CHARACTER MATTERS: CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION

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Dedicated to

My Family

My wife, Donna, who encouraged me when there seemed to be no end to the long journey. I thank you for your love, support, patience and understanding.

To my daughter, Paige, who lost out on playtime with her daddy, I will make it up to you. You are a little *Character* yourself.

To my newborn Ben, your smiles brightened my breaks from my work.

To my mother, you taught me perseverance... it paid off.

Abstract

In recent years there has been increasing pressure all across North America for schools to focus more on character education. This study examines one District's response to character education through the implementation of the Community of Caring Program in the District. The results of the study provide insights into the program through the perceptions of central office administrators. Respondents explain in detail why there was a need for such a program, how character education was implemented throughout the District, what the overall effects of the program have been on student character development, school culture and climate, and future directions for character education within the District. The overall effectiveness of the character education program, Community of Caring, was assessed through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected from interviews with central office administrators. The results of the study indicate that there was almost unanimous support for the inclusion and continuation of character education in the District. Community of Caring was found to have positive effects on the climate, culture, and character development of the students in the District's schools.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Research Question and Background

Introduction

In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society" (Lickona,1991, p. 4). There are numerous problems in society such as violence, alcohol abuse, suicide, drugs, and the breakdown of the family unit. All of these problems potentially impact children. They shape children's lives. Increasingly, educators are finding a need to implement programs that can counter the effects of problems that develop in society and reveal themselves in schools.

Michelle Borba (2001), in her book *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues That Teach Kids To Do The Right Thing*, emphasizes that it is important for schools to fill the void in the area of character development for children. Educators need to provide opportunities for everyone within the school setting to develop morally because "the moral atmosphere in which today's children are being raised is toxic to moral intelligence" (p. 4).

Borba explains that society has created the problems that children face today because "adult supervision, models of moral behavior, spiritual or religious training, meaningful adult relationships, clear national values, community support, stability and adequate parenting is slowly disintegrating." (p. 4).

Teaching has always been more than the three R's,- reading, writing and arithmetic. Educators have always taught the hidden curriculum of morals and moral development. This study examines character education and the effects of character education on a school district.

Background Information

As a young boy growing up in the District I attended a Catholic school from kindergarten through to grade twelve. As a student I remember a number of the district slogans. These included *Education with a Difference,* and *Educating the Whole Child.* At the time I did not question or even reflect upon such vision or mission slogans.

As a teacher and administrator with ten-years of experience with the District I now realize the significance of such slogans, and through my experiences, I see a tremendous need for the existence of character education in our schools. I am a firm believer that as an institution of learning we are called to focus on more than just academic performance; we must be concerned with development of the whole child. This of course includes the physical, spiritual, social, emotional, and intellectual development of our children. Intellectual development needs to be a central feature for us in our schools. However, it is not the only area we need to address. Schools must also work towards developing character in our students. Character education must be an integral component of our institutions of learning. Through the implementation of curriculum which focuses on character education, I believe we will see a corresponding improvement in academic achievement. Students who are appropriately concerned for and about the world they live in will also be students who will strive to be the best they can be in all their endeavors. The study took place in a separate school division in an urban center in the province of Alberta. For the purposes of this report, the school division will be referred to as the *District.*

Goal

The goal of the study was to determine the effects of the program Community of Caring on the character development and climate within the district as a whole. The study specifically examined the results of the program according to the perceptions of Central Office administrators.

General Research Question

To what extent does the implementation of the Community Caring Program within the District result in positive change in the character development of students as well as the schools' overall climate, according to the perceptions of central office administrators?

This general research question will be explored using the following number of key guiding questions. Why has the District implemented Community of Caring in the District? How has the District implemented Community of Caring? What are the results of Community of Caring within the District? What is the District accepting as evidence in determining the effects of Community of Caring? Has the Community of Caring program been successful in developing a stronger sense of community within the District?

Significance of the research

There are a number of reasons why this research may be considered significant. First, this research could provide the District, and others, evidence for determining future directions for such character education programs as the Community of Caring. Second, it is hoped that this research will lead to the implementation of character education programs in other schools. Third, the findings could possibly lead to the development of a new curriculum which would include character education. Fourth, this study may lead to an increased partnership between home and school. Together they may be successful in

creating communities or schools of caring which focus more purposefully on the development of responsible citizens.

Definition of terms

The following definitions are intended to provide further clarity.

Lickona (1991) states *good character* "consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good-habits of mind, habits of heart, and habits of action" (p. 51).

Character education is an organized approach for parents, educators and members of the community to instill strong character in our children and students, preparing them to become responsible citizens. It seeks to teach virtues to develop character in an organized fashion so students can be empowered to make choices that are right for them.

Community of Caring is a comprehensive, values-based education program designed to integrate values and values discussions into a school community (Community of Caring Elementary Program Guide). Community of Caring creates a school environment that will help students develop virtues so they confront the challenges they meet in a positive manner. Community of Caring

Empathy , as defined by Borba (2001) is "identifying with and feeling other people's concern" (p.13).

Respect is "showing you value others by treating them in a courteous and considerate way" (Borba, 2001, p. 119).

Responsibility is "Doing what is right; being answerable and accountable to yourself and others" (Borba, 2001, p. x).

"Our *values* define what is meaningful to make the world a more moral place" (Borba, 2001, p. 130).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

<u>Character Education</u>

In a world of contrasts--wealth, poverty, gluttony, hunger, honesty, dishonesty,

generosity and greed-- it is evident that people are lacking character as is reflected in the

choices they are making (Maloney 2003, p. 1). Traditionally, Western democracies have

assumed education helps people make gains in their own development as human beings,

and it can also enable a country to forge ahead socially and economically. However,

escalating moral problems in society, ranging from greed and dishonesty to violent crime,

to self-destructive behaviors such as drug abuse and suicide, are bringing about a new

consensus (Lickona 1991, p. 4).

If governments value responsible citizens, they must attend more closely to those

aspects of society that promote greater responsibility and address deficiencies (Glaze,

McLean & Hogarth, 2003, p. 1). One of the most effective ways to accomplish societal

change is still through the education system. Maloney (2003) echoes that point when she

states that Aristotle thought, "all who have mediated on the art of governing mankind

have been convinced that the fate of the empire rests with the education of our youth"

(p. 3). Yet the methods may need to change.

To contribute to the development of responsible citizens schools need to promote

programs that instill values that are important to society. "Values, respect for others, and

discipline must be at the centre of what we teach our students" (McGuinty, 2003, p.1).

Martin Luther King Jr. echoes a similar sentiment when he says that the meaning of

education is to "remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character, that

is the goal of true education" (McGuinty, 2003, p. 2).

Because society is seen to be continually changing, so many of the values in society

may also be seen to be changing. Students are confronted constantly with conflicting

values. Mohandas Gandhi believed people should not fall victim to one of the *seven*

blunders so they can experience the numerous good things that life offers. These *blunders*

are said to be "wealth without work"; "pleasure without conscience"; "knowledge

without character"; "commerce without morality"; "science without humanity"; "worship

without sacrifice"; and "politics without principle" (Maloney, 2003, p. 4-5).

There are many opportunities for people in their lifetimes to make choices about their

lives and it is important for individuals to have a *moral compass* (DuFour & Eaker, 1998)

to help them make right choices. To counteract many of the problems within society,

Lickona (1991) feels strongly that character education should be an integral part of

schooling. Borba (2001) echoes a similar thought as she says there is a crisis in society

because of the lack of moral intelligence. She argues that professionals from various

walks of life, including education, are concerned and they feel the problem has to be dealt

with immediately. Youth violence is a serious problem, which is evident in all schools

across Canada and the United States. Reports of disturbing events in schools are splashed

across newspapers and reported widely on the evening news. Borba (2001) provides a

number of frightening statistics which clearly identify the seriousness of the problem in

the United States. Bullying, teasing, threatening and name-calling are keeping students

out of the classrooms as they are simply staying home for fear of what might happen

when they arrive at school. These students fear for their safety and their well-being.

"Peer cruelty is steadily increasing: an estimated 160,000 children stay home each day

and miss school for fear of being picked on by their peers, and considering the

accessibility of weapons, the potential for physical injury is high" (p. 2).

The problems, however, are not simply limited to youth violence. There are a number

of other concerns which demonstrate the lack of moral intelligence or character in our

children. Borba notes, "Other distributing indicators including substance abuse,

disrespect for parents and teachers, incivility, increase in vulgarity, and widespread

cheating and dishonesty" (p. 2). She provides the following statistics as evidence:

> Fifty percent of students surveyed indicated they have stolen something; twenty-
>
> five percent would lie to get a job; seventy percent admitted cheating on an exam;
>
> over twenty percent of fifth grades admitted to having been drunk; adolescent
>
> suicide is up three hundred percent; depression is up one thousand percent; and
>
> the average age of a first experiment with marijuana is down to the age of twelve.
>
> (p. 2)

Borba (2001) argues that schools must teach values and focus on character

development because, "The moral atmosphere in which today's children are being raised

is toxic to moral intelligence" (p. 4). Simply put, society has created the problem because

"adult supervision, models of moral behavior, spiritual or religious training, meaningful

adult relationships, clear national values, community support, stability and adequate

parenting is slowly disintegrating" (p. 4).

The mass media also has a tremendous impact on our children and their character.

Today we are bombarded by messages from television, radio, advertising, print, and the

internet. The problem is that many of these messages lead to the erosion of moral

intelligence or character in society. Lickona (1991), in his examination of the effects of

television, paints a very clear picture of its impact on children. He argues that television

can have a positive effect on moral intelligence; however, the negative effects outweigh

the positive. He states: "At its worst and the worst is increasingly pervasive-television

inundates the young with shoddy values and diverts them from the family relationships

and healthy pursuits. In many ways, television is the most insidious and ubiquitous moral

miseducator in the lives of children" (p. 406).

In response to numerous problems, such as the one just described, there has been a

general call for more programs dealing with character education. "Now all across the

country, from private citizens and public organizations, from liberals and conservatives

alike, comes a summons to the schools: Take up the role of moral teachers of our

children" (Lickona 1991, p. 4). Ryan and Bohlin (1999) contend that character

development is lacking in our schools and governments should pass legislation requiring

schools to focus more on it. They also cite Gallup polls based on public opinion, which

call for schools to focus on virtues such as responsibility, respect, honesty, caring,

tolerance, and moral courage. It is important to teach children values but whose values

should be taught? In the *Community of Caring Elementary Program Guide,* it is stated

that:

> Schools exist to educate for citizenship.... citizenship has a values
>
> component. We cannot credibly say we are educating good citizens if

we don't help our young people to think seriously about matters of

value and create for them a community in which they can discover

themselves (p. 17).

Barlow and Robertson (1994) in the book *Class Warfare* also confirm that education,

in serving society, balances the needs of the individual with the need for common

knowledge and experiences and collective values. Most educators agree that the school

system should develop people to become responsible citizens. However, they do not

always agree on the values that should be taught, or how they should be taught.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) describe values and how they have an impact on people.

"Values are a link between emotion and behavior, the connection between what we feel

and what we do … with everything changing around us we need something unchanging

…to hang on to …Values are our moral navigational devices" (p. 87).

There are numerous programs already in place that deal with character education.

Otten (2000) describes several of these approaches to the development of character in her

article *Character Education.* For example, *Character Counts* a program which identifies

six pillars that are supposedly necessary in education. The pillars are caring,

trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, and citizenship. In the *Giraffe Project*

students look out, or "stick their necks out," for other people. The students work at

building a caring community. The *Character Education Partnership* serves as a model of

exemplary practices where schools can learn about and build a community of caring (p.

2).

Borba (2001), in her book entitled, *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential*

Virtues That Teach Kids To Do The Right Thing, stresses the importance of building

moral intelligence by focussing on teaching our children seven essential virtues. These virtues include; empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness. She argues, "the sooner we begin purposefully cultivating our children's capacity for moral intelligence, the better the chances of acquiring the foundation they'll need to develop solid character and of growing to think, believe, and act morally" (p. 6).

John Dewey (1959) in his work *Moral Principles in Education* focuses on the importance of moral development in the education system. He examines the school's role in developing moral character in students to enable them to develop and sustain relationships with others.

> The child is an organic whole, intellectually, socially, and morally, as well as physically. We must take the child as a member of society in the broadest sense, and demand for and from the schools whatever is necessary to enable the child intelligently to recognize all his social relations and take his part in sustaining them. (p. 9)

Lickona (1991), a developmental psychologist and educator who is internationally recognized as a respected authority on moral development and values education, claims that in the absence of values, no society can function effectively and no individual can hope to live happily. Not to teach good character based on these core values would be a grave moral failure for any society, according to Lickona.

As educators we learn about the values or virtues that are important; it is also essential that we understand how to implement these in the school. Sergiovanni (2000) writes extensively about the importance of developing good character in building a learning community. According to Sergiovanni, to be a learning community, a school

needs to develop a community of relationships, a community of mind and heart, a community of memory of what was and what can be, and a community where positive practice is seen as important.

> As a school becomes a community of relationships, connections among people are close and informal individual circumstances count, acceptance is unconditional, emotions are legitimated, sacrificing one's self-interest for the community is common, relationships are intrinsically valued, knowledge is valued and learned, and students are accepted and loved. These kinds of relationships among people create a unity that is similar to those found in families and other close-knit collections of people. (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 23)

Similarly, Barth (1990) focuses on school culture and on the interpersonal relationships which exist in the school. He points out the importance of creating a culture where relationships are strong. Character education programs can be of value when it comes to relationship building, as teachers, students, parents and members of the community all model positive relationship based upon community values.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) use the term community rather than organization as it "places greater emphasis on relationships, shared ideals, and a strong culture, all factors that are critical to school's improvement" (p. 15). DuFour and Eaker argue that professional learning communities attempt to create environments which foster mutual cooperation, emotional support and personal growth, as all members of the community work together to achieve goals. It is quite possible that supportive environment, could not be developed without the existence of character education.

Borba (2001) claims that over the past few years we have witnessed a breakdown of appropriate role models for the youth of today. She believes this to be the case because character traits, like skills, are learned. Students learn these traits by watching others model such character. In our schools, we must be role models for each other whether we are administrators, teachers, students, parents or support staff members.

Fullwinder (as cited in Sergiovanni, 2000) writes about the importance of school character, and its development. As virtues are implemented within a school it is seen to develop a stronger character. The virtues Fullwinder speaks of are "moral virtues - honesty, truthfulness, decency, courage, justice, intellectual virtues – thoughtfulness, strength of mind, curiosity; communal values – neighborliness, charity, respect, helpfulness, and political values – commitment to the common good, and responsible participation" (p. 19).

The National Commission on Character Education (cited in Williams & Schaps, 1999) in the United States, broadly defines the term character education as "any deliberate approach by which school personnel, often in conjunction with parents and community members, help children and youth become more caring, principled and responsible" (p. 2). The Character Education Partnership, an advocacy group for character education, defines it as "the deliberate efforts by schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values" (Lickona, 1996, p. 1).

In examining the definitions above it is evident that character education requires deliberate actions of individuals. Coles (1998) states that "character is ultimately who we are expressed in action, in how we live, in what we do, and so the children around us

know: they absorb and take stock of what they observe, namely, us – we adults living and doing things in a certain spirit, getting on with one another in our various ways" (p. 7). If educators are going to be successful in character education programs, Coles says they have to bring up "matters of conscience, of ethical concern, again and again" (p. 9).

The research indicates that while character education programs are considered important for students, there have been numerous programs in the past that may not have always succeeded. In the article *The Missing Link's Missing Links* Ryan (1997) explains there have been numerous reforms introduced, and financial resources allocated to programs that have not enjoyed success. Ryan states that "if educational reform is to succeed, the twin goals of intellectual and moral development must be championed in every classroom in that America" (p. 81).

Schaps, Schaeffer, and Sanford (2001), in *What's Right and Wrong In Character Education Today,* contend that a person's character develops over time, and it can be formed in many ways. They write: "One way is through exposure to the actions and attitudes of others, particularly those whom we have come to trust. Another is through engaging in moral action, such as service to others. A third way is through open, considered dialogue about those situations" (p. 1). One of the foundations of many programs that promote open dialogue about various moral situations is Kohlberg's six stages of moral reasoning. *In Promoting Moral Growth from Piaget* to *Kohlberg* the authors, Reimer, Paolitto and Hersh (1983), discuss Kolhberg's stages of development. They suggest Kohlberg's theory of moral development "is more properly a description of the development of moral judgement." (p. 45).

Figure 1 presents an adaptation of Kohlberg's theory.

Figure I: *The Six Stages of Moral Development*

Level and stage	What is right	Reasons for doing right	Social perspective of stage
Level 1 Preconventional Stage I Heteronomous morality	Sticking to rules backed by punishment	Avoidance of punishment	Egocentric point of view
Stage 2 Individualism	Following rules only when in one's immediate interest	To serve one's own needs or interests	Concrete individualistic perspective
Level II Conventional Stage 3 Mutual interpersonal expectations	Living up to what is expected by people close to you	The need to be a good person in your own eyes and those of others	Perspective of the individual
Stage 4 Social system and conscience	Fulfilling duties to which you have agreed	To keep the institution going as a whole	Differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives
Level III Postconventional Stage 5 Social contact	Being aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions and that most of their values are relative to their group	A sense of obligation to law	Considers moral and legal points of view
Stage 6 Universal ethical principles	Following self-chosen ethical principles	The belief in the validity of universal moral principles and a sense of commitment to them	Perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive

According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, some people think of morality as the values they have acquired from their environment. Therefore, when they know they have values, people who are seen as *moral* know they must act upon the values they have acquired. Of course, as the authors note, this type of thinking does not take into account what happens to people's values when they conflict.

Cronin (1999) in the text, *Character Education in the Catholic School*, identifies three goals that are important for children in a character education program. They are:

1. The cultivation of a desire to be good so that they undertake and persist in living lives of care and concern for themselves and others.

2. The formation of a lasting habit of introspection about their behavior and its consequences to enable them always to be aware of how other people are treating themselves and how they treat other people.

3. The development of an understanding of the reasons why they should be good and the ways in which they can be good. (p. 7)

If children are to develop and maintain good character they will need to want to be good. According to Cronin, "Putting children in touch with their own behavior and its consequences and motivating in them the desire to act in the service of goodness is the essence of character education. All three dimensions are essential – knowing what to do, wanting to do it, and doing it" (p. 7).

Cronin goes on to describe the following distinguishing attributes of character:

1. A good character is rooted in a positive sense of self, an awareness of and confidence in one's personal worth.

2. A person of good character has developed a well-formed and active conscience.

3. A person of good character has learned and uses the following skills of

   decision-making and choosing:

a. choosing purposively

b. evaluating alternatives

c. considering the consequences

d. incorporating what has been learned by experience from one

   situation to another and appropriately applying it to new situations

4. A person of good character has a wide array of virtuous habits, such as honesty,

temperance and patience, which are practiced consistently. (pp. 7-9)

A critical step for a school staff is to find out what type of character education

program to teach. Some of the character education programs that schools use aim only to

promote good manners, or follow the rules, and do not seek to develop strong, morally

sound individuals.

Schaps, Schaeffer, and Sanford (2001) describe some types of character education

programs which are problematic. They include programs described as "cheerleading,"

"praise and reward," "define and drill," and "forced formality" (p. 2). The authors go on

to explain why such programs are inadequate. The cheerleading program may incorporate

such things as posters, banners, a new virtue every month, motivational presentations and

upbeat messages on the intercom. This type of program exposes the children to these

types of messages and then has the students attempt to become good by doing the right

things.

Praise and reward programs are accomplished through positive reinforcement in much the same way that B.F. Skinner used food pellets to shape the behavior of rats. This type of program focuses on the reward, and not the student's actions.

Define and drill approaches have students memorize the definitions for the values and regurgitate the information without any attempt to apply what they have learned. The idea of memorization is equated with the idea that the child has internalized the virtue.

Forced formality programs ask the students to comply strictly with the rules of the school. One example is the students would need to show respect by saying "Yes sir" or "No ma'am" when an adult speaks with them (p. 2).

Schaps, Schaeffer, and Sanford (2001) describe the type of character education program they believe will work in schools. They say the best programs are those in which students are active, influential participants as they create a caring environment in the classroom and also the school. The authors go on to explain that the "best forms of character education also involve students in honest, thoughtful discussion and reflection about the moral implications of what they see around them, what they are told, and what they personally do and experience" (p. 3).

Schaps, Schaeffer, and Sanford elaborate on character education and give concrete examples of how to achieve success in the program. They propose:

1. Class meetings to solve common problems and assess progress.

2. An exploration of the moral and social implications of what the students are learning.

3. Student collaboration on projects.

4. Buddy programs in which students of different ages come together to work on various types of academic and service activities.

5. Events that include the whole school body that encourage students to use their personal experiences to enrich their our lives and the lives of others.

6. Projects which are service learning opportunities inside and outside the school. (p. 4)

According to Schaps, Shaeffer, and Sanford, character education programs that are successful must demonstrate such approaches, combined with an unremitting focus on lofty standards for the duration of the program.

Arbuthnot and Faust (1981) discuss some of the problems educators face when implementing a character education program. They write first about the *insensitive participant*. Students may be insensitive to other students' comments and say something they shouldn't. Accordingly, rules make sure inappropriate comments are discouraged. Arbuthnot and Faust also describe the *overactive participant*, a person who monopolizes discussions and doesn't allow other students to have input in the discussion or activity. A third type is the *underactive participant,* a person who contributes little to the discussion or the activity. The participant may be experiencing discomfort with the activity, or may lack interest. Finally, the authors describe the person who has a *negative attitude*. Such students' input is negative, or they develop negative ideas about character education.

The implementation of a character education program can have educators wondering if it is worth the effort because of all the problems they may encounter. Therefore, it is important that they be sure of the purpose behind implementing a character education program before they begin.

Character education programs vary in type, purpose and critical elements. Accordingly, educators are advised to select the program most suitable to their students' and their school needs.

A character education program develops students so they learn how to become morally sound individuals. This will ensure they become responsible citizens in the future. Educators need to review what values the school stands for before implementing a character education program. The success of the program will be dependent upon developing strong interpersonal relationships to create a positive school culture. Societal changes have made the need for implementation of character education programs in school necessary.

Two main goals of education are academics and character. The implementation of a character education program gives schools the opportunity to achieve these goals. The specific program that the District has chosen is the Community of Caring Project.

<u>A Brief History of the Community of Caring Project</u>

Community of Caring is a comprehensive, values-based education program designed to integrate values and values discussions into a school community (Community of Caring Elementary Program Guide).

The Community of Caring program of character education fosters the high level of self-esteem that is essential to combat the forces that lead to harmful relationships and destructive behaviors that may occur later in adolescence. Community of Caring is not confined to a traditional classroom, nor a single curriculum (C of C Elementary Program Guide). Teachers participate in character development everyday, whether it is in a classroom, hallway, cafeteria, playground or on the playing field. Community of Caring

is an interactive process that is woven into all aspects of the curriculum. Through

discussion, exploration, and service learning projects students will begin to understand

the relationship between their values, their decisions, and their actions.

The Community of Caring program was founded in 1982 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver,

and it developed into a project of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation in Washington.

The program was first established to assist unwed mothers by focusing on five core

values of caring, trust, respect, responsibility, and family. Today, through a multi-faceted

process, Community of Caring addresses the attitudes that frequently lead to premature

sexual involvement, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, delinquent behavior, violence, and

dropping out of school. At the heart of Community of Caring are the five core values:

Family, Caring, Responsibility, Respect, and Trust. These are defined as follows:

- **Caring:** Caring is the opposite of both indifference and hate. Without caring,

  nothing matters (http://www.communityofcaring.org/).

- **Trust:** When people care for and respect each other, trust takes root and grows.

  Trusting people means counting on them: depending on them and expecting them

  to deliver. Communities of people cannot exist without a certain level of trust.

  Trust requires knowledge (http://www.communityofcaring.org/).

- **Respect:** Respect for each other makes a moral community--a community of

  caring--possible. To respect others means to see them as valuable in their own

  right. Self-respect and respect for others go together, and both are essential

  (http://www.communityofcaring.org/).

- **Responsibility:** People who care must be willing to take responsibility. That

  means they are accountable for their actions, enjoying praise when things go well

and willing to accept blame when things go wrong. Being responsible means being willing to stand up and be counted, to say "I" decided to take action. It was my choice, my achievement or my fault (http://www.communityofcaring.org/).

- **Family:** Family is the community that raises children, the community they leave to go to school, and the kind of community they may create themselves one day. Families have been called "the school of character," the place where values are taught and learned (http://www.communityofcaring.org/).

Components of the program include teacher training, values discussion, student forums, family involvement and service learning. Special activities are planned, implemented, and led by students, teachers, community leaders and family members. The groups come together and discuss issues of concern to students with adults acting as guides and mentors. Students are encouraged to put their concerns in the context of the larger community. Young people speak their minds and offer their own solutions to issues and problems, as they develop leadership skills. The interactive process brings together the adults and students in a learning setting that is broader than academic work. (http://www.communityofcaring.org/)

The District adopted the Community of Caring Program in 1999. At the heart of the District' schools is Religious Education; therefore, the need to add the sixth value, faith, was recognized. Through Religious Education students develop the knowledge, beliefs, skills and values needed to build a relationship with God. It is an essential and integral part of a Catholic school.

Effective Leadership Qualities

Ultimately it is the principal who takes responsibility for the changes within the organization and, therefore, leadership is a vital component in implementing new programs and initiatives within a school. The implementation of a character education program that builds community and teaches values requires distinct leadership qualities. The success of that program depends on the leaders in the building, both teacher leaders and administrators. Qualities such as vision, values, relationship building, commitment and lifelong love of learning and leading are essential to the development of a character education program within a school. Staff members must be seen as role models who model appropriate behaviors, morals and values. The adults need to be approachable, warm, and caring. Developing a positive school climate takes time and commitment from all members of the school community is very important. Moreover, although there are many characteristics of effective leaders, qualities essential to building and nourishing community within the school are most important in character education. Leaders need to have strong principles, be visionary, empowering of others, supportive, skilled, and committed to creating a community enriched in values and learning.

Having a vision is one of the keys to fostering community in a school. "A vision is a kind of moral imagination that gives school people, individually and collectively, the ability to see their school not only as it is but also what they would like it to become" (Barth, 2001, p. 204). A vision is necessary so that a school can establish goals and work towards those goals. The success of a new program is dependent upon whether or not it is seen as a goal or just another thing to do. Adults in the building need to recognize the value in a program so students will then recognize that same value. The principal's role

is to "engage the faculty in the co-creation of shared vision and values" (DuFour &

Eaker, 1998, p. 184). This shared vision should be the hopes and dreams of the people

within the school. Relying on this vision will give people a direction and focus to work

towards.   Identifying that citizenship is a key component of education is crucial to the

success of character education programs. Wald and Castlebury (2000) believe that:

> To sustain this communal energy and hope, the leader must hold the vision high
>
> for all to see, constantly revisit it, expand on it and continually help members of
>
> the community connect with it and find ways to personalize it and make it their
>
> own. (p. 20)

The six core values of a Community of Caring are on the walls throughout our school.

It is a daily reminder of what we stand for and the values we are trying to instill. Having

our message visible allows for everyone to be a part of that vision and to share in it.

Sergiovanni (1996) discusses the importance of being invitational in building a school

with this kind of vision. It is essential for leaders to be visionary and inviting as they

work towards creating a community rich in values.

Values-based leadership, or moral leadership, is another distinct quality necessary for

a leader implementing a character education program. Sergiovanni (1996) states,

"communities are defined by their centers of values, sentiments, and beliefs..." (p. 47).

Therefore, if communities are defined by their values, so must the leaders within those

communities be so defined. Wald and Castleberry (2000) believe that "leaders, by their

words and actions, are the keepers of values. Such words and actions emanate from deep

within the heart of the leader" (p. 22). This idea of knowing who you are as an individual,

first and foremost, is the basis for being able to draw out the values and beliefs of the

other individuals within the community. A leader who is authentic will be able to do just that. Moral or values-based leaders must be able to stand up for their beliefs, displaying strong convictions and courage. Moral leaders, will understand what values are important and will use them as a guide for behavior and decisions. In turn, they we teach their students to do the same.

Building relationships is an integral component to the development of a Community of Caring. Administrators need to build productive relationships with teachers, parents and students. Teachers need to build the same relationships with parents and students. A sense of caring, respect, and family needs to be developed. Covey (1991) discusses the importance of believing in people as a characteristic of *Principle-Centered Leadership*. He says the leader must believe in the "unseen potential of all people" (p. 35), because it allows for growth and opportunity. Accepting and recognizing the diversity of individuals within the learning community will help "provide opportunities for learning teams to seek new or different perspectives" (Wald & Castleberry, 2000, p. 27).

Trust and integrity are foundational to strong relationships. Covey (1990) also believes "trust - or the lack of it - is at the root of success or failure in relationships and in the bottom line results of...education..." (p. 31). Once leaders have demonstrated trust and integrity the process of creating community has begun. Trust is one of the six core values in a Community of Caring. Trust must be established with the leaders in the building so that teachers, students and parents feel safe and risk-taking can occur. To teach values such as trust it is important that the values can be seen within a person. They can't just be something people talk about. When people in an organization feel trusted

and respected they "learn more about themselves and their individual and collective potential" (Wald & Castleberry, 2000, p. 26).

Establishing a sense of belonging is also a key component to building relationships within a community. The sense of belonging created by the leader enables people to feel as if they are an important part of the community. It also empowers people to act on their ideas. Fullan (2001) sums it up best when he says, "the role of the leader is to ensure that the organization develops relationships that help produce desirable results" (p. 68).

In the end, perhaps, the leaders are responsible for providing the enabling structures needed for building positive relationships among the members of the school organization and, thus, they are a key factor in determining whether or not a school becomes a successful community.

<u>Student Leadership</u>

Academics are only one area of education; to develop empathy and leadership in students is a lifelong, necessary skill for a future decent society. As defined by Fertman and Van Linden (1999):

> Character education in schools involves formal instruction in honesty, trust, cooperation, respect, responsibility, hope, determination, and loyalty; it also lays the foundation for positive leadership development. The values mentioned are important to leaders regardless of race, religion, economic status, or other defining characteristics, to promote a livable and workable society. For adolescents, positive leadership behavior is character education in action. (Fertman & Van Linden, 1999, p. 182)

Community of Caring is a project implemented in over 60 schools in the District to achieve the goal of making these values a prominent part of the school environment. Community of Caring is a process as well as a program. It empowers student through the teaching of universal values which improve their self-esteem. Through this process, students increase their commitment to school, their amount of productive community service, and their understanding of the importance of planning for their future. The project plays a key role in the interaction between adults and young people (C. McInnes personal communication, May 9, 2003).

Character Education is more necessary now than ever before in our society. Calgary Police are active participants in the school community and are proactive in making sure students speak out about violence and bullying in the initial stages to head off more serious problems. "This is not a police message. This is just a message about human decency", said Constable Rick Woo of the Calgary police youth education and intervention unit in talking to educators (Toneguzzi, 2003). Edmonton City Council has recently passed Canada's first anti-bullying bylaw, which outlaws pushing, shoving, or name-calling and provides fines of up to $250.00 for offenders. However, educators do not believe law enforcement is a lifelong solution to this problem.

Borba (2001) believes it has become the role of schools to become moral educators, so our teachers must focus on character education and ethical development. Schools must take on this role because many of today's students lack the understanding of what it means to possess good character. Character education programs are of the utmost importance in education if we are going to develop strong trusting relationships with our

students. It is through such programs as our Community of Caring that we can begin to create the climate necessary to foster character in our students.

In order for students to become emotionally involved in the process of building a Community of Caring it is necessary for them to have a voice and a role in the decision making process. The teenage years are a time when the most important questions, such as "What gives meaning to life?" or "Why am I here?" can fester in loneliness or, with support, inspire a journey toward wisdom and connection (Kessler, 2000). All students have the ability to find the best in themselves. It is important for students to be told this and have them believe in this. Too often students are stereotyped and not given the opportunity. However, it is up to the staff to provide them with opportunity and give them the choice to participate. Berman (1997), an educator who has devoted much of his work to understanding the development of social responsibility, believes that people must, sooner or later, turn purpose into action. "Young people are continually negotiating a sense of meaning, place and commitment," writes Berman. "In often subtle ways they ask: Do I have a meaningful place in the social and political world? Are there values that I can make a commitment to and people I can stand with? Am I capable of contributing something useful to others that they will welcome and appreciate?" (p. 97). Through meaningful participation in their community, students can go beyond "rules" to empathy and decency, beyond filling mandated "service learning" requirements to finding purpose through giving. Students develop social responsibility not as an obligation, but out of a sense of connection and empowerment. They discover the compassion that makes humans want to alleviate the suffering of others. Through experience, they find that

choice and change are possible - first in themselves and, by extension, in the community and society at large (Kessler, 2000).

According to Fertman and Van Linden (1999), "There are three stages of youth leadership development: awareness, interaction, and mastery" (p. 18). Students need to become aware of themselves as leaders and need help to begin the process of identifying and building on their leadership potential. They can then begin to get involved in leadership activities and eventually realize their ability to influence others. By establishing a Community of Caring, the District hopes to initiate both leadership activities and character education. Schools are attempting to teach both responsibility and accountability.

> "Youth leadership includes both transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership focuses on the skills and tasks usually associated with leadership such as speaking in public, delegating authority, leading meetings, and making decisions…Transformational leadership focuses on the process of leadership and what it means to be a leader… *doing* leadership tasks vs. *being* a leader. (Fertman & Van Linden, 1999, p. 25)

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (2000) believe that transformational leadership is a particular area of need in both staff and students. It is important for administration team leaders to value the participation and contribution of their staff and, in turn, expect they will do the same for their students. All viewpoints and advice should be taken into account before decisions are made. Developing an understanding and appreciation for others' points of view, culture and needs is essential. Perhaps too often, educators focus

on the transactional; the doing and organizing of a task, but don't consider instilling the character traits of being a leader.

As the Community of Caring Project is changing, or transforming, school culture, it is necessary for teachers, simultaneously, to mediate the transformation of the student body. Transformational leadership entails not only a change in the purposes and resources of those involved in the leader-follower relationship, but an elevation of both - a change 'for the better'"(Leithwood, et al., 2000). It is also noted that vision, inspiration, and individual consideration have positive effects over contingent reward and *Management-by-exception*, which means to attend to an aspect of the organization only when something exceptional or unusual occurs (Leithwood , et al., 2000). As stated previously, it is far more desirable to implement a Community of Caring and promote regular, decent behavior towards our fellow human beings, rather than jumping to attention after a violent action has occurred.

A Community of Caring needs to be built slowly in order for it to be sincere and a natural part of the school culture. Discussion groups and opportunities to share ideas on problems and solutions build an initial atmosphere of trust. Student-led spirit activities develop a positive, inclusive atmosphere. Involvement in charitable works where students have the opportunity to connect with those they are helping and develop an understanding of others' hardships, allows them to make that emotional connection and develop a personal passion for the activity rather that being assigned the task from an outside authority. According to Fertman and Van Linden (1999) " The goal in forging leadership development and character education is to help students experience and reflect on both their transformational and transactional leadership abilities" (p. 69). In working with

adolescents to develop and support basic human values, educators in the District are also laying the foundation for the development of caring and competent leaders. In order to help our students make positive contributions to their workplaces, communities and families, we must put into effect trust, responsibility, respect, caring, determination, and faith while they are in our care.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To gain a better understanding of the implementation of the Community of Caring Program and its effects on a school district, this study explores the perceptions of three central office administrators in the school District. Within this chapter, the method of study and method of data collection will be presented. The method was designed to address the question: To what extent does the implementation of the Community Caring Program within the District result in positive change in the character development of our students and overall climate and climate of the schools, according to the perceptions of central office administrators?

Method of Study

Gay (1996) say qualitative research is defined as the "collection and analysis of extensive narrative data in order to gain insights into a situation of interest" (p. 208). The intent of qualitative analysis is to carefully examine empirical information and reach a conclusion (Neuman, 1997). Neuman states that "qualitative methods are best understood as data enhancers. When data are enhanced it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly" (p. 15).

In qualitative research the researcher is considered to be the main instrument of measurement. This is because it is the researcher's observations and opinion of the literature that determine what is to be included in the final presentation.

As the researcher I have decided to use an action research approach to the study of Character Education in the District. Charles and Mertler (2002) define action research as "research done to improve a product, procedure, or program in a particular setting with no intention of generalization the results" (p. 379). Action research is an appropriate

31

method because it allows us to " study what is happening in our school and see if we can make it a better place" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 4) which is the main goal of the character education program, Community of Caring implemented by the District.

In this case study (Neuman, 1997) "the researcher will look for patterns in the lives, actions, and words of the people in the context of the complete case as a whole" (p. 331). Yin (1994) states that, "the essence of the case study is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result" (p. 15). In this particular case study I have tried to begin with the reasons why Community of Caring was implemented in the District, and proceed to examination of the results of that decision.

<div align="center">Subjects</div>

The purposive sample for this study includes three central office employees with experience with the Community of Caring Program in the District. The specific respondents include an Area Superintendent; the Religious Education Supervisor; and the Coordinator of the Community of Caring program. The subjects were selected based upon their position in the district and their involvement with the implementation of the Community of Caring program in the District. The central office administrators were given a letter of consent (Appendix B) and background information describing the intent of the study.

<div align="center">Interviews</div>

The method of data collection for this study was a semi-structured interview (see Appendix A) with three central office administrators. An integral component to the interview process revolves around developing questions which elicit responses from the

subject that provides enough information for the researcher. Glesne (1999) identifies the following important elements in the interview process. "Develop a clearly defined topic; design interview questions which fit the topic; ask the questions with consummate skill; and have time to pitch the questions to forthcoming and knowledgeable respondents" (p. 67). The interviews were transcribed as necessary to complete the analysis of the data. In this process emphasis was placed on the search for patterns and common themes according to Neuman's thematic coding of the data. Neuman (1997) states "it is the search for common themes and patterns in data-recurrent behaviors, objects, or a body of knowledge. Once a pattern is identified, it is interpreted in terms of social theory or the setting in which it occurred" (p. 426).

The interviews were semi-structured (Borg & Gall, 1989), with a few guiding questions (Appendix A). They were sufficiently as well as open to allow the researcher "to follow unexpected leads that arise" (p. 442). Borg and Gall (1989) state that this method is most appropriate in educational research because it allows for a "desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach" (p. 442). Another advantage of this process is that the close interaction afforded by the interview process allowed the interviewer to observe important personal reactions that were seen, subsequently, to enhance the richness of the data.

During the interview process, I wrote what I felt was the most important information the respondents offered. I then verified what I had written after viewing and reviewing the transcribed interviews. The transcriptions were checked for veracity with each

individual before being included as data for the study. The transcribed interviews along with the consent letters will remain in a locked file cabinet for a period of five years.

<u>Interview Questions</u>

The following interview questions were given to each of the three central office administrators who chose to participate in the study. The rationale as to why each question was asked is also included.

1. **Why has the District implemented the Community of Caring Program?**

   It is important to determine why the District felt the need for a character education program such as Community of Caring in its schools.

2. **What are some of the different ways the District has implemented Community of Caring?**

   This question was included to determine whether the program Community of Caring was implemented in the same way across the schools in the District and, if not, the extent to which the program was tailored to the needs of the individual school communities.

3. **What measures and indicators is the school district accepting as evidence in determining the overall effects of Community of Caring?**

   This question is integral to the study because assessments of the effectiveness of the program are not objective. The types of indicators used to evaluate the program are critical in determining the reliability and validity of the overall effects of the program.

4. **According to your perceptions, what are some of the more positive results of Community of Caring within the District?**

The overall effects of the program would be more apparent to central office administrators than those in individual schools.

5. **Has the Community of Caring program been successful in developing an improved sense of community and more positive school climate? If so how do you know?**

    This question was asked in an attempt to separate central office administrators' perceptions of the effects of Community of Caring from those of school based administrators.

6. **Has the Community of Caring Program had an impact on the character development of our students? If so how do you know this?**

    This question was included in an attempt to ascertain if baseline data had been used initially and if measures of changes in the character development of the students in the District were seen as appropriate.

7. **In what ways do the results of implementation of community of Caring influence future district curriculum and instructional goals?**

    If key District leaders value character education, and they feel the program is having positive effects on the character development of the students, it is much more likely to be included in future plans and programming.

<div align="center">Results / Analysis</div>

Analysis of the results followed what Creswell (1998) describes as a spiral approach. Initially the transcriptions of the interviews were read to gain a better understanding of the ideas presented. This allowed me to have a "general review of all the information" (Creswell, 1998 p. 140).

The second step in the spiral is the "describing, classifying and interpreting loop" (Creswell, 1998 p.144). This stage involved developing categories of data. At that time, general categories became apparent. They were then photocopied and ideas of similar nature were highlighted with the same colour and assigned to a category. Summary statements of each category were prepared to determine similarities and differences of response.

The final loop of the spiral was the interpretation loop. "Interpretation involves making sense of the data, the lesson learned" as described by Creswell (1998, p. 144). The interpretation took the form of detailed reporting of the substance of central office administrators' perceptions on the effects of the character education program Community of Caring on school climate, sense of community and character development of students, with an emphasis on points of divergence and convergence.

Chapter 4: Findings

Demographics of the Participants in the Study

The specific respondents for the study were three central office administrators experienced with the Community of Caring Program. They included a Superintendent, with previous experience as a principal in the District; the Religious Education Supervisor who oversees the program as it falls under the portfolio of religious education; and, finally, the Coordinator of the Community of Caring Program, who reports directly to the Religious Education Supervisor in the District. Two of the respondents were female and one was male.

The findings are presented as a summary of responses for each of the questions. Common themes and patterns are identified, and differences in response are noted.

Responses to Question 1:

Why the Need for the Character Education Program Community of Caring?

All three of the respondents focused on the concept of *identity* as being an overriding reason for the implementation of Community of Caring in the District. A key component of that identity was the emphasis on Catholic identity. One of the respondents qualified his response by saying:

Within the District we emphasize that we are a Catholic School District and that Catholicity becomes our identity and through character education. Particularly in the Community of Caring Program, we practice and live our Catholicity in our school communities. In a sense we become more intentional about our Catholicity through character education."

Another stated that, "Catholicity and Community of Caring gives us an identity as a district. The message is that Catholicity permeates all that we do."

The third respondent stated, "We do not just demonstrate our Catholic faith in religion class, but within the whole school, throughout the entire day. I believe Community of Caring ties our identities together." This respondent elaborated by noting, "It sends a message to the kids; sends a message to the parents, sends a message to the staff so that we can all identify with the same thing. It is that idea of sameness, but sameness being very positive, very community orientated."

All respondents also emphasized the concept of community. One reported:

"There was a need for a better sense of community across the District. Even though we are a Catholic School district, and we demonstrate and model Catholic values at all times, there needs to be something of structure in place, something more concrete, a framework that schools could plug in as such, to create that sense of community across the entire District."

The third common theme among all three respondents was the concept of the program focussing on character development to counter the negative issues which bombard our students on a daily basis. One respondent offered the following commentary:

"What values or character traits do we want our next generation to have and the children of our children to have? When we look around at the media, when we watch TV at night, when we hear the news of our own communities, and the types of things that are happening, we need to react. We want the students to be able to look at that with a critical eye, to be able to discern between what is right and

what is wrong, to be able to make decisions based upon their own morals and their own values, not to be influenced by the media or by negative peers or whoever that might be in their lives. I think it is that idea of teaching the whole child. We want to give all children a solid foundation. We want to be able to give them the foundation of values, that no matter where they find themselves in their lives, no matter what situation, or city, or what town, or whatever, that they can make those decisions in an ethical, morally sound way."

Responses to Question 2:

How has Community of Caring been implemented across the District?

In their response to this question, all three of administrators emphasized the point in great detail that schools can tailor the program to fit the needs of their individual schools. They all agreed, schools are all encouraged to do needs assessment for their particular community and implement the character education program in such a way that they are addressing those needs. For example, in a needs assessment, if it becomes evident that the school community is concerned about bullying, emphasis can be placed on bully proofing the school by focussing on the Community of Caring values of respect and responsibility. As one respondent observed, "The most beneficial component of the program is that no two schools are doing identical things, or working on the same projects. Each school determines what is important for their community."

The concept of the district identity recurred in their responses to this question. The point was made that even though schools may implement the program differently from school to school, there are some commonalties. Said one administrator:

"That is a nice part of the program because a lot of our schools were doing many of the things that a Catholic Community of Caring promotes, but again now it has that same identity, that same focus, that same language. You have the five values that work within this program, and we have the kids all talking the same way, so in terms of the entire district, a lot of that sameness is very positive, even though it may look different in each school."

The third theme that was evident from the responses to this question were examples of the ways Community of Caring has been implemented in some of the District's schools. In some schools emphasis is placed on charity, or service learning. Schools participate in programs such as *Run for the Cure*, or *Shave Your Lid for Kids*. Schools tend to focus on the core values differently. Often schools would begin working with character education in Community of Caring by looking at the values month by month. They may start with the value of respect and, from there, move into responsibility, trust, caring, and family. In other schools where there are issues of a lack of trust between home and school they may look at the value of trust first. Other schools have taken it further, and looked at themes such as *The Year of the Student*, or the *Roles and Responsibilities of the Student*. Still other schools appear to have concentrated on one thing such as an anti-bullying theme or service learning.

All three respondents noted that schools have also focused on parental involvement and student involvement. Student involvement has become a major focus within the District over the last two years. In some schools students are assuming more responsibility for their communities, and students are becoming active participants in

planning and implementing Community of Caring programs. One administrator said,

"We are empowering our students to be stewards of the program.

Schools have also examined the number and types of opportunities which exist to connect the students to the school community. One respondent stated, "We have seen an increase in student involvement in school clubs, sports teams and other organizations." Respondents stated that other schools have started what they call the Playground Peace Patrol Program. In their Playground Peace Patrol program students are trained in peer mediation and then those students go out and assist the noon hour supervisors to mediate any conflicts that may occur on the playground. As one administrator suggested, "In this program we are limiting conflicts on the playground while we develop student leaders at the same time."

Responses to Question 3:

What Is The District's Evidence For Determining The Overall Effects?

All the participants in the study emphasized the importance of how the District is evaluating the program. One respondent reported, "Evidence is a key component of Community of Caring. When we started the program the District wanted to be able to paint a clear picture of the effects of the program on our schools."

Basically the evidence the District is accepting in determining the effects of the program fall into two categories. The first category is quantitative data collected by the Community of Caring coordinator for the District. The data is compiled from data logs, which are collected from each Community of Caring school. In the logs school administrators report, "student absenteeism, discipline referrals to the office, suspension rates, incidents of bullying or violent behavior, and the number of opportunities for

student involvement in service learning, and parent involvement." The District has also examined and compiled the results from the its schools on Provincial Achievement Test results at the grade three, six, and nine level.

A second component of the quantitative data is data collected through surveys. The program coordinator explained, "In our Community of Caring program we conduct a series of satisfaction surveys from staff, students and parents which focus on appropriate behavior, school climate, values taught, opportunities for involvement, trust, cooperation, and parent involvement." The data collected in each case helps the District determine the overall effects of the program.

The second category of evidence which the district is accepting in determining the overall effectiveness of Community of Caring is anecdotal evidence collected from parents, students, teachers, administrators and central office personnel. One respondent reported, "the qualitative data we have collected through anecdotal notes has enriched the program to a great degree in that it shared with us little stories about what has been happening in schools, from students, parents and teachers."

Responses to Question 4:

Community of Caring Successes

According to the perceptions of the central office administrators the successes of the Community of Caring program fall into two categories. The first category of evidence is from qualitative data collected through anecdotal notes, observations, and stories, and interviews collected from parents, teachers, students, administrators and central office personal.

According to all three central office administrators one such success of the program was in the way Community of Caring has helped create an identity for all members of the District whether they are students, parents, teachers, support staff or administrators. One respondent added the following comment on the topic:.

I go back to the identity focus again. Catholic Community of Caring is an identity that we all share across the District. Kids can leave their school and go to another school and walk into the same kind of climate and culture. It might be a different focus at that school, but again the language will be the same, some of the symbols will be the same, like the symbol of the hand with the five fingers and the five different core values. You have an identity and you carry it with you from school to school. Consistency is critical. The message is the same.

Another theme, that emerged particularly in this set of responses, and was prevalent throughout the interview process, was the increased partnership between home and school as a result of the Community of Caring program. One central office administrator provided the following anecdotal note from a parent to emphasize this strengthened partnership between home and school.

I cannot begin to tell you how relations between home and school have improved as a result of Community of Caring. As parents we are made to feel that we are partners with the school. We are an integral component of the process. We are always welcome in the school and we have been given ample opportunities to participate. An open door policy exists and we are all welcomed into the community. Parking lot meetings with other parents have been adjourned. If we

have a concern we bring forward our concern and we know it will be heard. Trust

exists between home and school. We have become true partners with the school.

All three of the central office administrators detailed other successes of the

Community of Caring. Many of these are presented under other sections the titles of in

the findings chapter of the study.

Quantitative data collected through data logs and surveys are compiled from all

Community of Caring Schools in the District. The District's coordinator of the program

then compiles the data. The Community of Caring program falls under the Alberta

Initiative of School Improvement (AISI) program and, as a result, the District submits

annual reports of progress of the program. The following data compiled by the District

provides evidence of the positive progress the District has made in a number of

categories. The District coordinator responsible for the program stated. "Right now we

are into our fourth year, and I suspect that the positive implementation will continue. The

data we have compiled is accepted by Alberta Learning and, in turn, is accepted by our

school as positive evidence of the effects of Community of Caring on character

development and school climate within the District as a whole.

The following results are a summary of the quantitative data (complete results are

located in the Appendix E of the study) presented by the Coordinator of the Community

of Caring program for the District during the interview.

They were collected from satisfaction surveys administered to parents, teachers, and

students from each Community of Caring School in the District. The Coordinator of

Community of Caring then compiled the results.

Table 1 presents a summary based upon the response of students, parents, and

teachers in Community of Caring schools across the district. The District-designed

satisfaction surveys are included in the study (Appendix D). The survey is designed for

each particular group of students, staff and parents. It should be noted that the number of

responses increased each year as the number of schools increased from 28 at baseline to

63 in the 2002-2003 results. The participants in the surveys responded to individual items

on a Likert scale. Table 1 shows overall averages from the items surveyed, indicating

overall levels of satisfaction for each group.

Table I

Satisfaction Survey Summary Results from Students Staff and Parents

Year	Students	Staff	Parents
Baseline Data 2001	74%	78%	79%
Year 1 2000-2001	71%	81%	83%
Year 2 2001-2002	70%	81%	85%
Year 3 2002-2003	77%	83%	84%

The student survey included the following items: appropriate behaviour, encouraging school, feel safe, work cooperatively, treated fairly, pleased with school, participate in school activities, feel doing well is important, staff care about me, people are respectful, prepared to be active in society, honest, practice values, family is important, take responsibility for one actions, respectful to others, trust others, family involvement, family discussions. The results in the student survey indicate a drop in satisfaction in Years 1 and 2, followed by a substantial increase in overall student satisfaction, to 77% in 2002-2003.

A detailed examination of the student data from the satisfaction survey (see Appendix E) showed improvement of at least five percent satisfaction in the following items: students and staff work cooperatively, students feel people are treated fairly, overall satisfaction with the school, increased involvement in student participation, that the staff care for the students, people are respectful, students are prepared to be active members of society, students feel they can talk to staff, students help in the school and the community, people take responsibility for their actions, and trust exists between members of the school community. The District Coordinator viewed all these results as being indicative of the positive effects of Community of Caring.

In the staff survey the following items were tested: appropriate behaviour from students, encourages students, safe at school, works cooperatively, treats students fairly, pleased to work at school, cares about students, students are respectful, people take

responsibility, importance of family, trust others, feel appreciated, supportive staff, school prepares students, parent involvement, students taught values in school.

A detailed examination of the staff data from the satisfaction survey (see Appendix E) showed improvement of at least five percent satisfaction in the following items: students are respectful, people take responsibility for their actions, staff feel appreciated for their efforts, school prepares students to be active contributing members of society, and parent involvement. The District Coordinator felt that many positive results for staff occurred because people knew more about the program, were more involved, and felt greater support from school and District.

In the parent survey the following items were tested: appropriate behavior, encourages students, safe school, work cooperatively, treated fairly, pleased with school, administration is effective, opportunities to visit, comfort during visits, administration cares, people are respectful, importance of family, trust among stakeholders, values taught, prepares students to be active community members.

A detailed examination of the parent data from the satisfaction survey (see Appendix E) shows improvement or growth in 10 of the 15 items which were tested in the survey. In five areas, there was a minimal difference between the baseline data and the year three results.

The satisfaction survey results indicate that the program Community of Caring appears to have had some positive effect on the overall satisfaction of students, parents, and staff. One of the central office administrators summed up the satisfaction survey results this way. "We have the empirical data to back up our beliefs that the program is

having positive effects on the culture, climate, sense of community and character development of students in the District."

Another success attributed to the Community of Caring program in the District is improvement in academic scores on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams. One respondent reported that, "The positive results of Community of Caring are many, including the area of academic scores. We have statistics on academic improvement which we attribute to creating a school climate which is conducive to learning." Table 2 *Achievement Test and Diploma Exams in Community of Caring Schools,* does appear to show improvement in most subjects and most grade levels.

Table II

Achievement Test and Diploma Exams in Community of Caring Schools

Subject / Grade	Baseline 1999 % of students meeting acceptable standard	Year 1 2000-2001 % of students meeting acceptable standard	Year 2 2001-2002 % of students meeting acceptable standard	Year 3 2002-2003 % of students meeting acceptable standard
Language Arts Gr. 6	88%	89%	93%	94%
Social Studies Gr. 6	88%	89%	91%	92%
Language Arts Gr. 9	90%	92%	93%	99%
Social Studies Gr. 9	92%	89%	91%	89%
Language Arts 30	91%	92%	90%	95%
Language Arts 33	86%	87%	87%	85%
Social Studies 30	85%	90%	88%	91%
Social Studies 33	84%	80%	86%	81%

The results from Table 2 clearly indicate improvement each year in the grade 6 provincial achievement tests in Language Arts and Social Studies. There is growth in Language Arts results at grade 6 and grade 9 and a marked improvement at the 30 level over the three year period. There is a similar improvement in Social Studies at grade 6 and at Social 30 level. Only in grade 9 Social Studies, Social 33 and Language Arts 33% is there indication of a minimal decline.

The District Coordinator is responsible for compiling quantitative data collected from Community of Caring logs at each individual school (see Table 3). These results are used in reports to Alberta learning as well as District reports in determining the overall effectiveness of Community of Caring. Measures in these logs include; student absenteeism, incidents of bullying, suspension rates, discipline referrals to the office, and service learning opportunities. One of the participants in the study stated, "in the first three years of this implementation, we saw reductions in each of the negative areas, like discipline referrals and bullying incidents, and we also saw dramatic increases in student involvement in service learning projects."

Table III

Data Logs In Community of Caring Schools

Measurements	Baseline 1999 Ave per School per Year	Year 1 2000-2001	Year 2 2001-2002	Year 3 2002-2003
Absenteeism	3054	2840	2561	2952
Incidents of Bullying	41	36	41	35.5
Suspensions	29	20	11	2
Discipline Referrals	141	125	121	68
Service Learning Opportunities	1210 hours	1210 hours	1085 hours	1710 hours

The summary of Data Logs in Community of Caring Schools provides evidence of a reduction in negative behaviors including bullying incidents, suspensions, and discipline referrals to the office. In all three areas there was a steady decline in the average number of incidents each year for each Community of Caring school. There was also a reduction in the number of students absent for each the first two years of the project, but an increase in the final year. Opportunities for student involvement in service learning opportunities rose 29% from baseline to year three.

In presenting the data during the interview, the respondent stated, "We have quantitative data to support our position that our character education program, Community of Caring, is having a tremendous impact on our students, staff, parents and our school district as a whole."

Responses to Question 5:

Sense of Community and Positive Climate

The participants were asked whether they felt the character education program, Community of Caring, had a positive effect on community and climate in schools, and in the District as a whole. One respondent stated, "I would say yes emphatically. It has created a stronger sense of community and an improved climate." Another stated, "Definitely, not only in our schools but also across the district. Our schools reflect a difference and people often say that you can tell it is a Catholic School when you walk in. It is a respectful atmosphere which is built upon Community of Caring." The third participant stated, "Without question, the program has an impact on the climate in our

buildings, because of the strong core values, the consistency, and the formation of an identity in each school and also across the District."

One of the respondents went into great detail to provide examples to support contentions about the impact of Community of Caring on the District's sense of community and climate. Emphasis was placed on the countless examples of anecdotal notes from students, teachers, and parents, all complimentary of the positive climate and the sense of community which existed in the Community of Caring schools. One parent stated, "my child loves his school. He says he feels at home and that he can talk to anyone. He feels welcome even though he is the new kid on the block. My only wish is that we moved into this true school community sooner." A student said, "It all comes down to respecting this place, respecting yourself and respecting each other. People look out for each other, it is like a family, ours is just really big." Community of Caring" A third anecdote was from a teacher.

> This program has had a tremendous impact on our school and the surrounding community. As a staff we are a true community of professionals who collaborate together to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community. We have also developed close-knit relationships with our parent community. I have not worked in a school where the trust between home and school was so strong. In our students we see the pride they take in their community and in their studies. The students feel connected to that community. However they also feel loyal or a sense of responsibility to the community. Developing that sense of responsibility in our students is critical as they have responsibilities in our school to building and strengthening our community.

One respondent focused on experiences from countless visits to Community of Caring schools. "Once you walk in a Community of Caring school you know it because there are visuals from the program all over the school." The visuals consist of such things as bulletin board displays and student work. Particularly student work around the core values of the program and student work around their service projects. The respondents noted that schools have a greater sense of pride. Students have made banners with school slogans and the Community of Caring logo, showing the core values of caring, respect, responsibility, trust, family, and faith. "All of these visual cues in our schools remind the entire community of who we are and what will believe. It helps create the tone, the atmosphere, the climate which allows our communities to flourish."

Emphasis has also been placed on service learning. All respondents noted that students are starting to make their service learning experience more meaningful as they are taking ownership for their actions. Students are participating in pre and post activities based upon the service learning activity rather than just participating in a good cause in isolation. After the activity is finished, they debrief and they do activities. As one administrator explained, "Service learning projects help students develop that sense of pride and accomplishment that they have made a difference in someone's life and this carries over into the climate in the building."

The following account from one respondent examines community building in Community of Caring schools. A number of schools have introduced multi-age groupings, as a way of building community in the school.

> When you do a school visit and we walk into an assembly, the students are
> gathered based upon their multi-aged group, not necessarily their class. And when

you sit and watch students come into the gymnasium, it just almost gives you goose bumps, because you see the older kids who are very protective and caring of the younger children of the school. They guide them into the gym. They all sit together, they learn together, and they grow together. You look around the gym and you have a mixture of all grade levels and age levels of students and they are all caring for one another. It runs very smoothly, you really feel a sense of pride, you feel a sense of community. Kids are not isolated from one another, but now they are all integrated into one community.

Responses to Question 6:

Impact on Student Character Development

Has the Community of Caring Program had an impact on the character development of the students in the District? Is that impact measurable?

Many responses to this question were similar to the following comment:

I would like to say without question...I would hope to say yes, however, that is something that, in terms of measurable data, would take a great deal of time. One would have to conduct a longitudinal study examining student lives beyond highschool and post secondary to see if these individuals were still continuing with their sense of service, charity, and community development.

In all three interviews the respondents felt that the program was definitely helping shape the character of the students who were involved in the program. However, they were unable to determine the lasting effects of the program on the students' character. One participant stated it this way. "The long term effects are inconclusive, but if we look

at the students character in the here and now we believe as a district that the effects are very visible."

All respondents went into detail providing insights into how they believed the program was having positive effects on the character development of the students in the District. A theme which became apparent, was that of students modeling the values of caring, respect, responsibility, family, trust and faith through their actions and words. Through the program and the explorations of the values, many of schools in the district focussed on whether the students were "living the program" and modeling core values associated with the program. The expectation is that students will model the values in the classroom, in the hallways, on the athletic court, on the playground and in the community. Through the interactions of the student community the respondents believed they could see the impact on the character development of the students. One said, "When students are monitoring each others behaviors and reminding each other of the values the of the school community we believe that says something about character development." Another respondent stated that, "All one has to do is watch the students as they participate in service learning projects on their own time. Watch the students as they go out of their way to help the seniors, who live in the school community."

Another important theme that emerged in the responses to this question was the concept of consistency across the District and how this has had a positive effect on character development. As students move between different schools in the District the message is always the same. Emphasis is placed on the core values and living those values through their Catholic Faith. One administrator explained:

You can take slogans like, What Would Jesus Do, or By Your Actions, and bring

it back to the District umbrella of Community of Caring. You always have that

focal point to refer back to. You give the students that base set of skill, that base

set of knowledge and then refer back, refer back, refer back with lots of repetition.

The kids really benefit by having that shared understanding of the entire umbrella

and that they can work within that. We always use those five values, and that

gives them that focal point and the idea of clarity as well. They understand the

message is the same no matter what school they attend in the District.

The emphasis on consistency has produced positive results for all three respondents.

"You refer to the values on a constant basis, the kids have the identity, the kids have the

language, and the kids understand the skills that go with the language. The core values of

the program permeates because of our consistency," stated one respondent.

Responses to Question 7:

Influence of Character Education on Future District Goals

The final guiding question of the interview process focussed on the future direction of

the character education program, Community of Caring, and the extent to which its

success was having on influencing District curriculum and instructional goals. All

respondents emphasized that the program had grown from a small pilot project in 13

schools to an initiative which is supported by the provincial government under the AISI

program. Currently some 74 schools in the District are Community of Caring Schools

with the final 19 schools joining in the next two years. Two respondents stated that

character education would continue to be an integral component of the District's future

direction. One administrator noted, "The District is extremely supportive of this valuable

character education program and we look forward to the time when all our schools are Community of Caring Schools because the program solidifies our identity and strengthens our communities."

One respondent spoke of the District's continued support for the program for years to come. "The District will continue to offer both human and capital resources to support the program. This support consists of two coordinator teachers for the District, print, software, and video resources, and financial support in budget lines each year." One participant stated emphatically that character education will continue to be an integral program and it will influence future directions of District curriculum and instructional goals because it is critical to student development, adding:

> As a district, what we have seen so far has led us to believe that this is something that is required in all educational processes. Students need to be grounded in values-based education. Whether your school district is public or separate values education and character education are important. For our District it is a little easier. We are a Catholic District, we can say these are God's values, which, in fact, they are, but they are also universal values. This is rooted within our District, and this is integral to who we are as a District. This is part and parcel of education. We cannot educate only the mind. You have to educate the whole person and to have a full capable human being you have to educate their values and morals as well.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

Limitations of the Study

A parameter of the research that must be acknowledged is the limitations of the study. Creswell (1994) states that it is important to, "provide limitations to identify potential weaknesses of the study" (p. 110). I feel the study is comprehensive, even though there were a limited number of central office administrators interviewed, because of the additional quantitative data gathered through the interview process. However, I do not know whether the respondents interviewed reflect the opinions and perceptions of other central office administrators who did not participate in the study. Also, the respondents may be biased because of their close connection to the project and in the interviews, may not have always been forth coming.

Another limitation is that we may not know if the program is as successful as it could have been because student growth and development may not always be seen in a short period of time. Lack of participation in any one of the schools could also be seen as a limitation because this would have an impact on overall District results. This may lead to inaccurate results in the quantitative data. Finally, due to the size of the study sample the results are not generalizable to other school jurisdictions.

Discussion

To rephrase the guiding question for this study, the purpose of the research was to examine the perceptions of central office administrators with respect to the Districts' implementation of the character education program, Community of Caring, and to determine whether the program has had an effect on the character development of students; and to ascertain its impact, if any, on school culture and school climate. In order

to accomplish this, qualitative and quantitative data were collected through interviews with central office administrators and data received from the Community of Caring coordinator for the District.

Why the need for character education? According to the respondents in the study, character education programs are necessary as a result of escalating moral problems in society ranging from greed and dishonesty to violent crime and self-destructive behaviors such as drug abuse and suicide. As a result of these problems we need to focus on counteracting these message and images. Values need to be taught in our schools. In this regard, respondents consistently echoed the research and opinions of authors such as Borba (2001), DuFour and Eaker (1998), and Lickona (1991).

Today there is a deeply unsettling sense that children are changing in ways that tell us much about ourselves as a society. These changes are reflected not just in violent extremes of teenager behaviour but in everyday speech and actions of younger children. Many educators are now defining this as ethical illiteracy (Lickona, 1991).

Most teachers say that children who exhibit the most glaring deficiencies in moral values almost always come from troubled homes. Schools feel compelled to get involved with character education because of this evil in society. The other daunting problem is the mass media. The typical elementary child spends 30 hours a week in front of the television. By the age of 16, the average child will have witnessed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence and by the age of 18, approximately 40,000 sexually titillating scenes (Toufexis, 1989). In order to address problems such as these, the respondents felt that character education had to be part of every school's curriculum.

The other reason for the implementation of the character education program Community of Caring which became evident through the interview process was the creation of a common sense of identity across the District. According to Sergiovanni (2000) schools needs to develop relationships, and become a community of mind and heart, a community with a common identity. It seems that the schools in this District have developed a common identity, an identity based upon the core values of caring, trust, responsibility, family, and respect. In effect, this strengthening identity has helped form Catholic Community of Caring across the District.

Some of the results of the study indicate that the character education program, Community of Caring, has had an impact on a number of areas in the District, including academic achievement. Lickona (1998) states that character education programs have an impact on academic performance because, as student behavior improves students become more comfortable, and this tends to lead to improved academic scores. The scores on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams collected through the study show an improvement of scores in most areas (see Appendix E). At the grade 6 level there was a 10% increase over the three years in the number of students achieving the acceptable level in the two subject areas. At the grade 9 level, there was an increase of 6%. At the grade 12 level in diploma exams, there was an increase of 6% of students achieving the acceptable standard. I believe the results support the notion that as students develop a greater sense of identity in a Community of Caring school, they come to feel that school is a safe place which is conducive to learning.

In the literature and in this study there is a strong connection between character education and the development of community, school culture and climate. Barth (1990)

and Sergiovanni (2000) both focus extensively on the importance of community. Emphasis is placed upon developing close-knit relationships among students, teachers and parents. They both argue that a school needs to develop a community of relationships, a community of mind and heart, a community of memory of what was and what can be, and a community where positive practice is seen as important.

The results of this study show that Community of Caring has had an impact on the development of positive relationships among the stakeholders. Specific measures in the satisfaction surveys show how the Community of Caring program has had an impact on relationships in the school. Specifically, the student responses to questions about relationships we see that the relationship between students and schools have been strengthened. For example, more students feel that members of the staff care for them. On that measure the percentage of satisfaction increased from 72.1% in year one to 81.8% in year three. Similarly, the measure of students' ability to talk to staff shows an increase from 41.3% in year one to 53% in year three. Finally, the measure of the extent to which the school encourages students shows an increase from 82.4% in year one to 87.5% in year three. In these and many similar situations (see Appendix E) the relationships have been strengthened.

The results of this study also present some fairly strong connections between the schools' ability to develop as a community and the Community of Caring program. From the parents' perspective, both opportunities to visit the school and their comfort level during visits have increased. Opportunities to visit increased from 82.8% in year one to 84.5 % in year three, while their comfort during visits showed an increase from 87.1% to 89.1%. In Community of Caring schools, parents can become true partners in their child's

education, as is shown by the following anecdotal note from a parent: "I have never been made to feel like I am in the way when I go to the school. I feel like my opinion matters when it comes to issues at the school. I really feel like I am a partner with the school in my son's education."

The strength of a school's community is further indicated by such measures as student involvement. Community of Caring empowers student through the teaching of universal values which improve their self-esteem and, through this process, students increase their commitment to school, and thus strengthening the school community (Community of Caring Elementary Program Guide). In this study student involvement in school activities, was seen to increase from 79% in year one to 82% in year three. The measure of students helping in school increased by 9.6% over the three years to 55.1% in year three, while the percentage of students helping in the community increased from 45.4 % to 50.5 % in year three.

The character of education program, Community of Caring, has also, been seen to influence the culture and climate of the District. Satisfaction survey results (Appendix D) show a strong indication of this. The following measures are taken from the students' perspectives. *Students feeling safe* has increased by 10.4% over the three years, to 84.3% in year three. *Working cooperatively* has increased by 5.9% over that time to 86.3%. *Being treated fairly* has increased from 61% in year one to 76.2% in year three, and *being pleased with the school* has increased from 69.3 to 82.5% in year three. Similarly, the teacher and parent perspectives have also increased on most measures.

The data logs collected from each Community of Caring school show many additional measures which are indicative of school culture and climate. Incidents of

bullying, suspension rates, and discipline referrals have all decreased. While opportunities for service learning and student participation have increased (see Appendix E). Many of the results in this study parallel the results in the study by Satmick (1991). In an informal evaluation of character education, administrators stated that all forms of reported discipline problems had decreased, student morale had increased, parents had become more involved in the life of the school and students were acting more responsibly. In each case the school culture and climate was improved as a result of the character education. Slavin (1990) points out character education has led to students getting along better with fellow students, demonstrating mutual concern for one another, and were more likely to engage in appropriate social behavior.

The results of this study suggest strongly is that Community of Caring has had a positive impact on the District when it comes to relationship building, community building, and the development of positive school culture and school climate. Teachers, students, parents and members of the community appear more willing and able to model positive relationships, based upon community values.

In this study, one of the central questions was whether or not the Community of Caring program had an effect on the character development of students. In the interview process it was clear that all the respondents felt that was a difficult to prove. Campbell and Bond (1982) state that the measure of character has proven difficult since character, by definition, involves behaviour, but character is often defined by traits. They state some possible measures of character include, student discipline, suicide rates, crimes, assaults, pregnancy rates of teens, and appropriate social activities. Using some of these measures

it could be argued that the program has had some positive effects on character development.

Despite the limitations of the size and sources, the results of this study create a persuasive create account of what is happening through the character education program in the District. There are multiple indications to show that the program has been a success. It has been a success in the development of a unified identity across the District and in influencing the attitudes of teachers, students, and parents. The program has contributed to the creation of strong supportive communities where increased numbers of stakeholders play an integral role. School climates and cultures have developed, into learning environments, and a wide variety of measures all point towards the ability the Community of Caring program to help the District achieve some important system goals.

Recommendations

Today, there are many families that no longer see it as their duty to focus on character development and pass along values from generation to generation. Unless someone embraces the agenda of instilling values, children will, as a result of the disintegration of the family unit, grow up lacking essential skills, knowledge and attitudes which contribute to strong character. If schools do not include character education in the curriculum, then just as there are adults who are deficient in reading and writing, there will be more adults who are lacking in character.

Schools can never be free of values. Transmitting values to students occurs implicitly through the content and materials to which students are exposed as a part of the formal curriculum as well as the hidden curriculum – the routines and assumptions that shape school policies and programs. Schools must teach values, according to Thomas (1999)

who states that there is a renewed interest in the explicit teaching of values because there

is belief that a prime responsibility of schools is not only to focus on intellectual

development, but on intellectual and moral development.

Character education is essential to the education process. It has an impact on student

behavior, it contributes to the formation of positive supportive communities, and it also

leads to improved academic improvement. Schools must do what they can to contribute

to the character of the young and the moral health of our communities. Lickona (1998)

points out the importance of this critical role for our schools.

> When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when
>
> character is lost, all is lost. It is helpful to keep in mind that character education is
>
> not a new idea. It is an idea as old as education itself; indeed it is the school's
>
> most important mission. (p. 47)

In examining the research it is recommended that character education programs

assume the following in order to be successful.

1. A basic set of values, morals, and ethics has existed for a long time, is

   correct by its history and tradition, differentiates between right and wrong,

   and is agreeable to the stakeholders (Griffith, 1984).

2. Emphasis should be placed on observable conduct rather than on reflection

   concerning moral concepts or rationales. In other words, good character

   rests not so much on having right ideas but on doing right (Wynne, 1989).

3. Children should be prepared for life when reason will influence their

   conduct. Until that time, a strong foundation of habit-orientated moral

   instruction and practice should be provided (Greer & Ryan, 1989).

4. Good character is developed through persistent and pervasive reinforcement and through teachers and other authority figures who are models for students (Bennett, 1988).

5. Character education has a direct and positive relationship to high standards of academic responsibility, more homework, clear criteria for grade promotion, tracking of students, rigorous examinations, and differentiated diplomas (Lickona, 1998).

6. Improving the conduct of our youth through character building programs will help to reverse the rise of social problems and increase student achievement (Hanson & Ginsburg, 1988).

In conclusion, it is evident from the interviews with central office administrators and from the literature that there is a need for character education programs in our schools. All the data reviewed in this study-from students, teachers, parents and administrators-point to the conclusion character education will continue to be an integral component of the education of students in the District. This study has produced a better understanding of the valuable effects the character education program, Community of Caring, has had on the District. There is a stronger sense of community throughout the District and there are positive effects on school climate, school culture, and character development. Ryan (1993) states that students have a major task in life to become individuals of character. Character education, then, may be the central issue confronting educators. Rather than becoming the latest fad, character education must continue to become our schools' most important mission. Perhaps the positive results of this study will lead to the inclusion of character education in more schools. All educators must remember: *Character Matters.*

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Guiding questions for a semi-structured interview:

1. Why has the District implemented the Community of Caring Program in the district?

2. What are some of the different ways the District has implemented Community of Caring across the district according to your perceptions?

3. What other measures and indicators is the school district accepting as evidence in determining the overall effects of Community of Caring?

4. According to your perceptions, what are some of the more positive results of Community of Caring within the District?

5. Has the Community of Caring program being successful in developing a sense of community and positive school climate? If so how do you know?

6. Has the Community of Caring Program had an impact on the character development of our students? If so how do you know this?

7. In what ways do the results of implementation of community of Caring influence future district curriculum and instructional goals?

Appendix B
Letter of Invitation and Informed Consent

Dear _____,

  (participant's name)

As part of the Masters of Education program at The University of Lethbridge, I am focusing my research on the Community of Caring Project. The purpose of this project is to ascertain why the district has implemented this character education program in its schools. In general the research problem of this study is to determine if the Community of Caring Program as implemented in the DistrictSeparate School District will result in positive change in the character development of our students as well as the schools' overall climate.

You are being asked to participate in the study. I would like the opportunity to interview you. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. The data will be retained in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's residence for a period of 5 years from study completion, at which time all data will be shredded. Please note my university supervisor, David Townsend will have access to the original data and research materials. The results will be available to you at your request once the data analysis has been completed. The final report will be available through The University of Lethbridge Library. The research findings may be presented to educators and, administrators or other agencies as a part of presentation by the researcher. This study will take place from November 2003 to March 2004.

I would very much appreciate your participation in this study. If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness by signing the separate consent form and returning it to me. If you have any questions about the study, or specifics about your role, or the use of the data, please feel free to contact me at: mdbolder@shaw.ca, or phone me @ St. Rose of Lima (285-3800), or at home (257-4090). Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Also please feel free to contact my project supervisor at The University of Lethbridge (403-329-2731), email: davidtownsend@uleth.ca or Dr. Thelma Gunn, Chair of the Human Subject Research Committee, The University of Lethbridge (403-329-2459), email: thelma.gunn@uleth.ca, if you wish additional information.

Sincerely,

Mr. M. Bolder

Appendix B

Participant Consent

I, _____ have read and understand the conditions stated above, and having been briefed on the nature of the study, I consent to participate. I realize I am free to withdraw my consent and to withdraw my consent at any time.

Name:_____   _____
           Please Print   Signature

Appendix C

Permission to Conduct Research letters from the District

To: Director
Instructional Services, Secondary
The District
1000 Fifth Avenue, S.W.
Calgary, AB
T2P 4T9

Re: Permission to Conduct Research

Dear:

As a graduate student at the University of Lethbridge, I wish to conduct research on the effects of the Community of Caring project within the schools of the The District. The purpose of this study will be to examine to what extent does the implementation of the Community of Caring Program within the DistrictSeparate School District result in positive change in the character development of our students as well as the schools' overall climate? I anticipate this study could provide the The District, and others, useful information for determining future directions for such character education programs as the Community of Caring.

As part of my research I would like to interview, three district staff personnel who have been instrumental in the implementation of the Community of Caring program in the district. I would also like access to any data or documentation, which has been collected through the program. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. Please note, my university supervisor, David Townsend will also have access to my data. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, location and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. The data will be retained in a locked filing cabinet in my residence for a period of 5 years from the study completion, at which time all data will be shredded. The final report will be available through The University of Lethbridge Library. The research findings may be presented to educators and administrators or other agencies as a part of presentation by the researcher.

I would very much appreciate your permission to carry out this research. Please indicate your permission by signing the attached form and returning it to me. If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me via email at mdbolder@shaw.ca or by phone at home (257-4090). Also to contact my project supervisor at The University of Lethbridge (403-329-2731), email: davidtownsend@uleth.ca or Dr. Cathy Campbell , Chair of the Human Subject Research Committee, The University of Lethbridge (403-329-2459), email: thelma.gunn@uleth.ca , if you wish additional information. I am attaching the documents as required by the the District.
Please sign below and return to me. Again thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Mike Bolder

Permission to Conduct Research

I, the undersigned, have read and understand the conditions stated above, and having been briefed regarding the nature of the research, grant permission to conduct the research.

_____   _____
Name (printed)   Signature

_____
Date

Contact information

_____   _____
Phone   email

Appendix D

District Satisfaction Surveys and Results

Community of Caring
Satisfaction Survey

STUDENT VERSION

Please fill in the bubble indicating your choice on the general answer sheet. You will need to use an HB pencil.
A= STRONGLY AGREE
B= AGREE
C= NEUTRAL
D= DISAGREE
E= STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. I am: A= MALE, B=FEMALE

2. I am in: A=Grade 5, B= Grade 8, C=Grade 11

3. My teachers expect appropriate behaviour from me.

4. This school encourages me to do my best.

5. I feel I am safe while attending this school.

6. This school prepares me to work cooperatively with others.

7. The principal, vice-principal and teachers treat the students of this school fairly.

8. I am pleased that I attend this school.

9. I participate in school activities.

10. I believe that doing well in school is important to succeeding in the future.

11. The principal, vice principal and teachers at this school care about me.

12. People at this school are respectful towards others.

13. This school prepares me to be an active member of the community.

14. I am an honest person.

15. I practice the values of my faith.

16. Students feel that they can talk to teachers in our school about anything.

17. Most students in our school go out of their way to help other students when they are in need.

18. Most students in our school go out of their way to help others in the community when they are in need.

19. Family is important to me.

20. I accept responsibility for my behaviour.

21. I believe that I am respectful to people.

22. I feel that I can trust people in my school.

23. My family comes to our school for special occasions.

24. I hear values discussed in many subject areas.

Community of Caring
Satisfaction Survey
STAFF VERSION

Please fill in the bubble indicating your choice on the general answer sheet. You will need to use an HB pencil.

A= STRONGLY AGREE
B= AGREE
C= NEUTRAL
D= DISAGREE
E= STRONGLY DISASGREE

1. I am A=MALE, B= FEMALE

2. Teachers expect appropriate behaviour from students.

3. This school encourages students to do their best.

4. Students feel safe while attending this school.

5. This school prepares students to work cooperatively with others.

6. Administration and teachers of this school treat students fairly.

7. I am pleased to work at this school.

8. The administration and teachers of this school care about the welfare of students.

9. People at this school are respectful towards others.

10. I feel that people in this school take responsibility for their actions.

11. The importance of family is recognized within our school.

12. I trust the student, staff and parent community of this school.

13. I feel appreciated for the job I do in this school.

14. I feel that the staff of this school is supportive.

15. This school prepares students to be active members of the community.

16. There is a high level of parent involvement in our school.

17. In our school students are taught values throughout all aspects of school life.

Community of Caring
Satisfaction Survey
PARENT VERSION

Please fill in the bubble indicating your choice on the general answer sheet. You will
need to use an HB pencil.

A= STRONGLY AGREE
B= AGREE
C= NEUTRAL
D= DISAGREE
E= STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. I am: A= MALE, B= FEMALE

2. Teachers expect appropriate behaviour from students.

3. This school encourages students to do their best.

4. Students feel safe while attending this school.

5. This school prepares students to work cooperatively with others.

6. Administration and teachers of this school treat students fairly.

7. I am pleased that my son/daughter attends this school.

8. Administration and teachers of this school work effectively with parents.

9. I have had a number of opportunities to visit this school (special occasions, to
volunteer, etc.).

10. As a parent I feel comfortable in attending events at this school.

11. Administration and teachers at this school care about the students

12. People at this school are respectful to others.

13. I feel that family is important to this school.

14. I feel that there is a strong sense of trust among the administration, teachers and the
parent community.

15. I believe that my son/daughter is being taught values in this school.

16. This school prepares students to be active members of the community.

Appendix D

Student Satisfaction Survey Results
SUMMARY OF YEAR 1, 2, 3 SURVEYS

Students Survey	Year 1 % of students agree/strongly agree	Year 2 % of students agree/strongly agree	Year 3 % of students agree/strongly agree
Appropriate behaviour	95.7	94.2	96.9
Encouraging school	82.4	80.3	87.5
Feel safe	73	78.2	83.4
Work cooperatively	80.4	79.5	86.3
Treated fairly	61	63	76.2
Pleased with school	69.3	74.9	82.5
Participate in school activities	79.5	75.5	82.1
Feel doing well is important	93.9	94.9	96.3
Staff care about me	72.1	69.4	81.8
People are respectful	38.7	43.4	51
Prepared to be active in society	70.1	67.5	77.1
Honest	82.5	82.2	85.5
Practice values	77.7	73.6	76.8
Can talk to staff	41.3	42.5	53
Students help in school	46.5	43	55.1
Students help in Community	45.4	41.8	50.5
Family is important	97.3	95.9	98.1
Take responsibility	88.4	89.2	98.1
Respectful to others	84.1	85.9	89.1
Trusts others	52.1	52.3	61.3
Family involvement	52.4	51.4	54.2
Family discussions	69.1	63	72.2
AVERAGE	71%	70%	76.7%

Staff Satisfaction Survey Results
SUMMARY OF YEAR 1, 2, 3 SURVEYS

Staff Survey	Year 1 % of staff agree/strongly agree	Year 2 % of staff agree/strongly agree	Year 3 % of staff agree/strongly agree
Appropriate behaviour from students	94.6	94.6	95.2
Encourages students	93.4	92.1	93.5
Safe at school	84.1	84.5	83.8
Works cooperatively	84.7	84.9	88.2
Treats students fairly	89.5	90.5	90.9
Please to work at school	87.1	89.1	90.6
Cares about students	93.7	95.7	93.9
Respectful students	71.2	74.5	77.8
People take responsibility	65.7	67.5	70.7
Important of family	84.7	85.1	86.2
Trust others	70.9	68	72
Feel appreciated	71.4	69.2	76
Supportive staff	82.5	82.6	84.2
School prepares students	73.2	75	80
Parent involvement	52.3	54.1	59.2
Students taught values in school	90.6	84.9	87.8
AVERAGE	80.6%	81%	83%

Parent Satisfaction Survey Results
SUMMARY OF YEAR 1, 2, 3 SURVEYS

Parents Survey	Year 1 % of parents agree/strongly agree	Year 2 % of parents agree/strongly agree	Year 3 % of parents agree/strongly agree
Appropriate behaviour	95.8	97.1	95.5
Encourages students	89.8	90.7	89.9
Safe school	82.6	87.5	85.3
Work cooperatively	88.2	89.4	88
Treated fairly	73.9	83	75.3
Pleased with school	87.1	90.7	90.1
Administration is effective	77.6	76.6	75.7
Opportunities to visit	82.8	80.5	84.5
Comfort during visits	87.1	89.9	89.1
Administration cares	88.6	91.5	86.9
People are respectful	70.5	75.7	73.3
Importance of family	85.2	87.5	87.9
Trust among stakeholders	72	74.5	69.7
Values taught	88.6	90.7	90.9
Prepares students to be active community members	76	75.1	78
AVERAGE	83.1%	85%	84%

Appendix E

District Results from Data Logs
2000 - 2003

	MEASUREMENTS	BASELINE	YEAR I (2000 - 2001)	YEAR II (2001 - 2002)	YEAR III (2002 - 2003)
1.	Reduce Absenteeism	3054 (Avg.)	2840 (Avg.)	2561 (Avg.)	2952 (avg.) original group from baseline
2.	Reduce Incidents of Bullying	41 (Avg.)	36 (Avg.)	41 (Avg.)	35.5 (Avg.) original group from baseline
3.	Reduce Suspensions	29 (Avg.)	20 (Avg.)	11 (Avg.) increase in population	2 (Avg/) original list of baseline
4.	Reduce Discipline Referrals	141 (Avg.)	125 (Avg.)	121 (Avg.)	68 (Avg.) original group of baseline
5.	Service Learning Increases	1210 hr. (Avg.)	1210	1085 (Avg.)	1710 hrs. (Avg.) original group from baseline
6.	Parent Satisfaction	79%	83%	85%	84%
7	Staff Satisfaction	78%	81%	81%	83%
8.	Student Satisfaction	74%	71%	70%	77%
9.	Language Arts - Grade 6	88%	89%	93%	94%
10.	Social Studies - Grade 6	88%	89%	91%	92%
11.	Language Arts - Grade 9	90%	92%	93%	99%
12.	Social Studies - Grade 9	92%	89%	91%	89%
13.	Language Arts 30	91%	92%	90%	95%
14.	Language Arts 33	86%	87%	87%	85%
15.	Social Studies 30	85%	90%	88%	91%
16.	Social Studies 33	84%	80%	86%	81%

∗ Population increased each year as the number of schools participating increased from 28 @ baseline to 63 in 2002-2003 results