character education is a temporary craze of the time. Initiatives have been made previously through history to emphasize moral education but apparently have failed if there is still a need for them. According to Lasley (1997), from the University of Dayton, “character education programs will lose their luster not because they are fundamentally flawed, but because adults are fundamentally flawed and proud of it. American culture as seen in the media tends to emphasize the worst, not the best, in human nature” (Clouse, 2000, p. 28). If this is the case then society as a whole is doomed and set up for continued failure and turmoil.

Character education has some concerns that need to be addressed. Overall, the issues can be easily tackled with a correct plan of attack. Although implementing a character education program seems like a difficult task at first, in the long run the program will actually benefit the teachers and faculty. The time they spend now on discipline problems and behavioral issues will later be transformed into the time devoted to character education principles. More learning will take place when there is fewer interruptions and more self confidence in students.

## Summary

As a review of the literature suggests character education is an essential asset in schools especially due to the nature of society. The basis of the character of man is historically a significant aspect of education that we should continue to pursue. Character education initiatives help produce moral communities of virtues that allow students better decision making processes. The impact of character education in schools is tremendous, ranging from reduced discipline and behavioral problems, to academic success. Although, there are a few issues of concern in character education, there is promise for these issues to be rectified. Ultimately, modeling and defining what is moral to children allows them to make more ethical decisions in their communities, which eventually reduces problems facing society, such as promiscuity, drugs, alcohol, and violence.

## Chapter 3

### Research Content and Design

#### Introduction

Character education will be defined as an effort to create a learning community enriched with moral behavior and conduct including aspects of respect, kindness, and honesty through models and examples taught and practiced throughout the classroom and school environment. The implementation of character education programs in schools are an effort to create positive learning environments in which students can learn for success. Character education means demonstrating and providing students with a nurturing environment where positive and moral decision making is taking place. In addition, students are provided with skills and techniques to learn in order to make their own moral decisions within their communities.

The purpose of this study was to implement a character education program to a third grade inclusion classroom at Cooper's Poynt School in Camden, New Jersey using research that results in improved interpersonal skills. This study was conducted in efforts to improve relationships and interpersonal skills using qualitative action research. This chapter will explain the context of the study including the environment in which the study was implemented and the research methods that were executed.

#### Context

Camden is located in Camden County, New Jersey, along the Delaware River, just across the way from the city of Philadelphia. In the late half of the Nineteenth

century, Camden was a booming industrialized city with home to many industries including Campbell Soup and RCA factories. (History, 2007) Today, Camden is well known for the Adventure State Aquarium, E-Center, and Minor League Baseball Team, the Camden River Sharks. Camden also houses a branch of campus for Rutgers University as well as Rowan University.

Coopers Poynt School is located in north Camden, New Jersey and houses students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. According to the *Cooper's Poynt PDS School Data Profile of 2005-2006*, there were 621 students enrolled in the school and 31.2% were limited English proficient. Also, in the 2005-2006 school year, the student body population consisted of 42.6% African-Americans, 56.9% Hispanic, 0.3% Caucasian, and 0.2% Asian/Pacific Islander. Coopers Poynt, 78.4% of students receive free lunch and 9.7% receive reduced lunch. An average class size consists of approximately 18.8 students in each class, with an average of about only 10.3 students in self contained classrooms (Sullivant, 2007). Each classroom has about five computers with internet connection that students are given access to; in addition there are two computer labs, one for the elementary level students and one for the middle school students.

In addition the teachers, faculty and staff are an integral part of Coopers Poynt School. Also, according to the *Cooper's Poynt PDS School Data Profile of 2005-2006*, there are 70 members of faculty and staff. The staff represents 83.6% female and 16.4% male and consists of 61% African American, 31% Caucasian, 4% Puerto Rican, 3% Other Hispanic, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. Approximately seventy-one percent of



the faculty has obtained a Bachelors Degree, and twenty nine percent has obtained a Masters Degree (Sullivant, 2007).

There were seventeen third grade students involved in this study that were solicited from a third grade inclusion classroom to participate. However, only the students who returned their permission slips signed by a parent or guardian were able to be included in the study. The participants included both male and females students ranging from ages eight to eleven. Some of the students are classified and contain Individualized Educational Plans (IEP).

#### Timeline, Materials, Resources

The study was conducted over a span of three weeks in which the instructional unit will be carried out through 30- 40 minute lessons at least three to four days a week. The unit consists of lessons from the third grade edition, character education program, *Lions Quest, A Positive Youth Development Program for Grades K-5* (Lions Quest). The materials needed for this study include; the surveys, *Lions Quest* third grade edition kit, materials listed throughout lessons for activities, worksheets, and the teacher research journal.

#### Procedure of the Study

Prior to the start of the study, permission was given for the study to be conducted through a letter of approval from the principal. After the principal granted permission, then a letter was sent home with the students explaining the study to gain permission from their parents or guardians (see Appendix A).

In order to measure the initial opinions of the students and their feeling about the classroom and school, a survey was conducted in the classroom (see Appendix B). Each

student completed a survey under the following context; the purpose of the survey was to gain insight into their feelings and opinions about the classroom and school, also, this survey was not a test, the students would not be receiving a grade so their answers would not be marked wrong or right. The students were explained the format of the survey circling how they felt about each statement; “almost never” “sometimes” “often” or “almost always.” Each statement was read aloud to the students a few times by the researcher and then the students were given a few moments to circle in their best answer. The information compiled from the surveys was then analyzed to interpret how the students felt about their relationship to their classmates, classroom, faculty, and school.

Following the initial survey the students were then instructed in a unit on character education. The character education program implemented in the classroom focused on using a variety of instructional activities and techniques that would create a more moral and ethical community in the classroom. The students would practice and model ways that encouraged good character. After various lessons students would respond to question prompts regarding the lesson in their own journals. At the conclusion of the unit the students would then be surveyed again using the exact same survey and format, in order to determine whether their attitudes and behaviors had changed over the course of the instructional unit.

#### Research Design/ Methodology

The design of this research consists primarily of qualitative teacher research. Qualitative teacher research allows the researcher to take an in-depth look at the feelings and thoughts of the participants throughout the study. The qualitative inquiry strategies used in this study include surveys, group discussions, students’ projects and artifacts,

student journals, and my personal teacher research journal. Quantitative research allows the researcher to project the data collected from the study through numbers. The results of the surveys will be used to compare any changes that have occurred over the course of the unit (see Appendix C). After all the data is collected and analyzed, overlapping themes and concepts will be identified to determine similarities in students' experiences with the character education program. Through implementing the instructional unit while observing and discussing student interaction, looking at students' work, and taking notes in a teacher research journal, the researcher will be able to see what effects there are from looking at these variety of sources.

#### Data Sources

There are various sources of data used in this study including, surveys, group discussions, journals, and artifacts that contribute to data collection. The surveys conducted measure the students' thoughts before and after the study regarding the classroom, classmates, teachers, and school. By administering and evaluating the surveys before and after the study it allows a comparison to be made to determine what effects may have taken place.

Data will also be collected through group discussions of the class. After various lessons and activities have been completed students will discuss what they thought about various activities. Students will be placed in a circle so everyone is facing one another. The teacher will prompt them with questions similar to, "What do you think the purpose of this activity was?" "How did it make you feel?" "What did you like/ dislike about the activity?" etc. Students will be able to express their opinions and ideas in an open learning community.

Throughout the lessons students will be completing worksheets, creating charts, and other various items that will be used as artifacts for additional sources of data. The work created by the students will represent whether the students are grasping the techniques and skills being explained and modeled for them.

In addition journals will be used as a data source as well. Both the teacher researcher and the students will have journals in order to express their thoughts and opinions. Students will be given their journals after lessons and activities to respond to prompts given to them by the teacher regarding the lesson. Also, students will have access to their journals in case they want to describe something that may have happened that regarded character, whether a positive or negative situation. Additionally, the teacher will record all observations, thoughts and feelings throughout the study regarding student behavior and attitudes.

#### Data Analysis

After various forms of data have been collected, then the information must be evaluated and analyzed in order to determine the impact a character education program has on a third grade inclusion classroom. The initial and final survey will be compared to one another in order to find any positive changes that may have occurred over the course of the instructional unit. The group discussions will provide a glimpse of students' thoughts and feelings about lesson activities. The student artifacts will examine how the students responded to the activities. The student journals will give an indication as to what the students were really feeling about activities without peer influence. The teacher journal will provide first hand insight into the lessons and activities implemented. Overall, the various sources of data collected will allow the researcher to determine if the

lessons in the instructional unit were beneficial in developing and enhancing character education within the students.

## Chapter Four

### Findings of the Study

#### Introduction

Chapter four discusses the findings of the study from the data collected. This chapter describes and draws conclusions on the data resources including the two surveys, students work and artifacts, group discussions, student journals, and teacher researcher journal. The data collected examines the opinions of students as well as observations of the students and of the teacher researcher. The data presented addresses the question of the study: What is the impact of a character education program on a third grade inclusion classroom?

#### Research Findings

##### Surveys

As previously stated, the students were provided with a survey to complete prior to the beginning of the instructional unit on character education, and then once again after the unit culminated. Students were explained to in detail the directions of the survey as well as the meaning of each possible response (see Appendix B). It was stressed to the students that the survey was not a test and would have no effect on their grades; there is no right or wrong answer. Students were asked to answer the responses honestly without worrying about what anyone else might think. The teacher read each statement aloud and provided ample time for students to respond. In addition, any questions the students may have had regarding a statement was answered by the teacher. The exact same survey was

given in the beginning of the unit and the end of the unit to prevent any discrepancies.

The survey statements were tallied up in a chart in order to compare the initial survey with the final survey (see Appendix C). In comparing the two charts regarding the initial and final survey, it shows that there are slight improvements in the responses to each statement. After the implementation of the instructional unit on character education, students marked their responses “higher.” Meaning for a positive statement, if a student felt they only “Sometimes” fulfilled the statement, now they felt they fulfilled it “Often” or “Almost Always.” In the same regard, for a negative statement, students felt if they “Almost Always” fulfilled the statement, now they may only do it “Often” or “Sometimes.” For the majority of statements a few students, anywhere from one to three, appeared to improve according to their survey responses. In particular, three statements showed a student response change the most compared to the other statements. For statements, #19, #20, and #30, students perceived to have more of an improvement after the implementation of the character education lessons and activities.

Statement #19. *I resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.*

In the initial survey, the number of students that responded for each option was the following:

<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>19.</b>	2	6	3	4

In the final survey, the number of students that responded for each option was the following:

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
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<b>Number</b>				
<b>19.</b>	1	1	5	8

By comparing the initial student surveys with the final student survey it appears that the students perceived a change in themselves in regards to the manner in which they resolve conflicts after the character education unit was implemented. Since the character education unit was put into place a few factors may contribute to the shift of perception by the students. Due to discussions in the classroom and lessons on character quality traits and what it means to be a good person, perhaps the students took the knowledge they learned and applied it to themselves. They realized what positive behaviors are versus negative behaviors and made an effort to practice these qualities themselves. In addition, students participated in an activity called “What Bugs Me?” This activity presented students with problems and situations they may encounter and various ways to deal with whatever was bugging them. Students may have used the technique they learned from the lesson by stating the problem they were having, how it made them feel, and a suggestion for something else to be done instead. The following is an example of this technique: “Jay, you stole my crayons! You’re an idiot! We aren’t friends!” instead the person might say, “Jay, you know I don’t like when you take my crayons without asking. It gets me really upset when I can’t find them. Next time could you please ask me before you take them?” By using this technique students may have avoided arguments that resorted to fights or threats, thus fewer altercations amongst the students.

Statement #20. *I am disrespectful to my classmates.*

In the initial survey, the number of students that responded for each option was the following:



<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>20.</b>	6	5	3	1

In the final survey, the number of students that responded for each option was the following:

<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>20.</b>	9	5	0	1

In comparing the initial survey response for question # 20. to the final survey response, it demonstrated the students identify themselves as being less disrespectful towards their classmates after the character education lessons and activities. Again this improvement may correlate with the fact that the students are more aware of what qualities define character and its importance. Through the character education lessons students may becoming more aware of themselves and others around them. During the getting to know you activities in the beginning of the unit students started to discover information about other students that they didn't previously know. The discussions of respect and the proper way to treat one another may have also played a role in the improvement of behaviors towards one another. Students are more aware of the golden rule that you should treat others how you would want to be treated yourself.

Statement #30. *I think that when teachers are with students, they act in ways that show qualities of good character.*

In the initial survey, the number of students that responded for each option was the following:

<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
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<b>30.</b>	2	2	4	7
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In the final survey, the number of students that responded for each option was the following:

<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>30.</b>	0	1	4	10

By looking at the students' responses for the initial survey and final survey for statement #30, it appears students perceived their teachers to exhibit qualities of good character after the implementation of the character education unit. This variance from the initial survey to the final survey may be due to the fact that the students better understood what it means to be a person of character. Students recognized the qualities that compose character and associated these qualities with their teachers. Also, over the course of time students may have grown to respect and become comfortable with the teacher researcher during the execution of the instructional unit. Students' personal opinions of the teacher may have shifted and therefore now that they knew the teacher researcher and liked her, they observed her in a more positive manner.

The application of the two surveys, before and after the implementation of the instructional unit on character education found important data to be analyzed. The information gathered from the surveys helped show a positive impact on the third grade inclusion classroom after the use of the character education lessons and activities.

#### Student Artifacts

Throughout the course of the instructional unit on character education students completed various types of assignments including worksheets, games, and projects

related to the lessons and activities being taught. The completion of these various assignments demonstrated the students' understanding and knowledge of different aspects of character. In particular, two assignments proved extremely beneficial to the students.

The first assignment was a "Giving Graph." Students were instructed on the implication of giving and the various methods of which one person can give themselves to someone. Here are the four ways of giving and examples of each: comfort, talking with someone who is upset, compliments, telling someone you liked their artwork, skills, explaining a math problem you understand to someone, and things, sharing school supplies. Students wrote down ways in which they have given of themselves and then shared their responses with the class. As a class a "Giving Graph" was created in order to show in which area we tend to give the most. Students recognized that most often people give "things" to one another. Over the course of the next week students were encouraged to write down additional ways they had given something or had seen someone else give something to someone and then tape it to the chart. The students were challenged to try to give more than just "things" in order to fill up the other areas of giving on the chart. As mentioned earlier, "Children are impressionable, and the events of life in school affect what they think, feel, believe, and do" (Ryan, 1999, p.22). By the end of the week students had contributed numerous additional ways of giving on the graph. The class understood the importance of giving and additionally enjoyed the way it felt.

The second assignment and student artifact that demonstrated the information the students had been learning was the "Bug You Board." Students were given a lesson on a technique to use when someone is "bugging" you. Students were instructed to give

helpful feedback when others are bothering them, by explaining the behavior that is bothering them and discussing a positive solution. In addition, students were encouraged to demonstrate responding in a positive manner to annoying behaviors. After a few activities pertaining to the purpose of the lesson students then created a “Bug You Board.” Students wrote down behaviors that bothered them, without naming anyone in particular, and ways that they could respond to the behavior. The students created various bugs out of construction paper and art supplies and attached their work to the bugs. The bugs were then displayed on a bulletin board along with a poem, “Bug Control.”

### ***Bug Control***

*Here’s a poem to help you know*

*Exactly what to do,*

*When actions of a classmate*

*Are really bugging you.*

*Don’t raise your voice; don’t jump or hit,*

*To shout will never do!*

*Instead keep cool and calmly state,*

*What action bothers you.*

*Then tell the person right up front,*

*What you would have them do,*

*To change how he or she behaves*

*To stop what’s bugging you. (Lions Quest)*

The creation of the bugs and bothersome behaviors for the “Bug You Board” helped the students become excited. The students realized that there are other ways to handling a bothersome behavior besides yelling, name calling, or physical actions. Character education means having the students understand, make a decision to progress and behave with the core ethical values (Milson, 2002). Over the course of the next few weeks the teacher researcher would try to encourage the students to use the technique they learned when students were having problems with one another. The students were asked to restate their grievance to the teacher researcher in a positive manner. It was difficult for the students to adjust to the new technique because they were comfortable with their own way of dealing with it, but some students made an effort. As previously noted after analyzing the two surveys, this “Bug” activity may have played a role in students perceiving themselves as handling disputes in a less threatening, physical way.

#### Student Discussions and Student Journals

Throughout the instructional unit on character, students had many discussions during and after the lessons and activities that took place. The students formed a circle in the classroom so everyone could see each other. Many positive statements were made during this discussion time. In the beginning of the unit students did “getting to know you better” activities in the classroom. They completed a “Scoop on Me” worksheet describing the things they liked and then they shared it with one another. Also, they carried out a “Check it Out” activity where they had to go around the room and find people who knew a lot about a statement on their paper, example “Knows about Sports” or “Reads a lot of Books”. The students had to get different people’s signatures and could not duplicate a person. It required the students to go around and talk to other

students then just their closest two or three friends. Afterwards during the discussion, students stated, “I didn’t know that about you!” and “I talked to other people I don’t always talk to.” The students enjoyed getting up, moving around the room, and being able to talk.

Another discussion took place after an obstacle activity the students carried out. The classroom was set up with various obstacles the students had to go through, walk a wiggly line, balance on a yardstick, walk between two chairs without touching them, leap over a large sheet of construction paper, and limbo under a string. The students felt the course was so easy at first glance but then later understood its complication. Students had to hold one hand in a fist and balance a pencil on the fist while walking through the course. If their pencil fell off their hand then they must “freeze” and wait for someone else to come along and unfreeze them by picking up the dropped pencil and still maintaining the balance of the pencil on their own hand. The goal of the activity was for every student to complete the obstacle. After the activity students took a moment to write down what they had thought about the activity and how it might relate to the classroom. The following is one girl’s response from her journal:

“It felt very good. I really didn’t think I could make it to the end but I did. I felt when I unfroze someone, it was funny because the pencil would not stay on the pencil hand. Of course my pencil fell a couple of times but I still made it. Also when mine fell someone put it back on and I was very thankful. I really didn’t care if I won I just wanted to have fun and I did. It felt great doing it inside the classroom, it was fun” (Student Journal 1, April 23, 2007).

Another girl also wrote in her journal:

“Winning was different because all of us had to get through together. I felt glad that I unfroze people because I helped them and they got to go on like me. It felt good when someone unfroze me because they all wanted to work together and win. It is similar to the classroom because we have to work together to finish our work” (Student Journal 2, April 23, 2007).

This is a journal response from a boy after the obstacle activity:

“It was good because you do not have a score and it has no hitting. I was happy because they counted on me and it was good because I counted on them” (Student Journal 3, April 23, 2007).

During the discussion that took place after the students wrote in their journals, one student stated, “I was scared people would laugh at me when I dropped my pencil, but no one did, instead they laughed with me because everyone dropped it (the pencil) a few times.” Another student stated, “I didn’t care about winning! It was fun helping everyone get through.” Students were excited and enjoyed this activity. The activity gave the students insight about how much fun it can be when everyone gets along and works together to achieve a goal. They realized that they counted on one another and it felt good when someone counted on them.

Another activity the students engaged in was working together cooperatively. The students were randomly assigned groups of three or four. They were instructed that they were going to work together today and figure out things that make working together easy and other things that make it hard. A number was written on the board, and without anyone talking the students had to use one fist and come up with the number using their fingers in the group. Everyone had to show their fingers at the same time and try to come

up with a combination of for example the number 11. The three students in the group would each put out as many fingers as they wanted to try and make the combination of 11 when all the groups' fingers were added up. One student might have three fingers, another five, and another one finger, so altogether they only had 9. Since they didn't reach a combination of 11 they must keep trying until they do. Then they can try again with another number. After the activity students wrote in their journals regarding their opinions of working together cooperatively.

One girl responded with:

"It is a lot of fun. You get to play with others and make new friends and work with them. Because you can't talk at all you just think and use one hand and you don't know what your partner is thinking so you can get the right answer" (Student Journal 1, April 25, 2007).

Another boy responded to the activity with:

"I didn't like it at first but then I liked working with one of my best friends. I enjoyed being with her because we hadn't talked in a while and now we are. I thought she was mad at me. I like the finger thing because it is fun. I didn't like to play with some of them and then I got to know them more and I had fun. It's hard because I don't know if they really like me like that. I think they think I'm mean. I got along better with Candace towards the end of the game" (Student Journal 4, April 25, 2007).

This particular journal entry showed progress with one of the students. The boy in the class did not get along at all with one of his classmates. There have been previous



problems with the two students. According to the journal entry during the activity they seemed to be getting along better and working together.

Through analyzing the student discussions that took place and the student journal responses it implies that the students were developing through the course of the activities. Students enjoyed the activities becoming engaged and therefore paid attention to their purpose. The themes throughout the character education lessons seemed to be impacting the students. The students themselves were observing their own changes and attitudes about one another. As already noted through analyzing the two surveys, maybe some of these activities and these student journal responses can give insight into the variance in the surveys for question #20. Students started to recognize the importance of working together and the positive aspects that come from it. Students may have begun to understand one another more and therefore were more respectful to their fellow classmates. After looking over the student journals and discussions the character education lessons and activities prove to be beneficial to the class.

#### Teacher Journal

The last source of data to analyze is the teacher research journal written over the course of time from January 16, 2007 to May 4, 2007. Various observations were made over the weeks the teacher researcher was placed in the third grade inclusion classroom at Cooper's Poynt in Camden, New Jersey. The observations described by the teacher researcher provide more insight into the development and attitude changes of the students over the course of time.

“Aha! Finally! This probably seems trivial but it is a defining moment in the classroom. Weeks ago when I first got here I remarked on how rude the students

were to one another. No one says please or thank you, a basic concept that students should have already mastered by third grade. But I understand it is partially environmental, if no one makes you say it then why would you. Well students would come up to me and say, 'Yo, Ms. Barbato, can I get a pencil' or 'Give me a pencil.' I found these statements unacceptable and rude. I would always say 'Lets rephrase this, why don't we try, may I please borrow a pencil, or can I have a pencil please.' I wouldn't give the student a pencil until they said it. Over the last few weeks they have very slowly caught on. They ask me the same way they always do and then I look at them and they then realize they need to say please. Well today, at separate times two different students asked for a pencil with a please without even having to think about it! I was ecstatic! It seems like such a minor thing but it is a huge step for them because they are gradually growing and understanding courtesy. My whole day was just great after that!" (Teacher Journal, March 29, 2007).

This journal entry demonstrates a gradual shift that the students were making over the course of time. Schools can not be expected to teach what parents are not teaching at home, or to override the negative behaviors they may have already learned through the media, but progress is possible (Lord, 2001). Behaviors were slowly being altered to reflect a more positive nature. Although students were constantly encouraged along the way, eventually the students adapted to the positive behaviors and it started to reflect their own character.

In the following journal entry, students again were adapting to negative behaviors and realizing the difference between wrong and right. In essence students were demonstrating good morals and qualities of character.

“A little while ago after an incident with students cutting or butting and saving spots in line where this one was upset with that one, and this one cut me, I clearly stated, ‘No cuts, no butts, no saving spots.’ The students all looked at me like ‘What?!’ After I repeated it again some of the students caught on and repeated it themselves. Since then whenever there is a problem on the line I say it aloud again, ‘No cuts, no butts, no saving spots.’ Well after a few weeks it has caught on! I hear the students say it to one another and then the entire line starts chiming in so whoever the culprit is knows to just move to the back of the line. I can’t believe it worked! I laugh whenever the students say it because now they sing it and added a part about coconuts because it rhymes. Hey, if it works then it is fine with me!” (Teacher Journal, April 17, 2007).

The journal response reflects the observational change in students recognizing their actions and behaviors. As previously stated, “Character education is an attempt to prepare individuals to make ethical judgments and to act on them, that is, to do what one thinks ought to be done... character education is a vital tool for preparing our young people in our schools” (Howard, 2004, p. 189). Sometimes behaviors become so natural that someone needs to point out that the behavior being carried out is negative and that there are other behaviors that should be used. The students gradually understood this concept.

The teacher research journals allow key observations of the class behavior over the course of time. Through analyzing the teacher journals it allows insight into the classroom with the students. The nature of the classroom changed as the instructional unit on character education was implemented. "Comprehensive and quality character education is critical. Character education can not be covered in ten minutes a day. It must be the heart of the entire education program. Character can't be taught in a course, it is a way of living" (Paige, 2003). The model and example the teacher demonstrated to the students allowed the students to exhibit more positive behaviors. As previously taken into consideration, the behaviors of the teacher impacted the students. Through the various lessons and activities shaping character, students recognized good qualities of character. In the two surveys the variance for question #30. demonstrated that students recognized that the teachers exhibit good qualities of character. The teacher researcher journal further allows a view at circumstances where this proves accurate.

### Summary of Findings

Altogether, a variety of data sources were used to analyze and discover findings for the study. Through the use of surveys, students' artifacts, student discussions, students' journals, and the teacher researcher journal, it allowed evidence of improvement of students' quality behaviors. The data collected demonstrated an impact on the third grade inclusion classroom at Cooper's Poynt in Camden, New Jersey. The implementation of an initial and final survey showed an impact on improvement in a positive nature over the course of the instructional unit. The student artifacts demonstrated the impact that students were applying what they were learning in lessons to circumstances in the classroom and throughout the school. Student discussions and

student journals showed an impact on student attitudes and opinions of other classmates and the idea of the importance of working together. In addition, the teacher researcher journal showed the gradual impact the modeling of qualities of character had on the students as well as their shift of behavior and attitudes. In conclusion, the implementation of a character education program had a positive impact on the third grade inclusion class.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion and Implications

#### Summary of Study

The concept for character education has been around for centuries, dating back to ancient Greek times and also displaying its roots in colonial America. Although the name of character education has changed over the course of time the underlying principles have remained the same. Character denotes the positive qualities and virtues a good person possesses that enable them to consider the difference between right and wrong when making moral decisions. Character education is a comprehensive idea to implement character enhancing programs in schools.

Due to the nature of society and the exposure children experience these days, building character in students is critical. Not all parents uphold their responsibility to model and teach morality to their children; therefore schools have accepted the burden of practicing and initiating moral conduct among students. In addition, studies and surveys have noted increases in unethical behaviors in students, including cheating, stealing, violence, and other various deviant behaviors. Children are becoming products of what they see at home, in the media, through movies and video games. Positive examples need to be set for children in order for their behaviors to change.

Research has noticed significant positive influences on schools that have adopted character education programs. The task of creating and applying character education in schools is difficult but has its rewards. Implementing character in the classroom is not

something that can be taught through one lesson; it is something a school must strive to teach throughout the entire school day and school year. Teachers must become exemplary models of character in order for students to witness what it means to be a good person filled with morals and the qualities that compose character.

Based on the research previously stated, this study was an effort to gain more insight into the implementation of a character education program. This study was initiated in the spring of 2007. The study took place in a third grade inclusion classroom at Cooper's Poynt School in Camden, New Jersey. The teacher researcher sought to find: what is the impact of a character education program on a third grade inclusion classroom?

### Findings

An instructional unit on character education was implemented in the third grade inclusion classroom. Several various sources of data were collected throughout the course of the study. Data resources included the two surveys, students work and artifacts, group discussions, student journals, and teacher researcher journal. The data collected showed the opinions of students as well as observations of the students and of the teacher researcher.

The data found from the application of the two surveys, the initial survey and final survey, before and after the implementation of the instructional unit on character education yielded important information to be analyzed. The information gathered from the surveys pointed to a positive impact on the third grade inclusion classroom after the use of the character education lessons and activities.

The student work and artifacts were composed of various types of assignments including worksheets, games, and projects related to the lessons and activities being

taught. Although various assignments were completed, two assignments proved extremely beneficial to the students and demonstrated the students' understanding and knowledge of different aspects of character.

Over the course of the unit, students participated in many discussions after various activities and lessons. In addition, students also wrote in their own personal journals discussing aspects of the activities. The student discussions and student journal responses showed the development of the students over the course of the study. Students were observing their own behavior changes and of those in the classroom. The information gathered from these discussions and student journals demonstrated an impact on the students' behaviors and attitudes.

An additional source of data was the teacher researcher journal that followed the course of the study. The observations described also demonstrated improvements on the students' behaviors in the classroom. The information from the teacher researcher journal provided insight into the study that revealed the impact the study provided the students.

Altogether the variety of data resources used to analyze proved changes that occurred throughout the character education study. The sources demonstrated the knowledge students acquired through the study along with observations about the students' development. The study concluded that through the implementation of an instructional unit on character education, an impact had been produced in the third grade inclusion classroom.

#### Limitations

The following study had a few limitations that should be taken into consideration. The teacher researcher had a limited timeframe imposed on them due to the fact that it



was only a sixteen week field placement. Ideally the study would have proved more efficient if conducted over a longer period of time, in particular at least one full school year. Also, the study took place in the spring, towards the end of the school year after rules, regulations, and routines had already been implemented for months in the classroom. Preferably, the study may have worked better if it had started in the fall when everything in the classroom was starting off original and fresh for a new school year. The dynamics of the classroom would have been different because routines would have been designed differently according to a character education approach.

In addition, this study could only focus on one classroom in one school. The study would be less limited if more classrooms had also implemented character education programs, in particular if all the third grade classes in the school followed the same character education instructional unit. The findings of the study would then include comparisons of each classroom to see if similar impacts were observed.

Due to the nature of the environment in which the school studied takes place the findings for the study may have varied in comparison to other schools from various districts. Cooper's Poynt School is in Camden, New Jersey, an urban city well known for its high crime rate. The students utilized for the study have experiences and home lives different from that of students in suburban cities and towns. The nature of their lives may contribute to variances in the study if the exact same study was implemented in a suburban school and was then compared.

#### Implications for Practice and Future Research

Overall, there is still a continuing need for further research and practice of character education. In particular further studies should be conducted in various schools and with different grade levels to determine more impacts character education programs

produce. Also, as previously mentioned, in order for the study to have been more effective and produce a bigger impact the study requires more time to be conducted. The lasting results and effectiveness of a character education program could be more accurately evaluated if a longer time period was used to study and measure students' behaviors.

Furthermore, schools need to adopt character education programs and become more knowledgeable on the concept. Teachers and faculty need to attend workshops that encourage and promote character education initiatives. Knowledge of how to implement lessons and activities in the classroom must be provided to teachers. A support network must be created for teachers to feel comfortable and confident in their application of modeling character.

In conclusion, character education is an important and effective concept that should be emphasized in schools today. Character education is critical for the positive development of our students and ultimately the future of our society. In order for negative behaviors to change, examples and expectations need to be set for students. The implications of character education programs demonstrate positive impacts. Further research and studies should be conducted to assess the continued effectiveness on character education programs in schools.

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## Appendices

Appendix A

Parent/Guardian Permission Slip

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you know, I have been working with your child in the classroom since January. I am a graduate student in the Collaborative Education Department at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Susan Browne as part of my master's thesis concerning the impact of a character education program in the classroom. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this study. The goal of the study is to see how implementing a character education program in an elementary classroom can help students' behavior in the classroom and therefore have a positive impact on attitude and increase in on task performance.

Each child will be interviewed regarding his/her personal interests, and feelings about the classroom environment and their relationship with their classmates. Furthermore, throughout the study, students will be given the chance to work cooperatively in team building activities along with learning strategies to deal with behavior. The data collected in this study will be based on class discussions, interviews, response journals, and written assignments.

The primary focus is to boost the students' self-esteem and provide an enriching classroom environment.

Although there is no risk factor to this study, to preserve each child's confidentiality, their name will not be used in the study, but rather will be given a pseudonym, or different name.

Your child does not need to participate and may withdraw from the study. Your decision whether or not to let your child participate in this study is completely voluntary and will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me, Ms. Barbato at (732) 804-3488, Mrs. Ross at (856) 966-5370, or Dr. Susan Browne at (856) 256-4500 ext. 3830. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Christina Barbato



**Permission Form**

The following study will be conducted in your child's classroom; *How does the Implementation of a Character Education Program Impact a Third Grade Classroom?* The study will be carried out over the next few weeks by Christina Barbato, a graduate student from Rowan University.

The primary focus is to boost the students' self-esteem and provide an enriching classroom environment.

Although there is no risk factor to this study, to preserve each child's confidentiality, their name will not be used in the study, but rather will be given a pseudonym, or different name.

Please indicate whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this to your child's teacher. Your decision whether or not to let your child participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class.

I grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

I do not grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/ Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Appendix B:  
Initial/Final Student Surveys

## Initial Survey

### Summary of Student Responses

<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>1.</b>	1	5	2	7
<b>2.</b>	8	6	0	1
<b>3.</b>	1	4	4	6
<b>4.</b>	1	4	3	7
<b>5.</b>	2	6	2	5
<b>6.</b>	2	6	0	7
<b>7.</b>	2	4	2	7
<b>8.</b>	3	8	2	2
<b>9.</b>	1	4	2	8
<b>10.</b>	1	6	3	5
<b>11.</b>	2	6	4	3
<b>12.</b>	8	6	0	1
<b>13.</b>	2	3	2	8
<b>14.</b>	2	4	3	6
<b>15.</b>	8	4	1	2
<b>16.</b>	3	4	2	6
<b>17.</b>	11	2	1	1
<b>18.</b>	1	7	2	5
<b>19.</b>	2	6	3	4
<b>20.</b>	6	5	3	1
<b>21.</b>	1	3	3	8
<b>22.</b>	2	4	5	4
<b>23.</b>	1	7	2	5
<b>24.</b>	0	7	2	6
<b>25.</b>	4	2	4	5
<b>26.</b>	5	6	2	2
<b>27.</b>	5	3	3	4
<b>28.</b>	0	5	3	7
<b>29.</b>	2	2	1	10
<b>30.</b>	2	2	4	7

## Final Survey

### Summary of Student Responses

<b>Statement Number</b>	<b>Almost Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
<b>1.</b>	0	4	4	7
<b>2.</b>	10	5	0	0
<b>3.</b>	0	2	4	9
<b>4.</b>	0	2	5	8
<b>5.</b>	1	4	5	5
<b>6.</b>	1	2	5	7
<b>7.</b>	0	2	6	7
<b>8.</b>	1	8	4	2
<b>9.</b>	0	2	4	9
<b>10.</b>	1	5	5	4
<b>11.</b>	0	8	4	3
<b>12.</b>	9	4	2	0
<b>13.</b>	1	2	3	9
<b>14.</b>	0	5	4	6
<b>15.</b>	11	3	0	1
<b>16.</b>	1	3	5	6
<b>17.</b>	11	4	0	0
<b>18.</b>	0	2	8	5
<b>19.</b>	1	1	5	8
<b>20.</b>	9	5	0	1
<b>21.</b>	0	1	4	10
<b>22.</b>	2	4	4	5
<b>23.</b>	1	3	5	6
<b>24.</b>	0	5	5	5
<b>25.</b>	3	3	3	6
<b>26.</b>	5	8	1	1
<b>27.</b>	3	2	5	5
<b>28.</b>	0	4	2	9
<b>29.</b>	1	2	2	10
<b>30.</b>	0	1	4	10

Appendix C:  
Results of Surveys

## Student Survey

**Please put a circle around the word that shows how often each of these things happen to you. There is no right or wrong answers.**

**1. I treat my classmates with respect.**

Almost Never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**2. I leave out other students who are different (ex. belong to a different race, religion, or culture).**

Almost Never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**3. I try to comfort one of my classmates who is sad.**

Almost Never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**4. I respect the personal property of others.**

Almost Never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**5. I help other students, even if they are not my friends.**

Almost Never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**6. When I do something hurtful, I try to make up for it (ex. I apologize or do something nice).**

Almost never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**7. I show respect for school property (such as desks, walls, bathrooms, building, and grounds).**

Almost Never                  Sometimes                  Often                  Almost Always

**8. I try to get other students to follow the rules.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**9. I behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, and aides).**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**10. I work well with other students.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**11. I help to improve the school.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**12. I am disrespectful toward my teachers.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**13. I help new students feel accepted.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**14. I try to have a positive influence on the behavior of students.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**15. I pick on other students.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**16. I am willing to forgive someone who hurts me.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**17. I show poor sportsmanship.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**18. I am patient with my classmates.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**19. I resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**20. I am disrespectful towards my classmates.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**21. I listen to my classmates during class discussions.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**22. When I see another student being picked on, I try to stop it.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**23. I refrain from using put-downs (negative, hurtful comments).**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**24. I share what I have with others.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**25. I feel comfortable being myself with your classmates.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always



**26. I show off and I act inappropriate in front of other students to gain their attention.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**27. I can talk to my teachers about problems that are bothering me.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**28. Teachers go out of their way to help students who need extra help.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**29. In this school you can count on adults to try to make sure that students are safe.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always

**30. In their interactions with students, teachers act in ways that demonstrate qualities of good character.**

Almost Never            Sometimes            Often            Almost Always