

The CHARACTERplus Way Results Monograph

October 2006

Building a Healthy School Community:
Experimental Evidence that The CHARACTERplus®¹ Way Works

¹ CHARACTERplus® is a registered trademark of Cooperating School Districts, St. Louis, Missouri.

THIS PUBLICATION WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION UNDER THE SECRETARY'S FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION

This publication is part of two studies funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Grant Numbers R215V020032 and R215S020232. All statements contained in this report are strictly those of the authors and do not represent, in any way, the official view or policy of the U. S. Department of Education.

In partnership with

Cooperating School Districts of Greater St. Louis, Inc.
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

This book is part of a series, which includes

Replication Handbook for School and Community Decision Makers
Character Education Connections
The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way: Plan-Implement-Refine
Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way: Plan-Implement-Refine

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Preface

The CHARACTER^{plus} Way Results Monograph is a compilation of four studies that provide compelling evidence of the robustness of this process in achieving positive student outcomes through building healthy schools. The CHARACTER^{plus} Way is a grass roots process for developing schools of character that first emerged in the 1980s. It started with the identification of the Ten Essentials for developing high quality schools of character. These Ten Essentials are:

1. *Community Participation*

Educators, parents, students, and members of the community invest themselves in a consensus-building process to discover common ground that is essential for long-term success. Together, they develop a plan for implementation of a character education process in their community.

2. *Character Education Policy*

Character education is a part of the district's philosophy, goals, or mission statement, including a formal, written policy adopted by the school board. In this way, it becomes a part of the leadership of the school and community. The district policy also should be affirmed and supported at the building and classroom levels.

3. *Identified and Defined Character Traits*

Parents, teachers, and community representatives agree on which character traits to emphasize and what definitions to use. Developing consensus on the definitions is key, and the early involvement of students enriches the process. Once the traits are defined, they should be highly visible throughout the school and community.

4. *Integrated Curriculum*

Character education is an integral part of the curriculum at all grade levels. Character traits are connected to classroom lessons so that students see how a trait might figure into a story, be part of a science experiment, or how it might affect them. These traits are a part of the instruction of the day – in every class and every subject.

5. *Experiential Learning*

Students are given many opportunities to experience character traits, see them in action, and feel them rather than just talk about them. Community-based, real-world experiences that illustrate character traits are included in the curriculum. Service learning, cooperative learning, and peer mentoring can be an important part of this approach. Ample time is also allowed for discussion and reflection.

6. *Evaluation*

The character education initiative – including the implementation process, program activities, and impact on students – is evaluated on a regular basis to determine if it is achieving the anticipated results and to validate that the processes and structures being implemented are working. Evaluation data are used to improve the program.

7. *Adult Role Models*

Children “learn what they live,” so it is important that all adults in the school community who interact with children on a daily basis demonstrate positive character traits at home, school, and in the community. Adults need to reflect and focus on important character traits and how to model them systematically and intentionally. If adults do not model the behavior they teach, the entire program will fail.

8. *Staff Development*

Significant time and resources are allocated for staff development activities so that staff can create and implement character education on an ongoing basis. Time for discussion and understanding of both the process and the resources, as well as for creation of curriculum and lesson plans, is an important part of training activities.

9. *Student Leadership*

Students are involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of all aspects of the program. They are involved in age-appropriate activities and encouraged to connect character education to their learning, decision-making, and personal goals as the process is integrated across the school curriculum.

10. *Sustaining the Program*

The character education program is sustained and renewed through implementation of the first nine essential elements, with particular attention to a high level of commitment from the top; adequate funding; support for district coordination staff; high-quality and ongoing professional development; and a networking and support system for teachers who are implementing the program

Through several federal grants and state support, multiple iterations of the program have been researched. This includes the initial developmental project in the late 1980s, the state project in the 1990s, and several implementation projects initiated since 2002. This monograph presents a description of the CHARACTER^{plus} process (Section 1, pages 9-17), followed by results from the four most recent implementations.

Presented in Section 2, pages 18-33, are the results from the four-year study, The CHARACTER^{plus} Way, a federally-funded² implementation project involving 64 randomly selected and placed elementary and secondary schools in Missouri. This implementation expanded the CHARACTER^{plus} initiative by adding extensive professional training, coaching support, and data-based decision making using student, staff and parent information.

Section 3, pages 34-52, contains the results from the four-year, Caring School Community^{TM3} The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way, federally-funded⁴ project involving 40 randomly selected and placed CHARACTER^{plus} elementary schools in the St. Louis metropolitan area. This implementation also expanded the CHARACTER^{plus} initiative by adding extensive professional training, coaching support, and data-based decision making using student, staff and parent information. Since these were already CHARACTER^{plus} schools with a foundation in the Ten Essentials, the content training, coaching support and data collection focused on the four collaborative structure components of Caring School CommunityTM. These components are Class Meetings, Buddies, Homeside activities, and Schoolwide activities.

Section 4, pages 53-62, describes another supportive two-year implementation study⁵ of over 40 schools in a large semi-rural school district. This implementation focused primarily on

² Project funded by U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, Fund for the Improvement of Education, Partnerships in Character Education Program, Grant R215V020032. All statements contained in this report are strictly those of the authors and do not represent, in any way, the official view or policy of the U. S. Department of Education.

³ Caring School CommunityTM is a service mark of Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, California.

⁴ Project funded by U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, Fund for the Improvement of Education, Partnerships in Character Education Program, Grant R215S020232. All statements contained in this report are strictly those of the authors and do not represent, in any way, the official view or policy of the U. S. Department of Education.

⁵ Project funded by U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, Fund for the Improvement of Education, Partnerships in Character Education Program, Grant Q215S040073. All statements contained in this report are strictly those of the authors and do not represent, in any way, the official view or policy of the U. S. Department of Education.

The CHARACTER*plus* Way initial training consisting of the Ten Essentials and data-based decision making. Collaborative structures were introduced during the school year.

Included in Section 5, page 63-69, is a supportive study of 29 schools who have received basic CHARACTER*plus* data-based services for five years. CHARACTER*plus* support for these schools has been through funding provided by the Missouri state legislature.

The results from these studies support the assertion that The CHARACTER*plus* Way is a compelling process that significantly impacts school culture resulting in healthy schools. This is evident in such aspects as an improved caring school environment where students are engaged in more positive pro-social behavior with significant reduction in discipline referrals and increases in achievement, and there is improved school leadership and staff collaboration. Achieving optimum results is linked to The CHARACTER*plus* Way and includes the following program components:

- Supportive school principal leadership
- Effective School Leadership Team (SLT) consisting of the school principal, two teachers, counselor, and two parents
- Annual data collection on staff and student perceptions of school culture and climate
- Use of data in school planning with the PIR (Plan – Implement – Refine) model
- Training in the Ten Essentials, data-based decision making, and collaborative structures, including class meetings
- Coaching support for the SLT and school staff
- Staff training in the Ten Essentials and collaborative structures

Section 1: The CHARACTER^{plus}® Process

The CHARACTER^{plus}® process was founded on the principle that successful initiatives are integrated into the fabric of an organization through dialogue among stakeholders rather than by transplanting externally developed programs. CHARACTER^{plus} is a holistic process where school leadership teams are trained to facilitate parent, community, and school involvement in developing the character initiatives that best fit their needs. It is a process for development, a set of essentials that enable schools to optimize their own development. The CHARACTER^{plus} process is based on Ten Essentials (listed in the Preface) for developing high quality schools of character. Underpinning CHARACTER^{plus} is Glasser's⁶ assertion that optimum educational results occur when students feel that they have a say in their own education, believe that they belong to the educational community, and perceive that they are competent to succeed in the educational process. CHARACTER^{plus} training and support focuses on these beliefs as the foundation for effectively developing healthy schools through the implementation of character education. These aspects of quality are referred to as the ABCs of Healthy Schools -- **A** for students' sense of autonomy and influence, **B** for students' feeling of belonging, and **C** for students' belief in their competence⁷.

Implementation Projects

The CHARACTER^{plus} process has been evaluated and researched through several implementation projects since its inception during the late 1980s. This monograph presents results from the four most recent studies. Research characteristics of these studies are provided in Table 1. Three of the four studies are experimental; two have qualitative information on

⁶ Glasser, W. (1969). *Schools without failure*. NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.; Glasser, W (1998). *Control Theory*. NY: HarperCollins, Publishers, Inc.

⁷ More information on the ABCs of Healthy Schools can be found at showmecharacter.com.

school leadership; all four studies used implementation, student, staff, and parent surveys; three of the studies had information on student discipline referrals; and two studies had student achievement results. For the three federally funded projects, surveys were administered by project-trained data collectors; for the state funded project the survey data were collected by the local schools.

Purpose of Projects

The implementation process in all four projects shared the same basic purpose: to build high quality schools through character education, resulting in improved school culture and climate for both staff and students; fewer student discipline referrals; and increased student achievement.

Treatment

The foundation for all four projects was the CHARACTER*plus* Ten Essentials. Three of the four projects (denoted CHARACTER*plus* and ShowMe Character™⁸ in Table 1) focused initial training on the Ten Essentials. In the second project (denoted Caring School Community™) the Ten Essential foundation was implicit, since the random sample of schools was drawn from districts which had engaged in CHARACTER*plus* for several years prior to the study. Leadership teams in all four projects received training in using the PIR (Plan-Implement-Refine) data-based planning process. This training was more formalized in the federally-funded CHARACTER*plus* project than in the state-funded project, and thus the federally-funded project has been designated The CHARACTER*plus*® Way. Collaborative strategies for leadership and instruction were the focus for the Caring School Community™ project. Heavy emphasis was

⁸ ShowMe Character™ is a service mark of International Learning Services, Inc., Orange Beach, Alabama and Marshall Consulting, Rapid City, South Dakota.

Table 1. Characteristics of Four Studies

Funding	Program	Type of Study			Type of Information Collected						
		Experimental Survey			Qualitative	Survey				Student by School	
		RS	RP	SS	Leadership Assessed	Implemen- tation	Student	Staff	Parent	Discipline	Achieve- ment
Federal	CHARACTERplus® *	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Federal	Caring School Community™ #	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Federal	ShowMe Character™	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
State	CHARACTERplus®	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

- RS Random Selection of Schools
- RP Random Placement of Schools into Treatment Groups
- SS Self-Selection of Schools into Treatment
- * Name Changed to The CHARACTERplus® Way
- # Name Changed to Caring School Community™ The CHARACTERplus® Way

placed on the components of Class Meetings, Cross-Grade Buddies, Homeside activities, and Schoolwide activities. Since this project implicitly embraced the Ten Essentials, and included rich training in data-based decision making as well as collaborative structures, it has been designated Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way.

The basic implementation processes for the three federal projects⁹ are as follows:

- **Orientation for District and School Administrators** – Project staff visited each district and school-level administrator to orient them to the project benefits and expectations.
- **Identification of School Leadership Teams** – There were five or six persons on a leadership team in each treatment school – principal, counselor, two teachers and one/two parents or community members. The purpose of the team was to provide character education leadership, guidance, and training for implementation in their school and district.
- **School Leadership Team Basic Training** – Initial staff development for School Leadership Teams was held for three days in the summer. Each team learned the basic components of the program and engaged in planning using baseline data provided in the School Report, which is a compilation and analysis of survey, discipline, and student achievement information.
- **School Leadership Team Advanced Training** – More in depth staff development was held for two days in the summer of each project year following the initial implementation year. Each school team learned advanced

⁹ The state project implementation provided initial training in the Ten Essentials and worked with schools individually on data-based planning and other strategies as needed.

implementation strategies and engaged in planning, using pretest-posttest comparison data provided in the School Report.

- **Networking** – Two or three networking sessions were held for the treatment groups each year of the project. During these sessions, schools shared their successes and learned new strategies for implementation.
- **Principals Roundtable** – Principals engaged in reflection and discussion relating to the role of the principal in implementing the character education initiative. These sessions were held in conjunction with networking.
- **Coaching** – Content and process-trained coaches worked directly with treatment schools during implementation. They served as advisors to principals and SLTs, and observed character education practices in the school community.
- **Staff Development** – Staff in treatment schools engaged in three hours of program orientation led by the School Leadership Team with support from the CHARACTER*plus* coach. During the school year, there were at least 12 hours of on-site staff development for the entire staff. About half of the sessions were whole-school workshops; the remaining sessions were imbedded in regular and ongoing planning, grade-level or subject matter groups, and/or individual teacher activities. It is important to note that staff development for character education became a part of the ongoing work of the school staff, not an “add-on” activity.
- **Materials** – Schools used character education and related professional development and curriculum development materials provided through the grants.

Results

A synopsis of the results from the four projects is presented in Table 2. More thorough presentations are provided in the following sections of the monograph. Directional analyses were used since the purpose of this research was to determine if CHARACTER*plus* has a positive impact on school culture and climate, including student behavior and achievement. In the following sections, it is documented where directionality is a significant factor in an analysis.

The order of presentation is first the three federally-funded projects, and then the state-funded project as follows:

- Section 2 Page 17 The CHARACTER*plus*® Way
- Section 3 Page 34 Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER*plus*® Way
- Section 4 Page 53 ShowMe Character™
- Section 5 Page 63 CHARACTER*plus*®

Table 2. Summary of Results by Project

Funding	Program	Results					
		Implementation*	Student	Staff*	Parent	Discipline	Achievement
Federal 4 Years	CHARACTER ^{plus} ®	Large Positive Growth #	No Change	Positive Growth**	Not Reported***	Large Decrease	Low to Medium Effect #
Federal 4 Years	Caring School Community™	Large Positive Growth #	Large Positive Growth in Autonomy#	Positive Growth**	Not Reported***	Moderate Decrease	Large Effect#
Federal 2 Years	ShowMe Character™	Large Positive Growth #	No Change	No Change	Not Reported***	Large Decrease	Not Available
State 5 Years	CHARACTER ^{plus} ®	Large Positive Growth #	No Change	Large Positive Growth	Some Positive Growth	Not Available	Not Available

* Implementation and staff surveys provide indices of school culture and climate.

** Significant positive change for high implementation schools compared to low implementation and control schools.

*** Insufficient numbers of surveys returned to provide valid information.

Effect size (ES) is the name given to the index that measures the magnitude of a treatment effect. Small ES ≤ .06; .06 < Medium ES < .14; Large ES ≥ .14. See <http://web.uccs.edu/lbecker/Psy590/es.htm>, October 11, 2006.

Discussion

The results presented here are from four different project implementations of character education using The CHARACTER*plus*® Way process. Three of the studies were experimental with random placement of schools into treatment and control groups. Two of the experimental studies included random selection of schools. The data analysis for all studies was at the school level – the level of both random placement and treatment implementation in the experimental research projects. The direct effect for character education can be strongly interpreted from the results of any one of these projects. The actuality that parallel results were found in all three experimental projects and further supported by the fourth evaluation study provides very strong evidence for the effectiveness of The CHARACTER*plus*® Way.

Large impact on school and classroom environment¹⁰ is documented for all four projects. There was no discernable change in school or classroom environment found in the control schools in the experimental projects.

CHARACTER*plus* implementation focused mainly on the school level through training in the Ten Essentials; moderate improvement was found in student achievement. Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER*plus*® Way focused mainly on the classroom level in CHARACTER*plus* schools through training in collaborative learning strategies; large improvement was found in student achievement.

Student discipline was documented for two of the experimental studies through school provided information using the project developed Student Office Referral Form. Since this was a volunteer endeavor¹¹, several schools in each project elected not to provide the information.

¹⁰ The term environment includes the overall culture of the school or classroom (how things are done) and the climate of the school or classroom (impact of the culture on how people feel and behave).

¹¹ IRB approval required that this data collection be voluntary.

For the third experimental study, the discipline referral information was available for all research schools through a district-wide computer database. Substantial decreases in disciplinary office referrals were found for all three experimental projects regardless of mode of data collection or completeness of the data producing sample.

Four projects, multiple methods of obtaining data, very different school samples yet parallel results provide strong evidence for the impact of The CHARACTER*plus*® Way process on school and classroom culture and climate, student discipline, and student achievement, when implemented in typical schools.

**Section 2: The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way
Federally Funded¹² Project
October 1, 2002 – September 30, 2006**

Research Process

Sixty-four schools were stratified and randomly selected for participation in the project.

The first-level strata were based on school level as follows:

Moderate to Large Districts

- Elementary Schools (K-5 or K-6) – 16 schools selected
- Junior High or Middle Schools – 12 schools selected
- Senior High Schools – 12 schools selected

Small Districts

- Elementary Schools (K – 6) – 12 schools selected
- Secondary Schools (7-12) – 12 schools selected

Within each of these strata, schools were categorized by socio-economic level and size, with the numbers of schools selected proportionately. The schools in each stratum were randomly placed into one of four treatment groups of 16 schools. These four group classifications were based on the year of their initial summer training for implementation: These groups were: First-Year (A), Second-Year (B), Third-Year (C), and Fourth-Year (D). The Fourth-Year Implementation (D) schools served as the control group.

Survey data were collected each February starting 2003 and continuing through 2006 from parents, staff and 4th, 8th, and 11th grade students. Small data producing samples were

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obtained for parent surveys compromising validity and thus are not included here. The annual data producing samples for staff were about 1,500 and for students about 3,500. In addition, for the final two years of the study, student discipline referrals were monitored in treatment and control schools. These data were amalgamated into school reports that were provided to each school during summer training.

Process Description

The implementation process for The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way is described in the previous section of the monograph. The training focused on implementation of the Ten Essentials and data-based planning using the Plan-Implement-Refine model. After the initial orientation, there was a strong school-level staff development focus on curriculum integration and service learning.

Survey Descriptions

Implementation Survey. The CHARACTER^{plus} Implementation Survey, administered to certified staff annually, was structured in the order of the Eleven Principles¹³ of schools of character. It included items drawn from both the Ten Essentials and the Eleven Principles. The Ten Essentials are listed in the Preface. The Eleven Principles are listed below.

Eleven Principles

- P1** Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
- P2** Character is comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
- P3** Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
- P4** The school is a caring community.

¹³ The Eleven Principles developed by the Character Education Partnership.

- P5** To develop character, the school provides students opportunities for moral action.
- P6** Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them to succeed.
- P7** Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation for developing good character.
- P8** The school staff is a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
- P9** Staff and students demonstrate moral leadership.
- P10** The school recruits parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.
- P11** Evaluation of character education assesses the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

Staff Survey. The CHARACTER^{plus} Staff Survey, also administered to certified staff annually, included the following five factors:

- Students' Feelings of Belonging
- School (Character-Related) Expectations
- Parent & Staff Relations
- Staff Culture of Belonging
- School Leadership

Student Survey. The CHARACTER^{plus} Student Survey, administered to all students in 4th, 8th and 11th grades, included the following six factors:

- Feelings of Belonging
- School Expectations
- Sense of Autonomy & Influence

- Self-Reported Altruism
- Feelings of Competence
- Parent Involvement

Results

Healthy Schools: Positive Change in School Culture and Climate

The health of the school culture was assessed using the Implementation Survey. Repeated measures analyses for the four project treatment groups provided the same results for all Eleven Principles. All three treatment groups showed large significant ($p < .01$) gains during

Group A	First Treatment Year 2003 - 2004
Group B	First Treatment Year 2004 - 2005
Group C	First Treatment Year 2005 - 2006
Control	No Treatment

their first year of treatment implementation and incremental gains during the following years. There was no significant change in

the control group. The implementation effect size¹⁴ for The CHARACTER^{plus} Way was very large (.42) demonstrating a large impact of the process on positive change in school culture and climate.

Implementation of The CHARACTER^{plus} Way resulted in the following school and classroom outcomes:

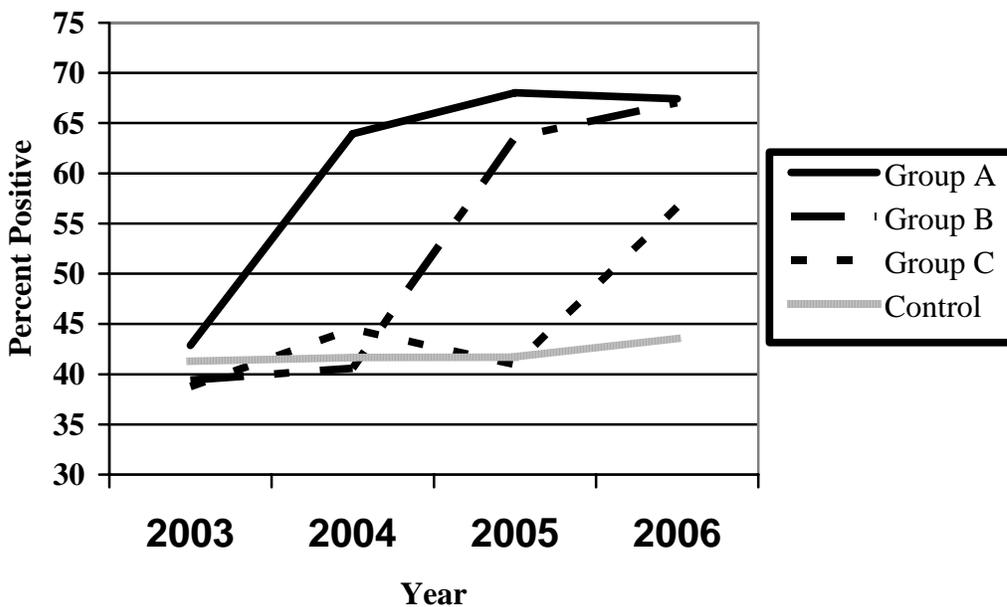
- **Increased District Support** – Schools are more likely to have a planned, proactive character education program supported by the district that provides opportunities for students to learn good character.
- **Agreement on Core Values** – Parents, staff, and others have more often agreed on the core ethical values (or character traits) for their schools.

¹⁴ Effect size (ES) is the name given to the index that measures the magnitude of a treatment effect. Small $ES \leq .06$; $.06 < \text{Medium ES} < .14$; Large $ES \geq .14$. See <http://web.uccs.edu/lbecker/Psy590/es.htm>, October 11, 2006.

- Improved Moral Leadership** – Both staff members and students are more involved in carrying out the character education processes in the school; staff members are more likely to provide moral leadership. Staff members are more likely to model character traits, engage in character-related discussion groups, and help to carry out the character education program. Schools are more likely to provide students with opportunities to carry out moral actions.
- Improved Academics with Integrated Character Development** – Students are more likely to be provided age appropriate academic opportunities for learning and developing their special abilities; character development is more often integrated into these academic activities.

These prevailing changes in school culture are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Implementation Levels All Schools on the Eleven Principles ($F = 12.04$, $df = 9/150$, $p < .01$, Effect Size = .42)



The outcomes are particularly powerful since the schools were randomly selected and randomly placed into treatment and control groups. The strong causal link, with large effect size,

between implementation of The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way and improved school culture and climate can be seen in the substantial increases in factor scores between the baseline year and the first post-treatment year for the schools in each of the three treatment groups. In contrast, as shown in Figure 1, the control group scores remained stable and low over the four years. Moreover, the positive growth in school climate was found for both elementary and secondary¹⁵

School Culture

The results show a strong positive change in school culture for both elementary and secondary schools as a direct result of implementation of:

The CHARACTER^{plus} Way.

schools ($F_{\text{Interaction}} = 1.17, df = 1/50, p > .05$).

Elementary schools demonstrated higher levels of positive school culture than did secondary schools (see Figure 2). Even so, the

overall strong impact of The CHARACTER^{plus} Way on school culture was felt by both elementary and secondary schools.

The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way had high impact¹⁶ on half of the treatment schools. Classification as high or low implementation schools by year is shown in Table 3 and by school level in Table 4. It can be noted that high implementing schools were equally distributed in each treatment group and included both elementary and secondary schools.

¹⁵ Secondary includes both middle (or junior high) and senior high school.

¹⁶ High implementation was defined as any school that increased in implementation by a minimum of 23 percentage points or at least one-third of the range in baseline implementation scores.

Figure 2. Elementary and Secondary Implementation Levels for the Eleven Principles (F = 10.80, df = 1/50, p < .05, Effect Size = .18)

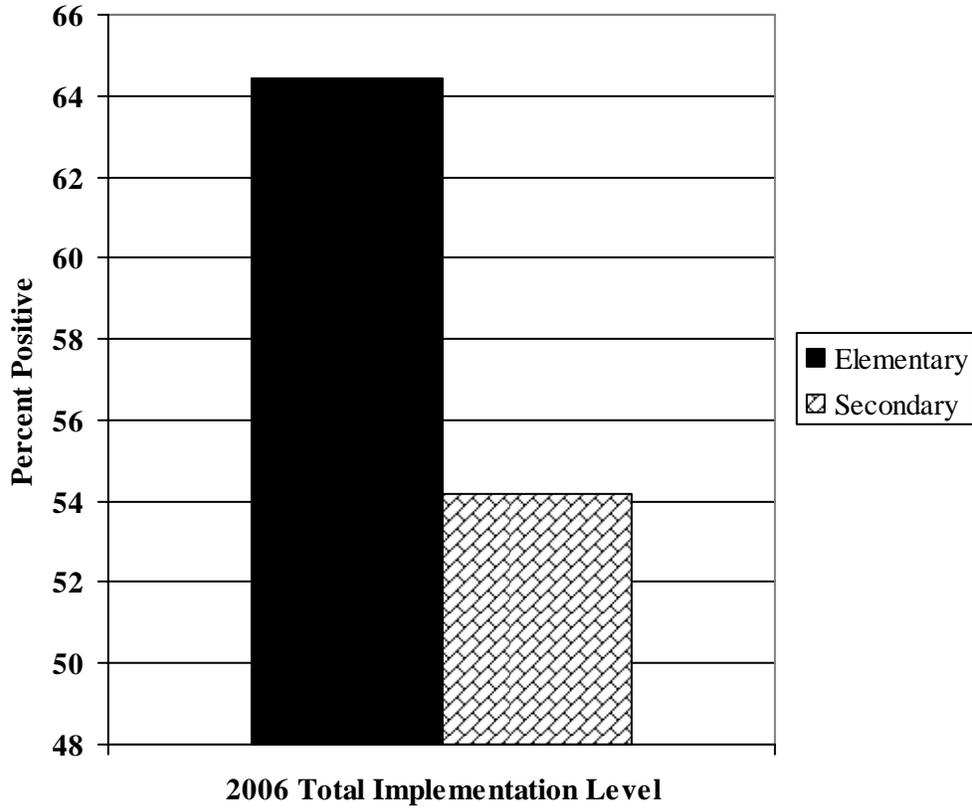


Table 3. Classification of Schools by Implementation Group and Change in Level of Implementation (Growth in School Culture)

		Growth in School Culture			Total
		Low	High	Control	
Year of Treatment	Group A	7	8	0	15
	Group B	7	8	0	15
	Group C	8	7	0	15
	Control	0	0	14	14
Total		22	23	14	59

Table 4. Classification Schools by School Level and Change in Level of Implementation (Growth in School Culture)

		Growth in School Culture			Total
		Low	High	Control	
School Level	Elementary	11	11	6	28
	Secondary	11	12	8	31
Total		22	23	14	59

The primary difference between higher and lower implementing schools was principal leadership as determined from coaches’ field descriptions and researcher field visits. Higher implementing schools had strong principals who embraced The CHARACTER^{plus} Way process, putting into action effective School Leadership Teams. This was not the case for lower implementing schools.

The impressive increase in school culture and climate was reinforced by the results from the Staff Survey in high implementing schools. Lower implementing schools showed results similar to the control schools. High implementing schools demonstrated¹⁷ positive change on all the factors assessed. The strongest gains with medium to large effect sizes were in staff perceptions of:

- **Improved Students’ Feelings of Belonging** (Figure 3) - Students are nicer to each other; they work better together and get along better; they take better care of school property and make new students feel welcome; they respect their teachers and are more responsible; they treat each other more fairly, think it’s more important to be good citizens, and tell the truth; they more often feel that they are treated fairly by the adults in the school.
- **Improved School - Parent Relations** (Figure 4) – School staff members become more

¹⁷ The results were analyzed based on school aggregate data using repeated measures design with a control comparing 2003 baseline and 2006 outcome results.

caring about parents and their families; treat parents with respect; make parents feel welcome at school; value parents' ideas and input; more often encourage parents to be involved at school; and communicate more effectively with parents.

- **Better Leadership** (Figure 5) – Both the administrators and teachers take more active roles in school activities; things are better organized; the needed resources are more often available to get the job done; staff members are more frequently recognized for a job well done; staff members are more likely to be involved in decisions which affect them; there is greater interest in the school in innovation and new ideas.

Positive growth for high implementing schools also was found for character-related School Expectations (moderate effect size) and collaborative Staff Culture (moderate effect size).

Figure 3. Staff Perceptions of Students' Feelings of Belonging for High, Low and Control Schools ($F = 5.82$, $df = 2/55$, $p < .01$, Effect Size = .18)

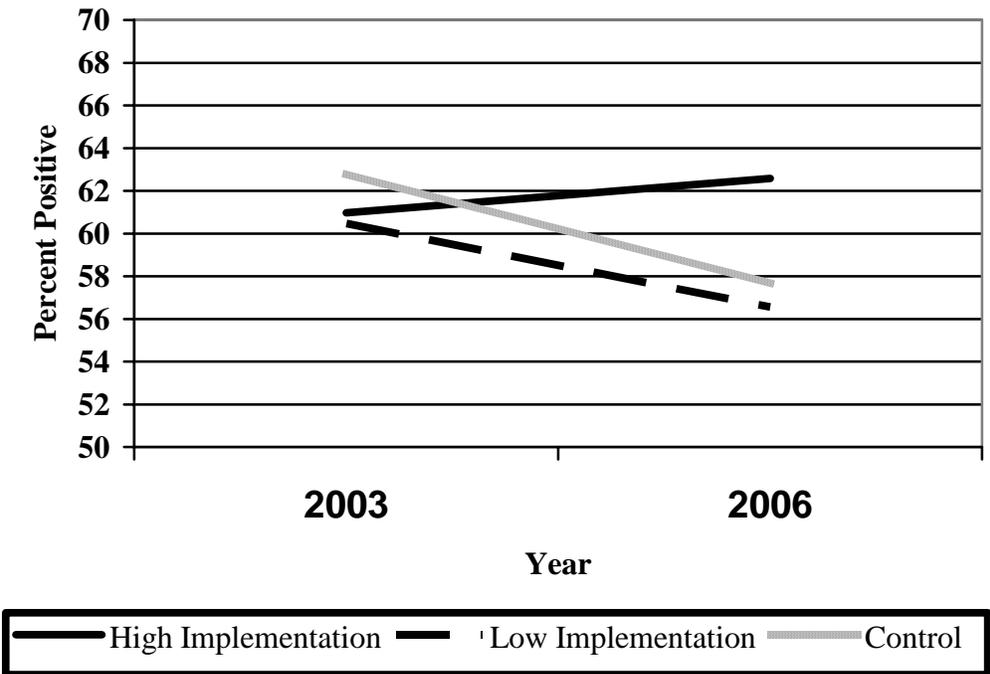


Figure 4. Staff Perceptions of Parent and Staff Relations for High, Low and Control Schools($F = 8.86$, $df = 2/55$, $p < .01$, Effect Size = .24)

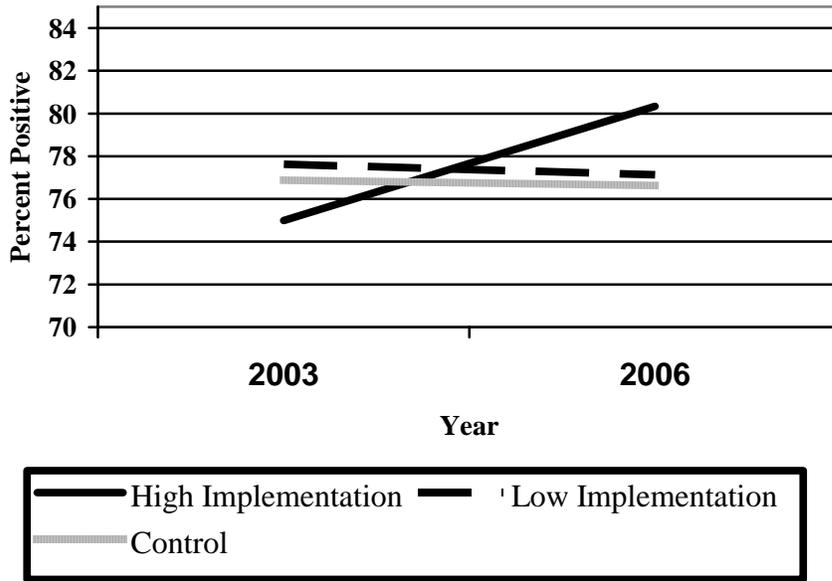
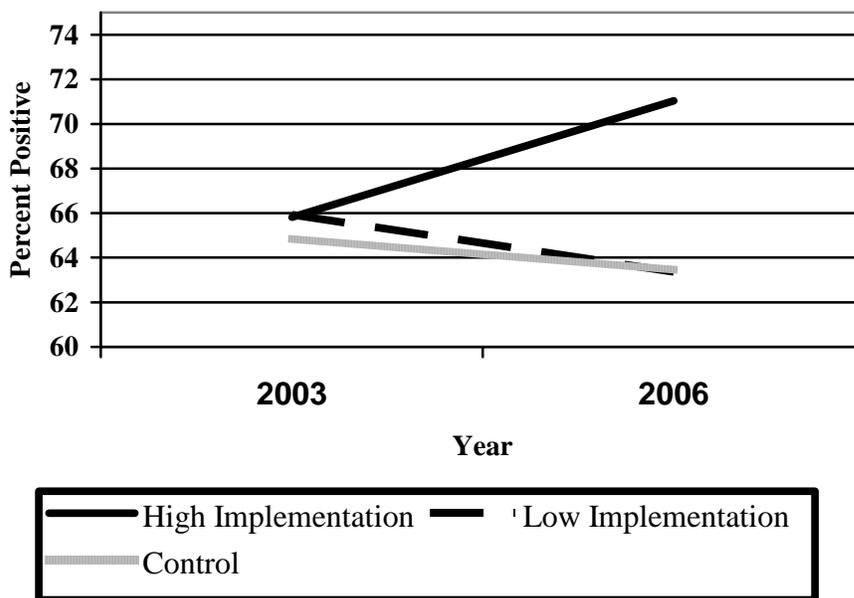


Figure 5. Staff Perceptions of School Leadership for High, Low and Control Schools($F = 2.74$, $df = 2/55$, $p < .10$, Effect Size = .09)



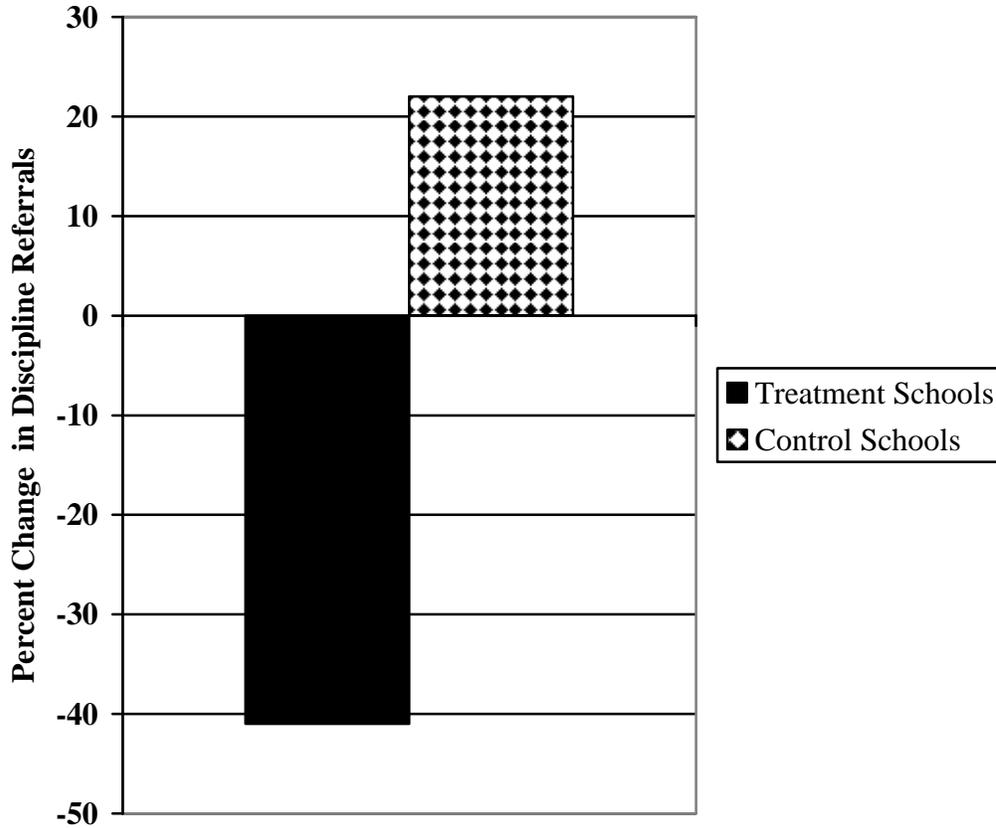
These outcomes show that when The CHARACTER^{plus} Way is properly implemented in schools, substantial positive changes occur in school culture and climate resulting in healthier schools for both staff and students.

Impact on Student Behavior

Improving school health has been shown to have long-term impact on students. This impact is often incremental for the first several years of change efforts but can be expected to have long lasting benefits. The CHARACTER^{plus} Way research implementation project spanned four years; three years of treatment with Group A. Little change was seen in the student perceptions of character indicators based on the survey data for any of the groups during the three years of treatment.

Improved Student Discipline. Student behavior referrals dropped significantly for treatment schools compared to the control schools. For this analysis, the treatment schools were those in Groups A and B and control schools were those in Groups C and D. This classification was made since student level impact was not expected during the first treatment year. From 2004 to 2006, two school years, 19 treatment schools and 16 control schools, including 18 elementary and 17 secondary schools, provided complete data for analysis. There was a significant decline in student discipline referrals in treatment schools while there was a noteworthy increase in student referrals in control schools. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Percent Change in Discipline Referrals From 2004 - 2006 ($z = 4.11, p < .01$)



Relation to Student Achievement. Analysis of the baseline survey information confirmed a high positive relation between school culture and climate and satisfactory level school achievement¹⁸ in math and communication arts. An analysis of relations between character-related factors as defined by the project surveys and the Missouri state-wide assessment test showed high associations for both math and communication arts. The climate factors accounted for 66% of the variation in math achievement among project schools (see Figure 7) and 79% of the variation in communication arts achievement among project schools

¹⁸ The percent of students scoring “proficient” was used as the statistic for analysis

(see Figure 8). These results indicate that the healthier the school culture, the higher student math and communication arts achievement. Imbedded in healthy school culture are the quality of school leadership, collegiality of staff, and excellence of classroom teaching in the development of students' feelings of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

Figure 7. Factors That Account for Differences Among Schools in Math Achievement

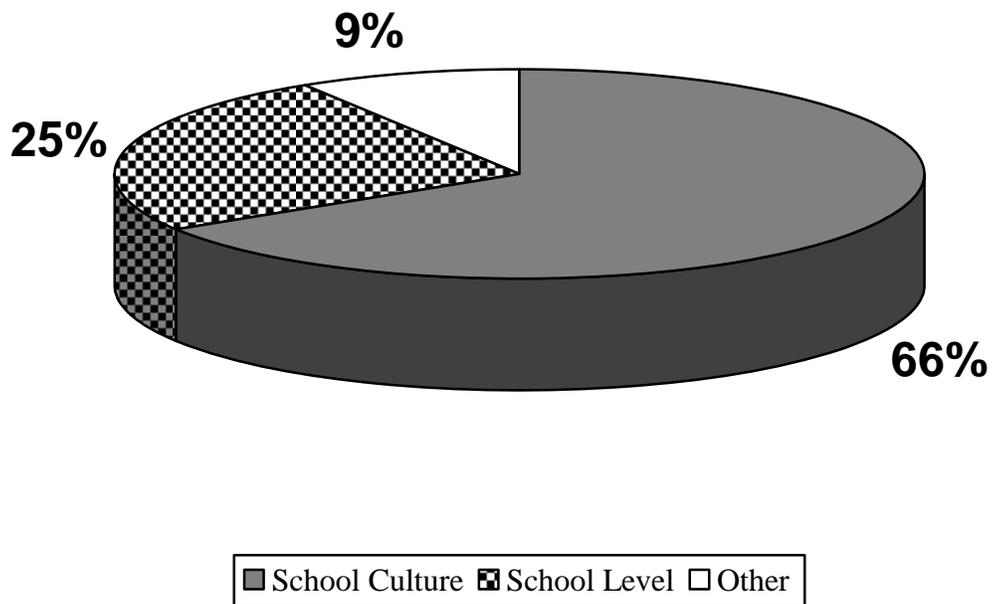
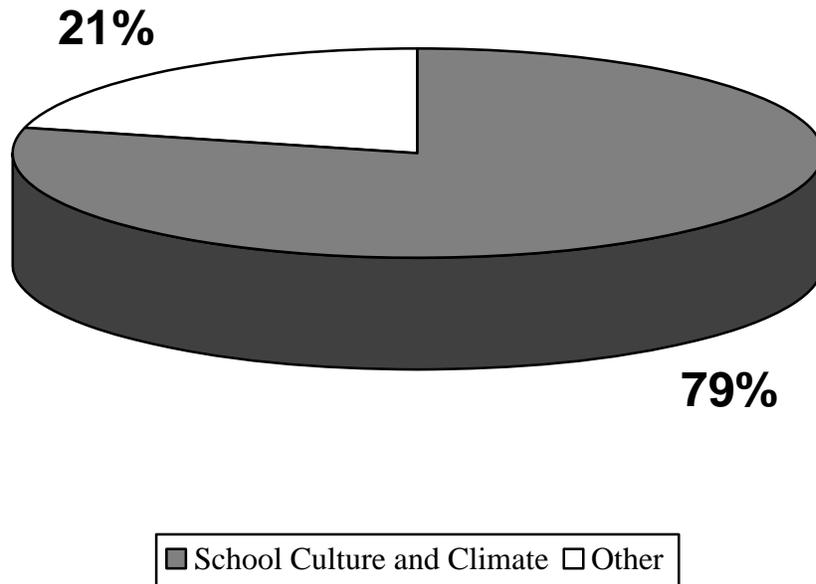


Figure 8. Factors That Account for Differences Among Schools in Communication Arts Achievement



Improved Student Achievement. High implementation of The CHARACTER^{plus} Way has a significant positive impact on student achievement in communication arts. The 2006 aggregate school results were compared statistically, controlling for the 2003 levels of achievement for high implementing schools in Groups A and B compared to low implementing schools in Groups A and B and control schools. The Group C schools, along with Group D schools, were considered controls for this analysis since the treatment had insufficient time to influence achievement levels in these schools. The math results (see Figures 9) showed positive but non-significant results with small treatment effect. The effect of The CHARACTER^{plus} Way on communication arts was statistically significant with medium treatment effect. There was about a 6% difference in the percentage of students scoring at the basic or below levels – about 58% for the high CHARACTER^{plus} schools compared to 64% for other schools.

Conversely, about 42% of the students in high CHARACTERplus schools scored at the proficient and advanced levels in communication arts compared to 36% of the students in the low CHARACTERplus and control schools.

Figure 9. Spring 2006 Math Achievement Aggregated by School Comparing CHARACTERplus Treatment and Control Schools Controlling Spring 2003 Achievement Levels ($F = 0.65$, $df = 1/63$, $p = .42$., Effect Size = .01)

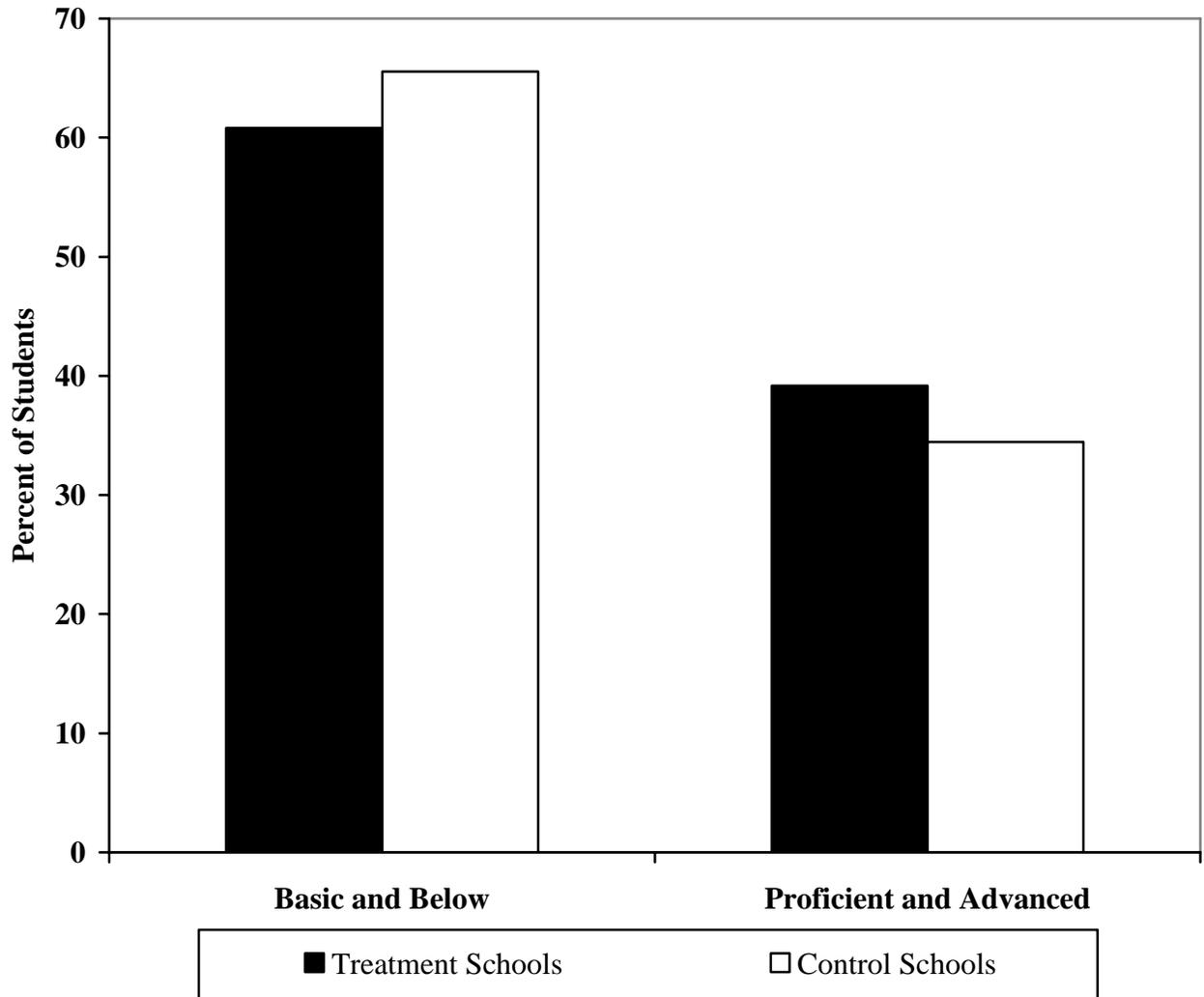
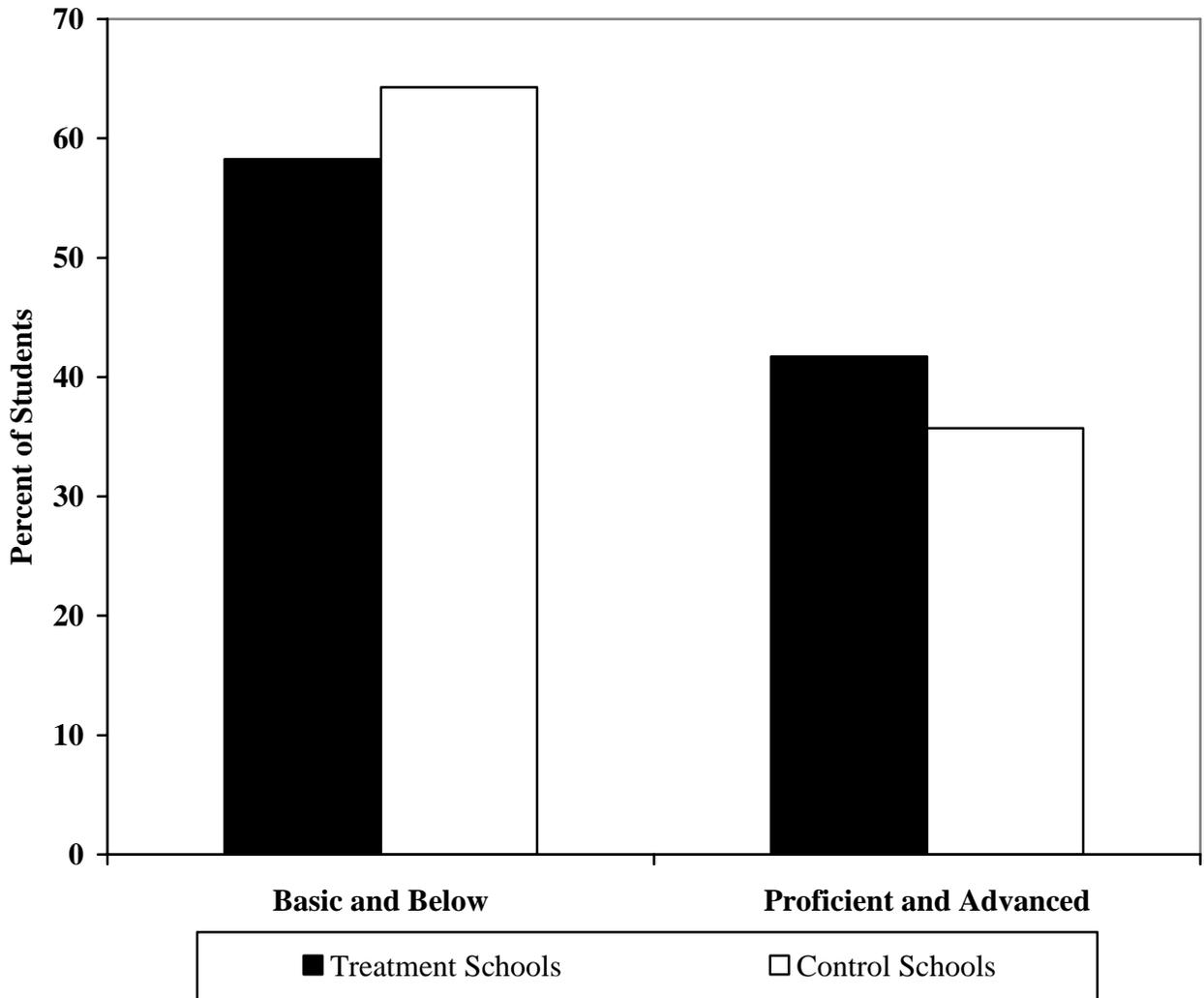


Figure 10. Spring 2006 Communication Arts Achievement Aggregated by School Comparing CHARACTER^{plus} High Implementation to All Other Schools Controlling Spring 2003 Achievement Levels (F = 5.12, df = 1/62, p = .42., ES = .08)



Final Comments

The results of The CHARACTER^{plus} Way four-year experimental implementation in 64 randomly selected and placed schools provided strong evidence of robust impact on the culture and climate of schools provided the schools have supportive principal leadership and effectual School Leadership Teams. The result is healthier schools for both staff and students with improved student discipline and higher student achievement in communication arts.

**Section 3: Caring School Community™
The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way
Federally Funded¹⁹ Project
October 1, 2002 – September 30, 2006**

Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way is a program of four instructional components overlaid on the CHARACTER^{plus} process. The four components of Caring School Community™ are Class Meetings, Cross-Grade Buddies, Homeside activities, and Schoolwide activities. These components and materials comprise the Caring School Community™ program distributed by the Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, California.

Research Process

Forty schools were selected from CHARACTER^{plus} school districts in the St. Louis, Missouri region. These districts were stratified by size with at least four or eight elementary schools. Districts were randomly selected for participation in the project. Four elementary schools were randomly selected from each of the smaller districts and eight from the larger districts. Schools within districts were then randomly placed in treatment groups with one per year from smaller districts and two per year from larger districts. This resulted in four treatment groups of 10 schools each. These classifications were based on the year of the schools' initial summer training for implementation. These groups were: First-Year (A), Second-Year (B), Third-Year (C), and Fourth-Year (D). The Fourth-Year Implementation (D) schools served as the control group.

¹⁹ Project funded by U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, Fund for the Improvement of Education, Partnerships in Character Education Program, Grant R215S020232. All statements contained in this report are strictly those of the authors and do not represent, in any way, the official view or policy of the U. S. Department of Education. CHARACTER^{plus}® is a registered trademark of Cooperating School Districts, St. Louis, Missouri. Caring School Community™ is a service mark of Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, California.

Survey data were collected each February starting in 2003 and continuing through 2006 from parents, staff and 3rd and 4th grade students. Small data producing samples were obtained for parent surveys compromising validity and thus are not included in this report. The annual data-producing samples for staff were about 1,300 and for students about 2,800. Student discipline referrals were examined for the final two years of the project. These data were folded into the school reports provided to each school during summer training.

Process Description

The implementation process for Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way is described in Section 1 of the monograph. The training focused on implementation of the four components of Caring School Community™ - Class Meetings, Buddies, Homeside activities, and Schoolwide activities – and on data-based decision making using the Plan-Implement-Refine model. After the initial orientation, there was a strong school-level staff development focus on collaborative structures including these four components.

Survey Descriptions

Implementation Survey. The CHARACTER^{plus}® Caring School Community™ Implementation Survey, administered to certified staff annually, was organized by the topology of context, process and content of the program. The eight factors assessed were:

CONTEXT	PROCESS	CONTENT
Learning Community	Data Utilization	Classroom Practices
Principal Support	School Climate	Student Pro-social Behavior
Resources	Staff Collaboration	

Context and process factors correspond to the educational health of the school while the content factors focus on the classroom collaborative structures that are the heart of the Caring School Community™ instructional components.

Staff Survey. The CHARACTER^{plus} Staff Survey was used for this project. It included the following five factors:

- Students' Feelings of Belonging
- School (Character-Related) Expectations
- Parent & Staff Relations
- Staff Culture of Belonging
- School Leadership

Student Survey. The Student Survey was based on the Child Development Project Student Survey used in the original Caring School Community™ validation project by the Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, California. The Student Survey included the following nine factors:

- Sense of Classroom as a Community
- Sense of Autonomy and Influence
- Self-Reported Altruistic Behavior
- Sense of Well-Being at School
- Trust and Respect for Teachers
- Concern for Others
- Liking for School
- Sense of Democratic Values
- Parent Involvement

Results

Healthy Schools: Positive Change in School Culture and Climate

School and classroom culture were assessed using the Implementation Survey administered each February to certified school staff in each of the project schools. The baseline assessments for school culture were relatively high, which may be indicative of the schools' CHARACTER^{plus} foundation. Follow-up assessments yielded moderate, consistent²⁰ growth for treatment schools compared to control schools for the following school and classroom outcomes:

- **Safer Learning Community** (Figure 11) – Schools become safer, more orderly, learning communities with school-wide plans for welcoming new students, staff, and parents. Staff members more often work together cooperatively.
- **Improvement in Available Resources** (Figure 12) – More time is provided for staff development and program planning; parents and other community members are more valued as resources; budget and other resources are more often provided to develop and sustain a caring school environment.
- **Increased Staff Collaboration** (Figure 13) – Staff more often form collaborative teams that regularly share ideas, strategies and successes, engage together in reflection on the results of instructional activities, and work together on instructional planning.
- **Improved Classroom Strategies** (Figure 14) – Students more often discuss the role values play in their behavior, help set classroom norms and rules, and plan after school activities

²⁰ Since positive change for treatment schools compared to control schools were the differences of interest in this study, a directional hypothesis was employed; repeated measures design, aggregated school data.

involving students, parents, and staff; cross-age student pairs²¹ are more likely to engage in learning activities and reflection; students and parents more often jointly engage in learning activities; and whole school activities are more frequently employed to foster relationships among children, staff, and families

- **Students More Often Demonstrate Good Character** (Figure 15) – Students more often learn to work cooperatively, have a sense of democratic values, and are supported emotionally and academically. They are more likely to be taught to reflect on their personal values.

The high effect sizes²² that were found suggest that the Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way had an important²³ direct, positive impact on school and classroom culture.

Treatment schools were divided into two equal sized groups based on their implementation of Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way²⁴. Classification as high or low implementation schools by year is shown in Table 5. It can be noted that high implementing schools were about two-thirds of the first two treatment groups and one-third of the third treatment group.

²¹ Wording is drawn directly from the Implementation Survey.

²² Effect size (ES) is the name given to the index that measures the magnitude of a treatment effect. Small ES \leq .06; .06 < Medium ES < .14; Large ES \geq .14. See <http://web.uccs.edu/lbecker/Psy590/es.htm>, October 11, 2006.

²³ Based on results from randomly selected and randomly placed schools; cause and effect can be presumed.

²⁴ High implementation was defined as any school that increased in implementation by a minimum of 7.5 percentage points or about one-fifth of the range in baseline implementation scores.

Figure 11. School as a Learning Community (F = 2.45, df = 3/35, $p_{\text{Directional}} < .05$, Effect Size = .17)

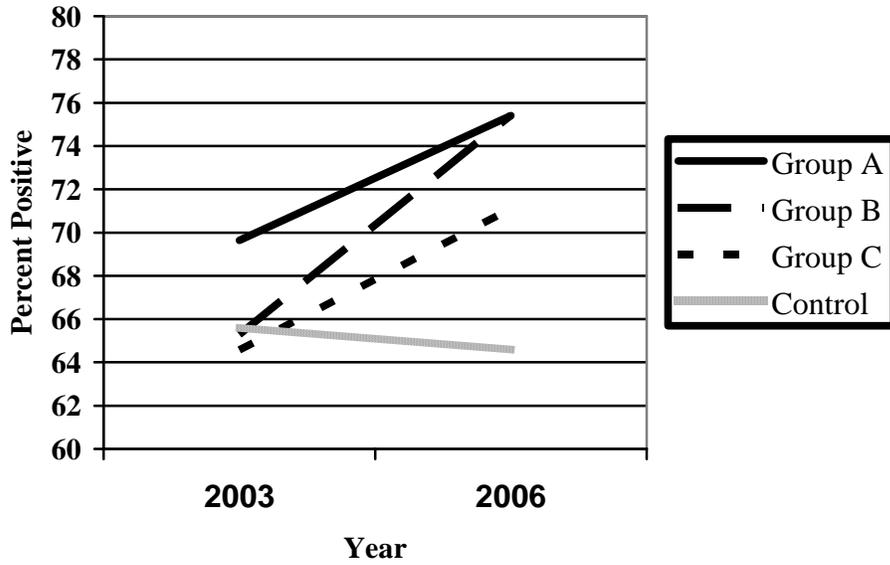


Figure 12. Availability of Resources (F = 2.78, df = 3/35, $p_{\text{Directional}} < .05$, Effect Size = .19)

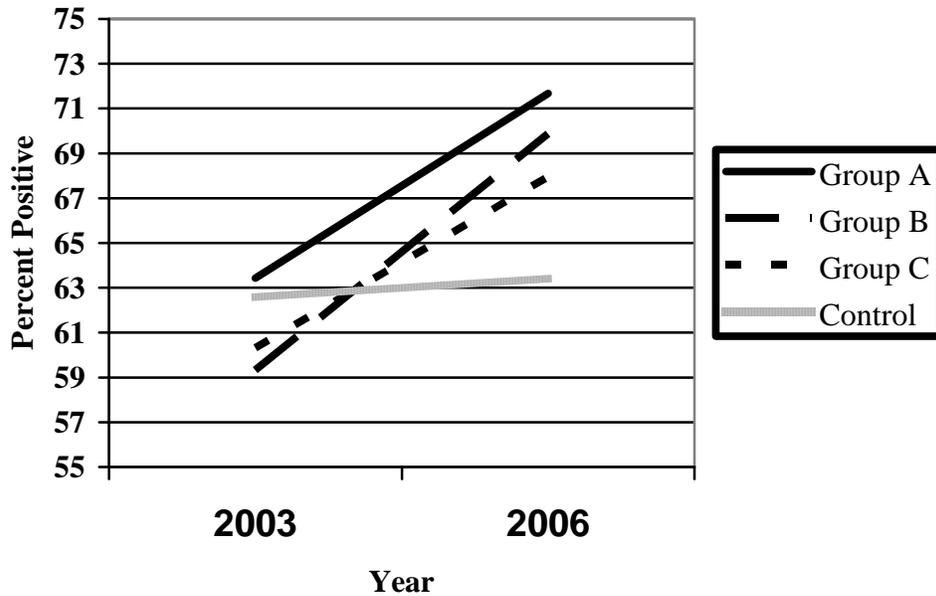


Figure 13. Staff Collaboration (F = 3.07, df = 3/35, p_{Directional} < .05, Effect Size = .21)

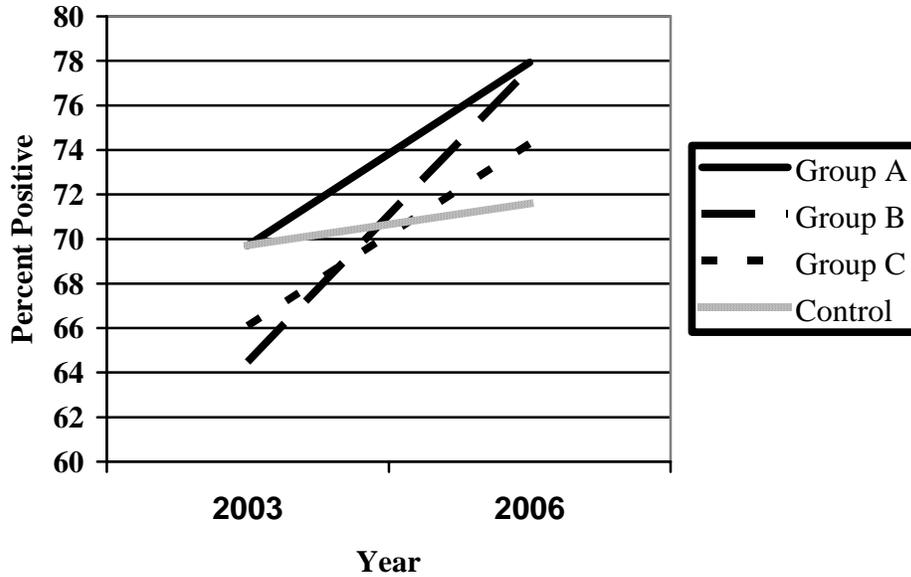


Figure 14. Classroom Practices (F = 6.39, df = 3/35, p_{Directional} < .01, Effect Size = .35)

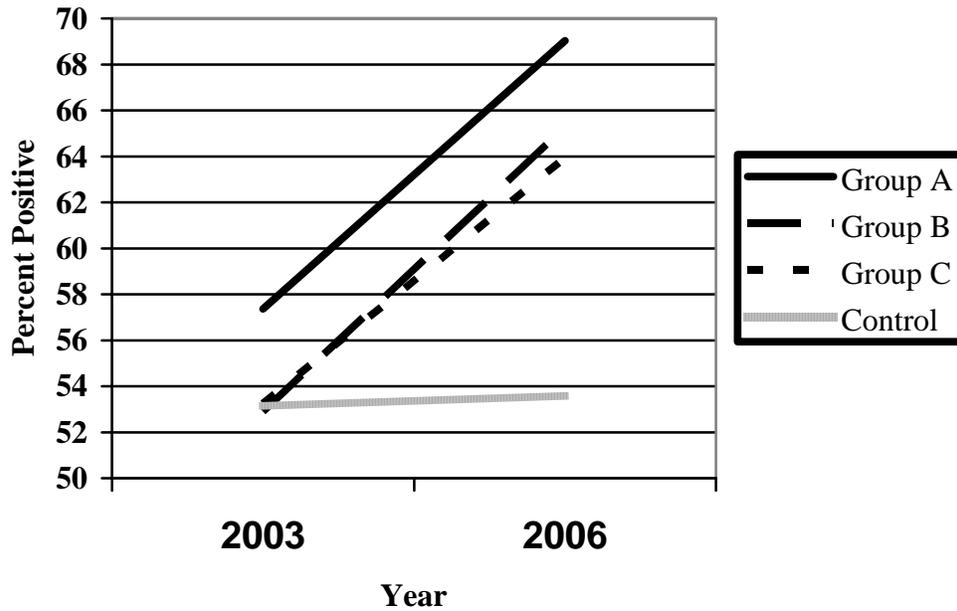


Figure 15. Student Social Behavior (F = 3.34, df = 3/35, p_{Directional} < .05, Effect Size = .22)

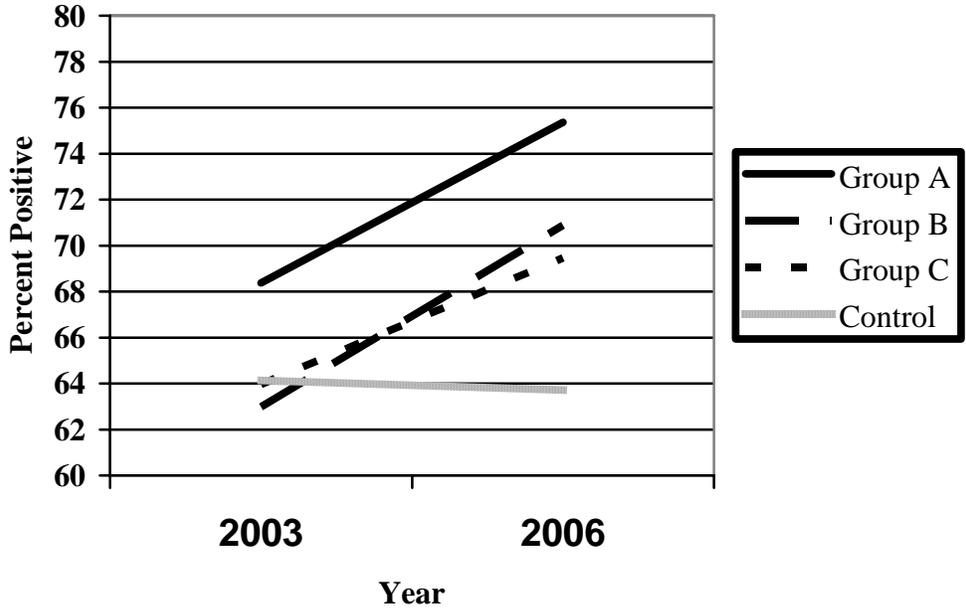


Table 5. Classification of Schools by Implementation Group and Change in Level of Implementation (Growth in School Culture)

		Growth Level			Total
		Low Growth	High Growth	Control	
Year Implementing	Group A	4	6	0	10
	Group B	4	5	0	9
	Group C	6	4	0	10
	Control (D)	0	0	10	10
Total		14	15	10	39

The differences between higher and lower implementing schools were associated with length of time in the program. The highest number of high implementing schools was in Group A followed by Group B and then Group C.

The increase in school and classroom culture was bolstered by the results from the Staff Survey in high implementing schools. These schools demonstrated²⁵ positive change on all the factors assessed while the lower implementing and control schools showed decreases on most factors. The strongest gains for high implementation schools compared to low implementation and control schools with large to very large effect sizes²⁶ were in staff perceptions as listed below:

- **Improved Students' Feelings of Belonging** (Figure 16) - Students are nice to each other; they work together and get along; they take care of school property and make new students feel welcome; they respect their teachers and are responsible; they treat each other fairly, think it's important to be good citizens, and tell the truth; they feel that they are treated fairly by the adults in the school.
- **Better Parent and Staff Relations** (Figure 17) - The school staff members care about parents and their families, treat parents with respect, make parents feel welcome at school, value parents' ideas and input, encourage parents to be involved at school, communicate effectively with parents, and tell parents about the school's efforts to develop good character in students.
- **Enhanced Staff Culture of Belonging** (Figure 18) - School staff members are supportive of one another, cooperative and help each other, and provide good counsel

²⁵ The results were analyzed based on school aggregate data using repeated measures design with a control comparing 2003 baseline and 2006 outcome results.

²⁶ ES \geq .14

when there are teaching problems; share the same beliefs about the central mission of the school; do not fall into conflicting cliques.

- **Stronger School Leadership** (Figure 19) - Both the administrators and teachers take active roles in school activities; things are well organized; the needed resources are available to get the job done; staff members are recognized for a job well done; staff members are involved in decisions which affect them; there is interest in the school in innovation and new ideas.

These outcomes show that when Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus} Way is properly implemented in schools, clear-cut growth occurs in school culture and climate, resulting in healthier schools for both staff and students.

Figure 16. Staff Perceptions of Students' Feelings of Belonging for High CSC, Low CSC and Control Schools (F = 7.84, df = 2/36, p < .05, Effect Size = .30)

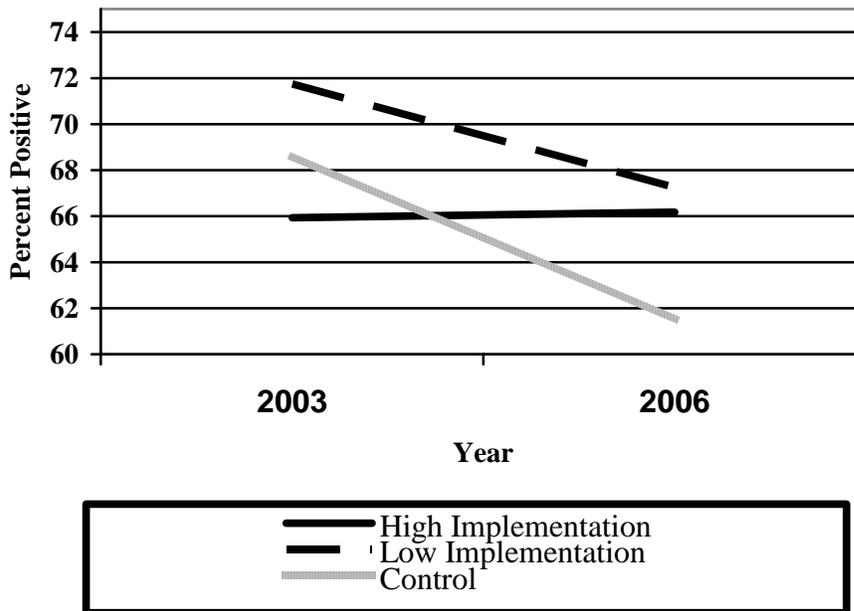


Figure 17. Staff Perceptions of Parent and Staff Relations for High CSC, Low CSC and Control Schools (F = 8.36, df = 2/36, p < .01, Effect Size = .32)

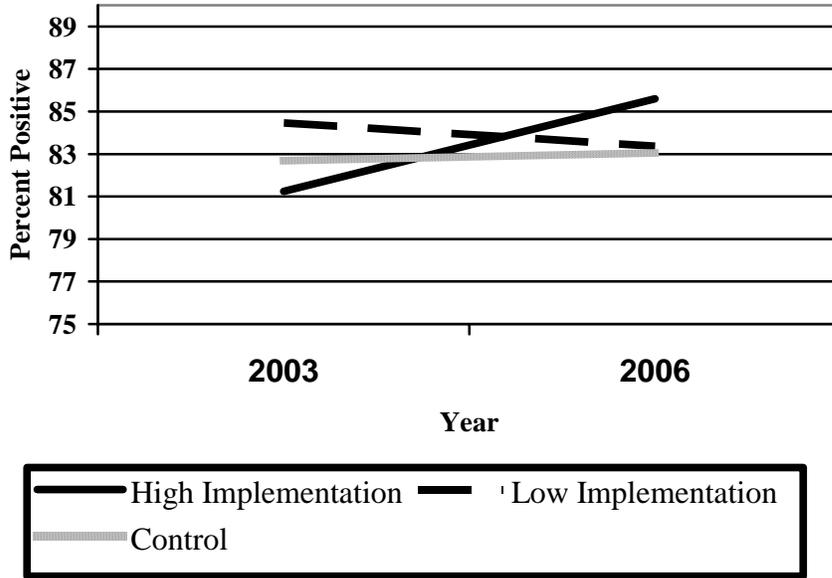


Figure 18. Staff Culture of Collaboration for High CSC, Low CSC and Control Schools (F = 4.84, df = 2/36, p < .05, Effect Size = .21)

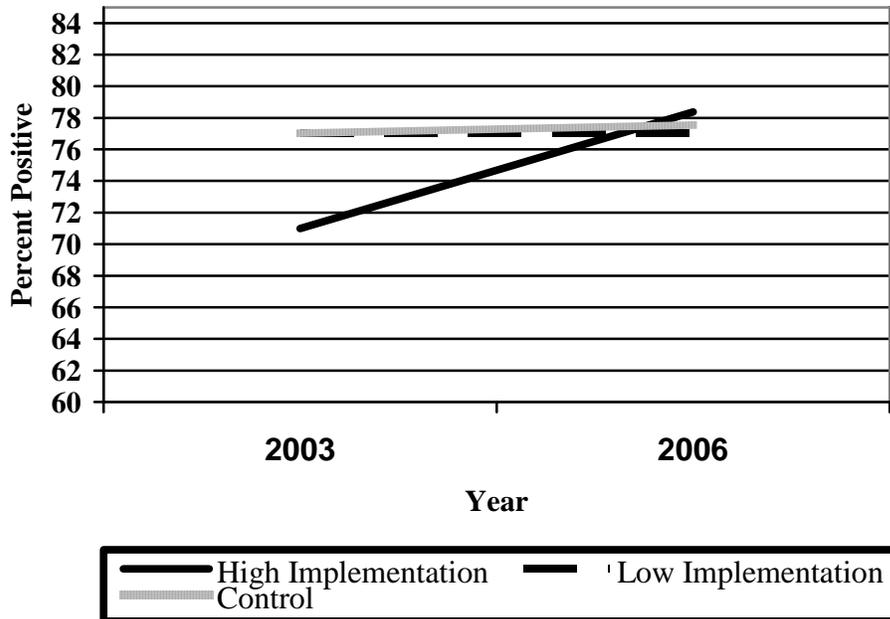
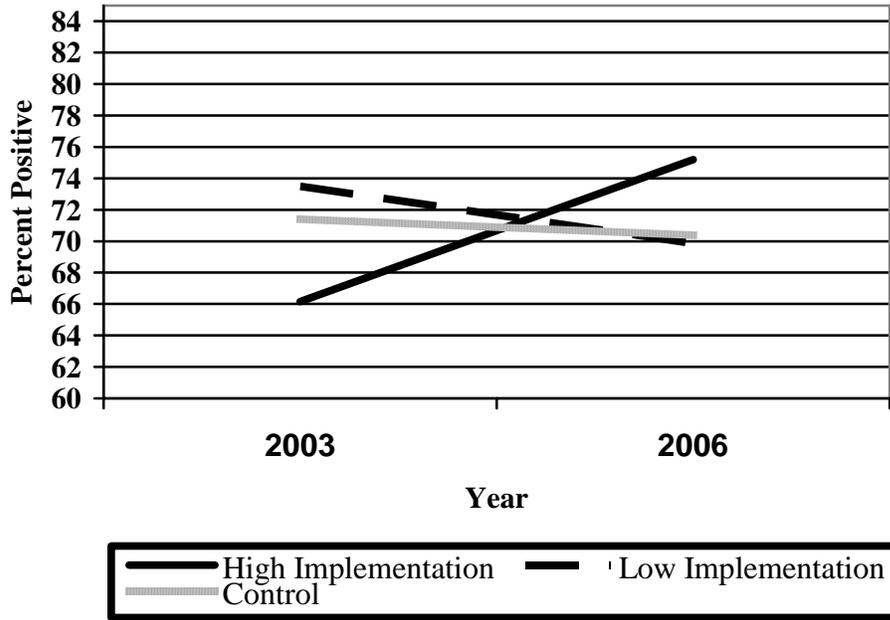


Figure 19. Staff Perceptions of School Leadership for High CSC, Low CSC and Control Schools (F = 14.16, df = 2/36, p < .01, Effect Size = .44)



Impact on Student Behavior

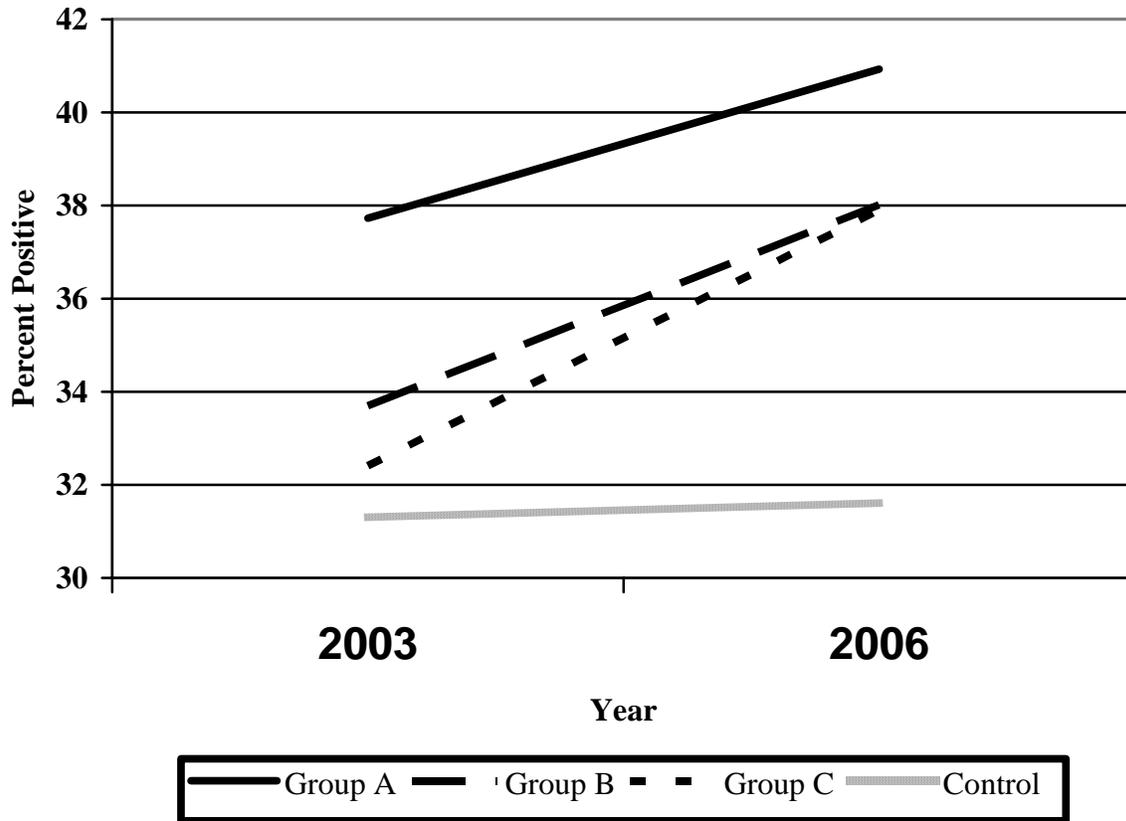
Significant positive change²⁷ with high effect size²⁸ occurred for implementation schools compared to the control group for Students’ Sense of Autonomy and Influence (see Figure 20). This result is especially important since this factor was the focal point in the Plan Implement Refine planning process for most treatment schools.

Improved Student Discipline. Student behavior referrals decreased for treatment schools compared to the control schools. The treatment schools were those in Groups A, B and

²⁷ Since positive change for treatment schools compared to control schools were the differences of interest in this study, a directional hypothesis was employed; repeated measures design, aggregated school data.

²⁸ ES ≥ .14.

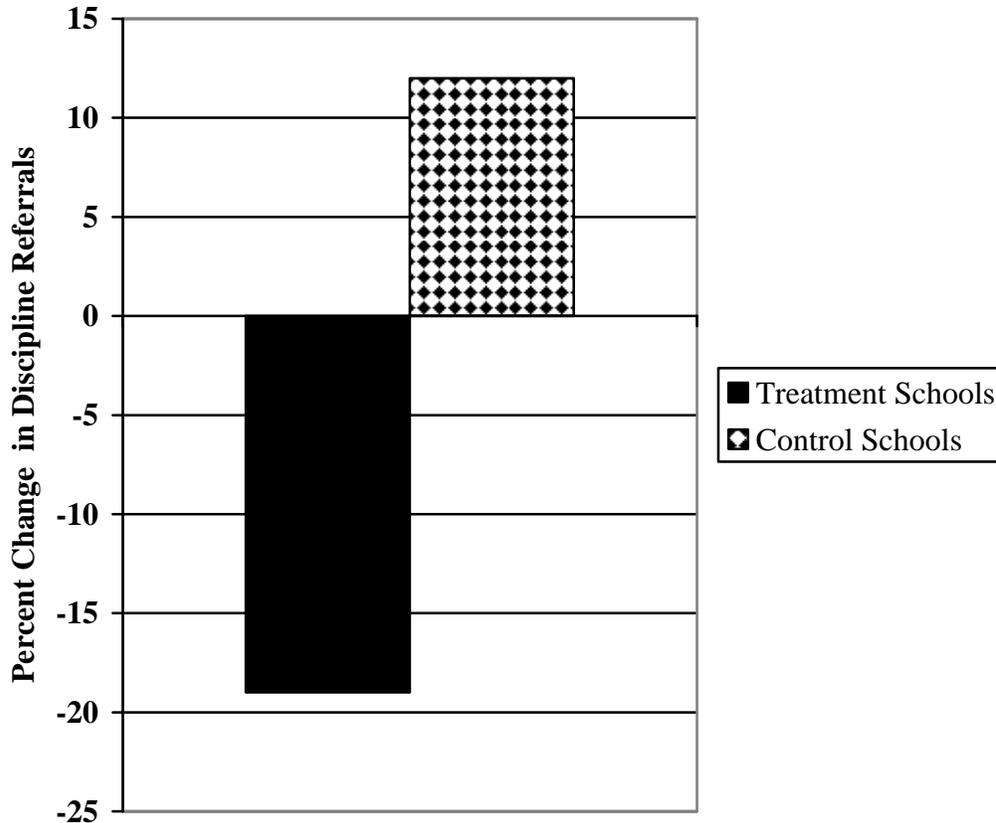
Figure 20. Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence for CSC Treatment and Control Schools ($F = 2.49$, $df = 3/35$, $p < .05$, Effect Size = .18)



C and control schools were those in Group D. From 2004 to 2006, two school years, 20 treatment schools and 4 control schools provided complete data for analysis. There was a significant²⁹ 19% decline in student discipline referrals in treatment schools while there was a 12% increase in student referrals in control schools. This is illustrated in Figure 21.

²⁹ Using $p \leq .05$ with a directional hypothesis.

Figure 21. Percent Change in Discipline Referrals for CSC Schools From 2004 - 2006 ($z = 1.68$, $p_{\text{Directional}} = .05$)



Relation to Student Achievement. Analysis of the baseline survey information confirmed a high positive relation between school culture and climate and school achievement³⁰ in math and reading. The results from the Missouri state-wide achievement tests were compellingly related to school health as defined by the climate factors. School climate accounted for 80% of the variation in math achievement (see Figure 22) and 86% of the variation in reading achievement among project schools (see Figure 23). These results indicate that the healthier the elementary school culture, the higher student math and reading achievement.

³⁰ The percent of students scoring “proficient” was used as the statistic for analysis.

Imbedded in healthy school culture are the quality of school leadership, collegiality of staff and excellence of classroom teaching, including collaborative learning structures, in the development of students' feelings of autonomy, belonging and competence.

Figure 22. Factors That Account for Differences Among CSC Schools in Math Achievement

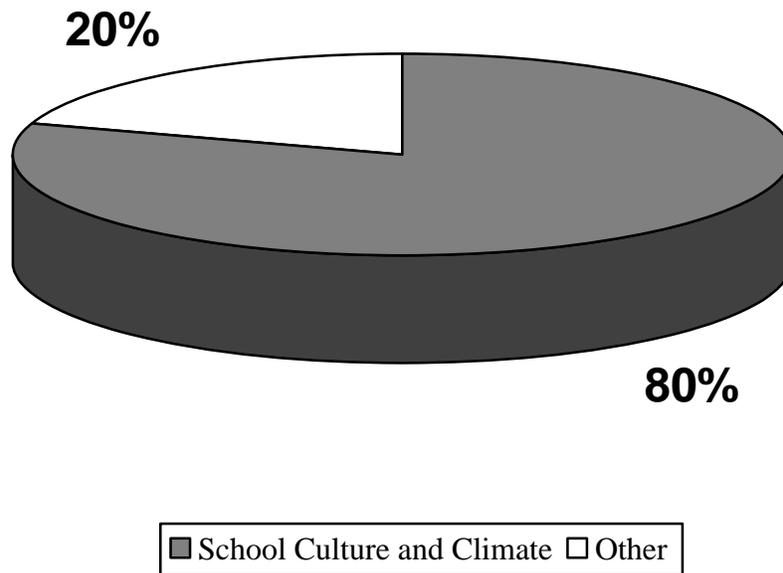
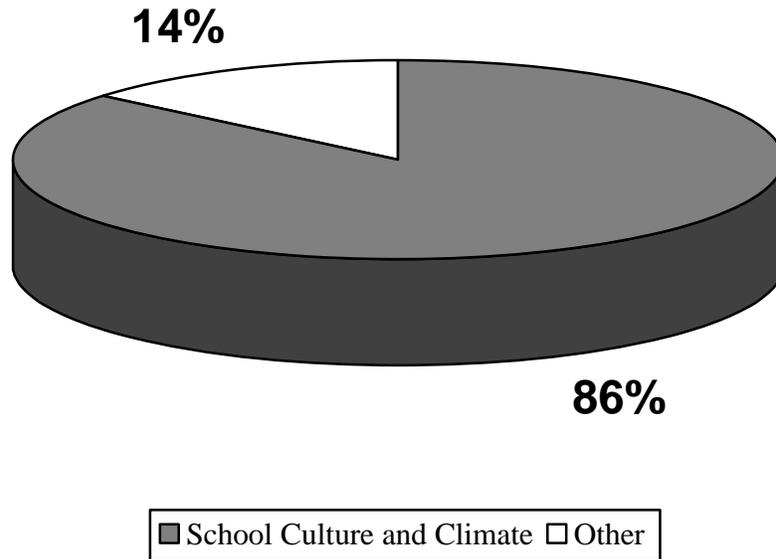


Figure 23. Factors That Account for Differences Among CSC Schools in Reading



Improved Student Achievement. Caring School Community™ The CHARACTERplus® Way had a significant positive impact on student achievement in both math and communication arts. The 2006 aggregate school results were compared, statistically controlling for the 2003 levels of achievement. The math results (see Figures 24 and 25) suggest the impact of the program on math is within the first year with incremental change in subsequent years. While the effect found was moderately high for the three treatment groups (see Figure 24), it was statistically significant when the three treatment groups (see Figure 25) were combined for comparison to the control group. The effect of Caring School Community™ The CHARACTERplus® Way was more pronounced for communication arts with noteworthy positive change in achievement levels associated with each year in the treatment program (see Figure 26). This “stair stepping” effect was dramatic with only 38% of the students in control

schools achieving in communication arts at the proficient or advanced levels; 46% of the students with one year of program treatment achieving at this level; 50% of the students in schools with two years of program treatment; and 56% of the students in schools with three years of program treatment. These results yielded a high effect size of .22.

Figure 24. Math Student Achievement Aggregated by School for Spring 2006 Controlling for Spring 2003 Achievement Levels ($F = 1.86$, $df = 3/32$, $p = .15$, Effect Size = .14)

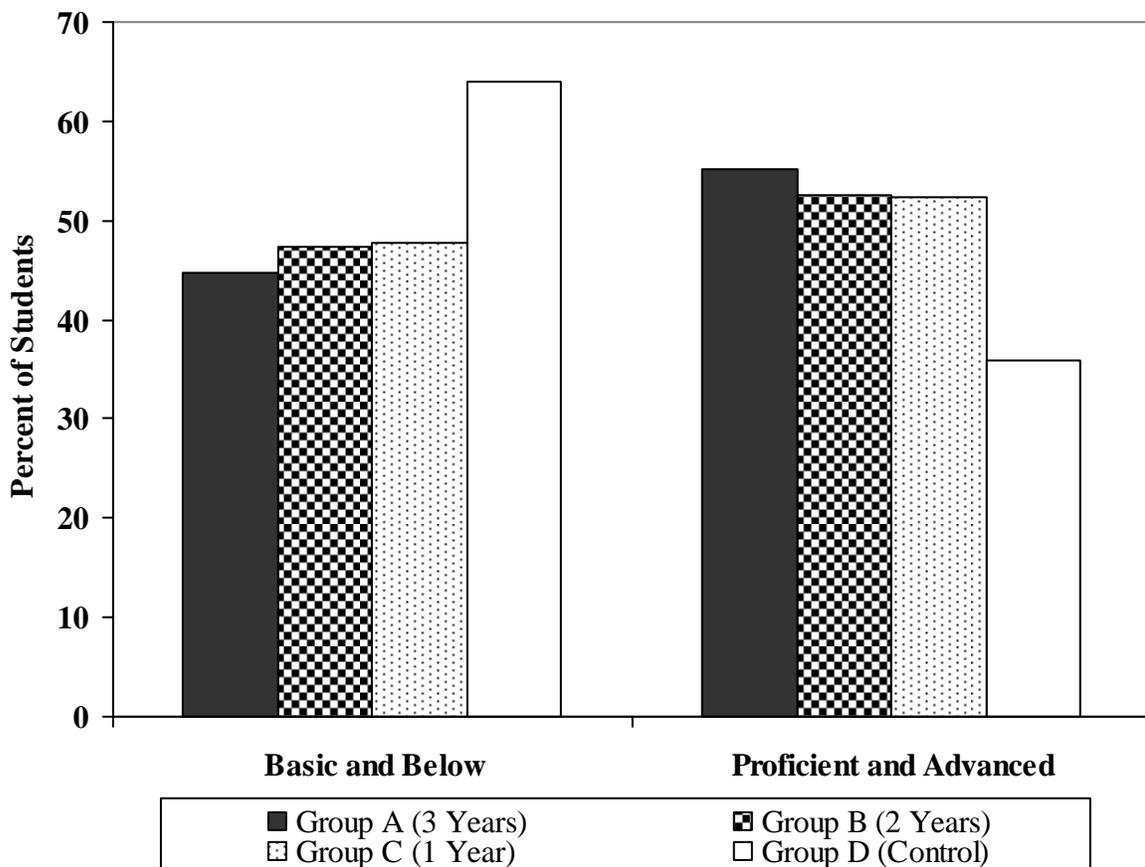


Figure 25. Math Student Achievement Aggregated by School Comparing Treatment and Control Schools for Spring 2006 Controlling for Spring 2003 Achievement Levels ($F = 4.90$, $df = 1/35$, $p < .05$, Effect Size = .12)

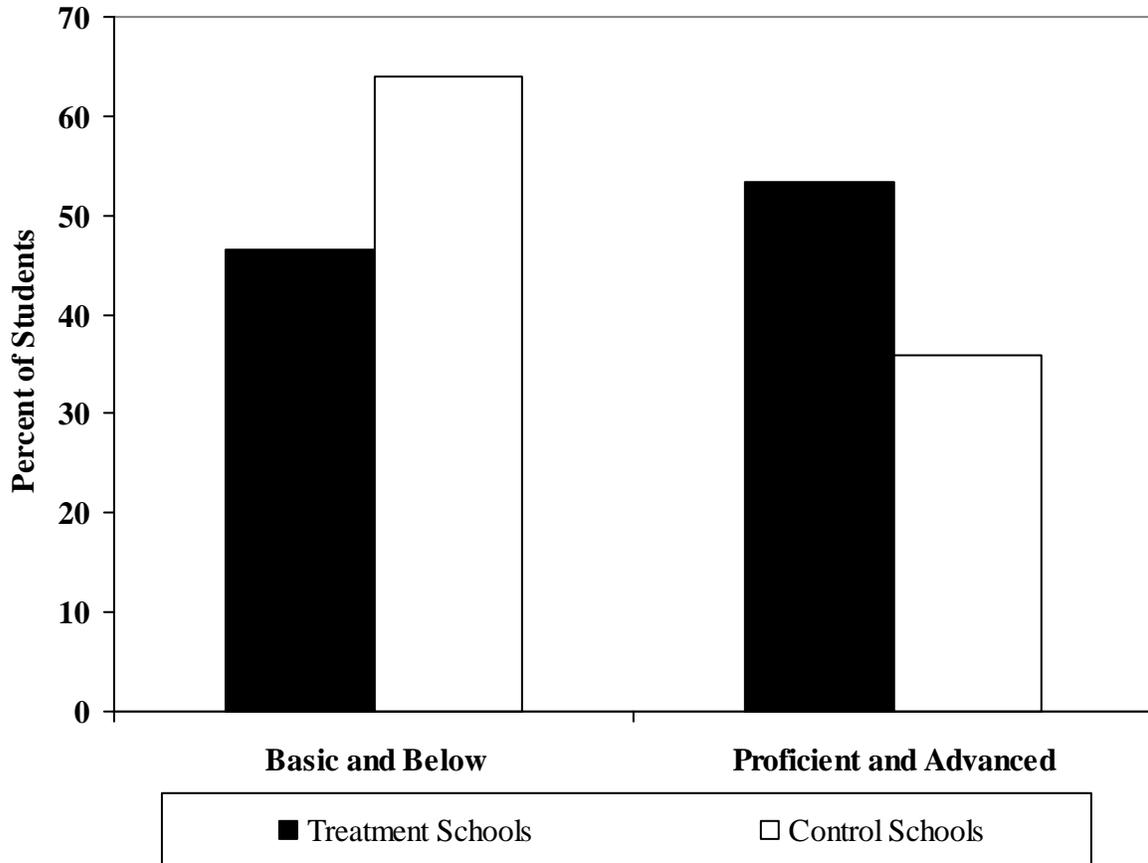
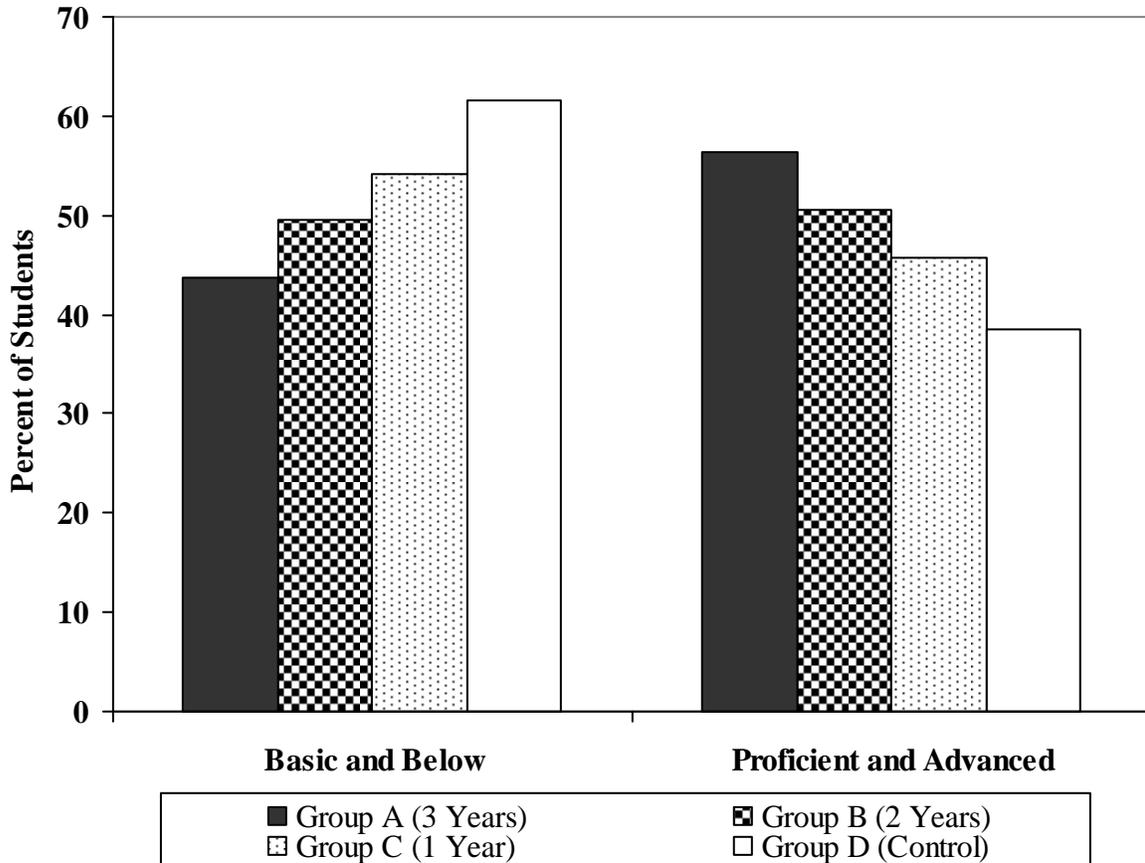


Figure 26. Communication Arts Student Achievement Aggregated by School for Spring 2006 Controlling for Spring 2003 Achievement Levels (F = 3.03, df = 3/32, p < .05, Effect Size = .22)



Final Comments

The results of Caring School Community™ The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way four-year experimental implementation in 40 randomly selected and placed schools provided evidence of strong impact on the culture and climate of the schools. The result is healthier schools for both staff and students with decreased student discipline problems, increased students’ sense of autonomy and influence, and increased levels of student achievement in both math and communication arts.

Section 4: ShowMe Character™ Federally Funded³¹ Project August 1, 2004 – July 31, 2006

ShowMe Character™³² is the integration of CHARACTER^{plus}® and the four components of Caring School Community™. It is a four-year project being implemented in a semi-rural county school district. Reported here are the results after two years of project implementation.

Research Process

Fifteen³³ of the 46 schools in the district were randomly placed in the treatment group stratified by region of the district and school level (elementary, middle and secondary). The remaining schools served as research controls. The data producing sample included 42³⁴ schools.

Survey data were collected in March of 2005 and February 2006 from parents³⁵, certified staff and 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 11th grade students. The annual data producing samples for staff were about 1,300 and for students nearly 7,000. Student discipline referrals were available from the district for both project years.

³¹ Project funded by U. S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, Fund for the Improvement of Education, Partnerships in Character Education Program, Grant Q215S040073. All statements contained in this report are strictly those of the authors and do not represent, in any way, the official view or policy of the U. S. Department of Education. CHARACTER^{plus}® is a registered trademark of Cooperating School Districts, St. Louis, Missouri. Caring School Community™ is a service mark of Developmental Studies Center, Oakland, California. ShowMe Character™ is a service mark of International Learning Services, Inc., Orange Beach, Alabama, and Marshall Consulting, Rapid City, South Dakota.

³² A further modification and enhancement of this model is currently being implemented in the 13 school districts in Madison County, Illinois, under the designation The CHARACTER^{plus}® Way, Grant Q215S060127. Breaking from the model described in this report, the Madison project splits the training into smaller units beginning in the fall of the first implementation year and includes an initial short principals' training module.

³³ Three additional schools were special schools that are not included in the data analysis.

³⁴ 10 elementary treatment schools, 4 secondary treatment schools, 18 elementary control schools, and 10 secondary control schools.

³⁵ Parent survey results are not presented here due to small return samples.

Process Description

The implementation process for ShowMe Character™ project followed the process described in Section 1 of the monograph. The initial training focused on the CHARACTER^{plus} Ten Essentials and data-based decision making using the PIR model. During the year, collaborative structures were introduced with training emphasis on cooperative learning and class meetings.

Concurrently with, but independent from, ShowMe Character™ the district implemented a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) program. Both PBIS and ShowMe Character™ focused on emphasizing positive student behavior. The core behaviors for students were identified and integrated into the school program. The two initiatives differed fundamentally in their focus for student motivation. PBIS emphasized motivating students through the distribution of extrinsic reward for positive behavior while ShowMe Character™ emphasized the development of pro-social student behavior through intrinsic motivation – doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do.

Survey Descriptions

Implementation Survey. The ShowMe Character™ Implementation Survey, administered to certified staff annually, was organized by the topology of context, process and content of the program. The six factors assessed were:

CONTEXT	PROCESS	CONTENT
Learning Community School Leadership	Staff Collaboration School Climate Ten Essentials	Practices and Student Behavior ³⁶

³⁶ School and Classroom Practices and Student Pro-social Behavior.

The context and process components represented school culture and climate while the content module embodied classroom practices and student social behavior.

Staff Survey. The Staff Survey included the following seven factors:

- Students' Feelings of Belonging
- Students' Sense of School as a Community
- Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence
- Parent & Staff Relations
- Staff Culture of Belonging; School Leadership
- Parent Involvement at School

Student Survey. The Student Survey also included seven factors:

- Students' Feelings of Belonging
- Students' Sense of School as a Community
- Students' Sense of Autonomy and Influence
- Students' Feelings of Competence
- Students' Sense of School Safety
- Parent Involvement at School
- Parent Involvement at Home

Results

Healthy Schools: Positive Change in School Culture and Climate

The survey results reported here represent an 11-month time period from March 2005 to February 2006; actual treatment was for six months from mid-August 2005 until February 2006. School culture was assessed using the Implementation Survey administered to certified school staff in each of the project schools. Repeated measures analyses yielded significant positive

growth for the treatment schools compared to the control schools for five of the six implementation factors assessed. The effect sizes³⁷ were medium to very large.

Positive growth was noted for the following school and classroom outcomes:

- **Improved Safe Learning Community** (see Figure 27) – School has a safe, orderly learning environment; students are supported emotionally and academically; parents have opportunities to experience the school as a learning community; school leaders understand the characteristics of a program to build a caring environment; administration, staff, and students share the core values of the school.
- **Better Leadership Support** (see Figure 28) – District leaders visit the school on a regular basis; school climate data are collected from parents, students, staff, and community members; staff analyze and discuss the implications of data collected from parents, staff, and students; budget and other resources are provided to develop and sustain a caring school environment; and school and district leaders support implementation of a program to build positive school climate.
- **Healthier School Climate** (see Figure 29) – Staff create partnerships with parents; students take part in setting classroom norms and rules; student pairs work collaboratively on activities that are aligned to the academic curriculum; students learn to work cooperatively; and students feel competent that they can achieve academic success.
- **Greater Staff Collaboration** (see Figure 30) – Teachers collaborate on instructional planning; staff share ideas, strategies, and successes; staff form collaborative teams; staff engage together in reflection on the results of instructional activities; and teachers take a major role in shaping the school’s norms, values, and practices.

³⁷ Effect size (ES) is the name given to the index that measures the magnitude of a treatment effect. Small ES \leq .06; .06 < Medium ES < .14; Large ES \geq .14. See <http://web.uccs.edu/lbecker/Psy590/es.htm>, October 11, 2006.

- **Improved School and Classroom Practices and Student Pro-social Behavior** (see Figure 31) – Cross-age student pairs engage in interviewing, listening, speaking, and helping; students are taught to reflect on their personal values; take-home activities relate to academic, social, citizenship themes that are important to the instructional program; reflection is encouraged on what has been learned from experiences of working together; and students have a sense of democratic values.
- **Implementation of the Ten Essentials** (see Figure 32) – Specific character traits have been defined for this school (or district); students reflect on character traits in our education process; character education is defined in terms of core ethical values; character traits defined for this school/district include both thinking and feeling; district commitment for the character education processes is evident by high levels of continuous support; our character process is infused throughout the school day; all school staff help carry out the school’s character education process; our character education process is planned and proactive; frequent communications on character education are common among the school, parents, and broader community; regular assessments are made of students, parents, and staff to check the impact of the character education process.

Figure 27. School as a Learning Community (F = 3.61, df = 1/38, p_{Directional} < .05, Effect Size = .09)

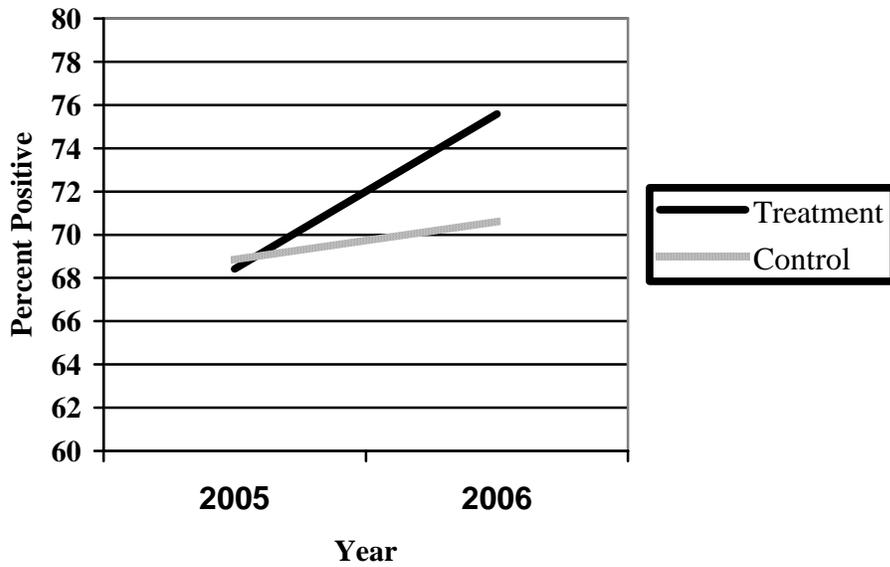


Figure 28. Leadership Support (F = 9.10, df = 1/38, p_{Directional} < .01, Effect Size = .20)

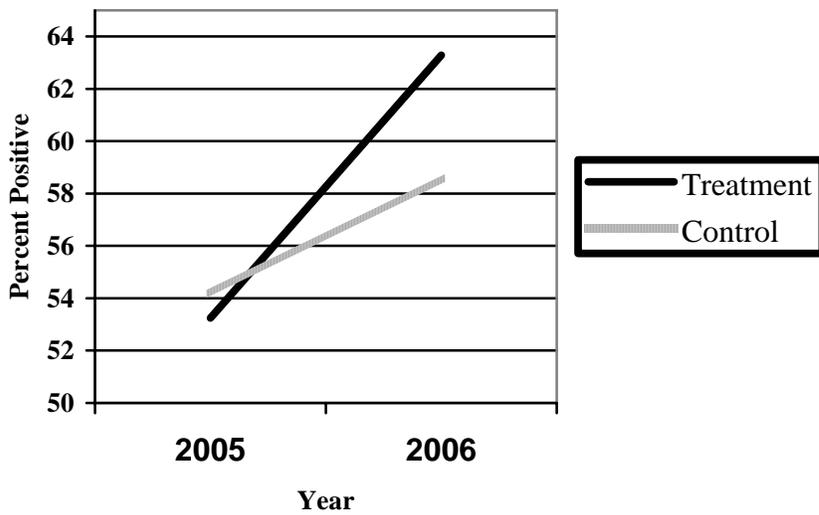


Figure 29. Healthy School Climate ($F = 3.92$, $df = 1/38$, $p_{\text{Directional}} < .05$, Effect Size = .09)

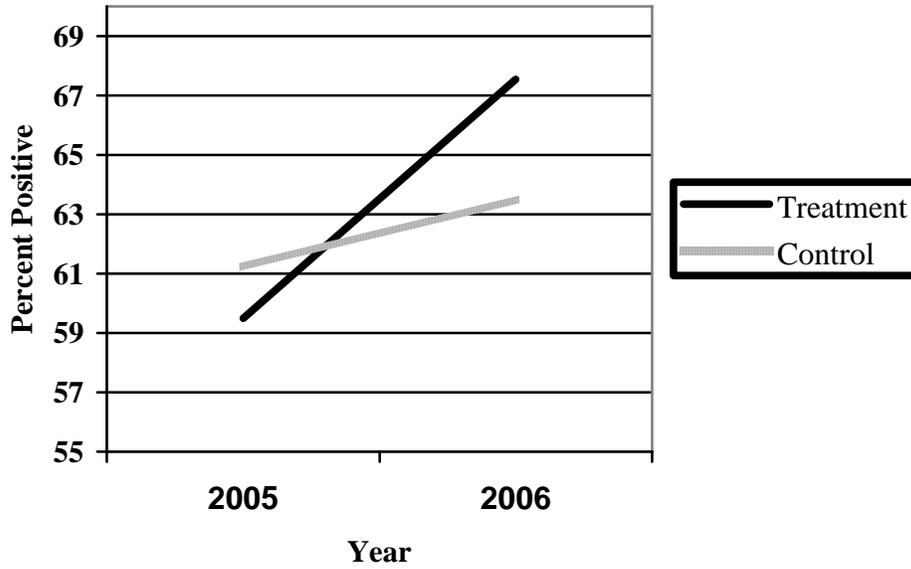


Figure 30. Staff Collaboration ($F = 4.81$, $df = 1/38$, $p_{\text{Directional}} < .05$, Effect Size = .11)

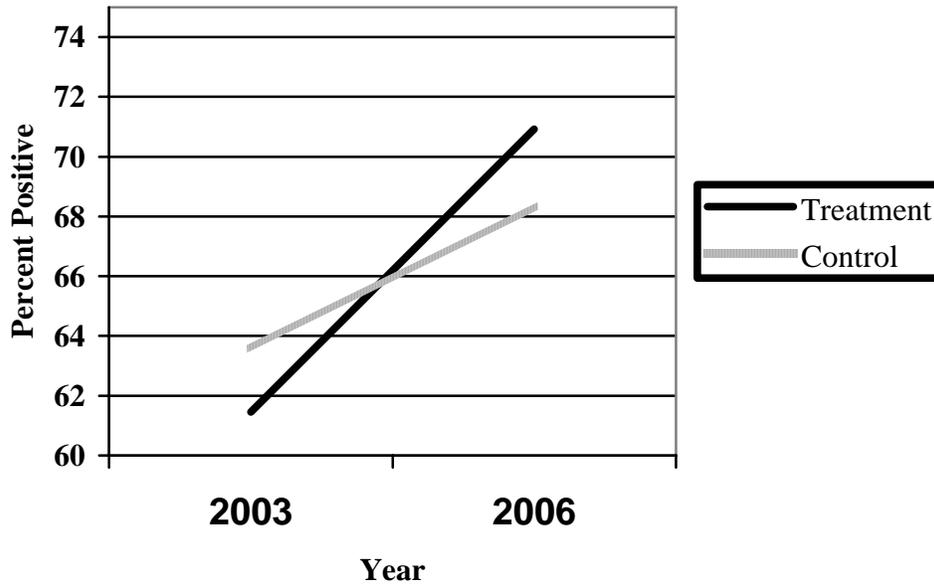


Figure 31. Practices and Student Behavior (F = 8.31, df = 1/38, p_{Directional} < .01, Effect Size = .19)

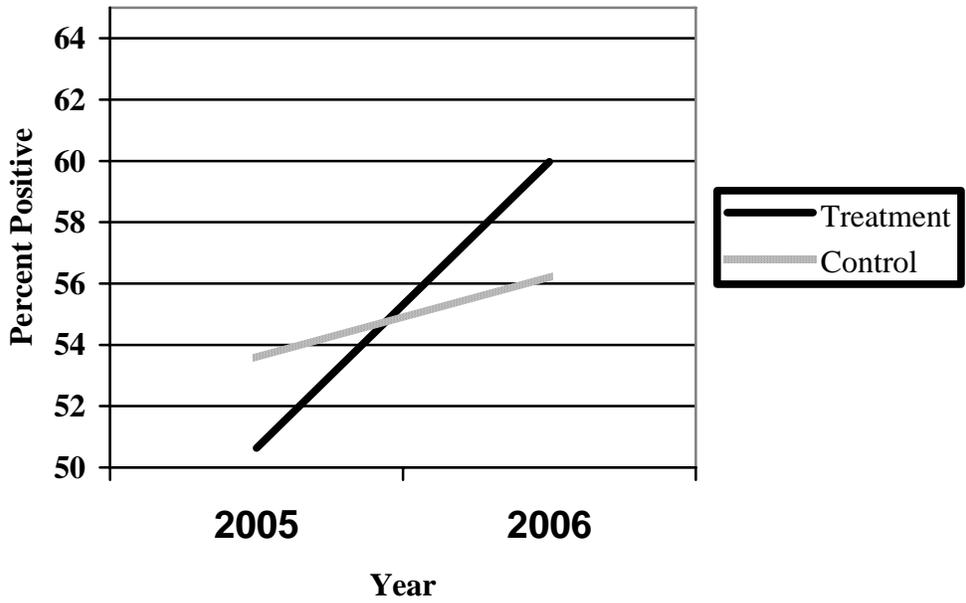
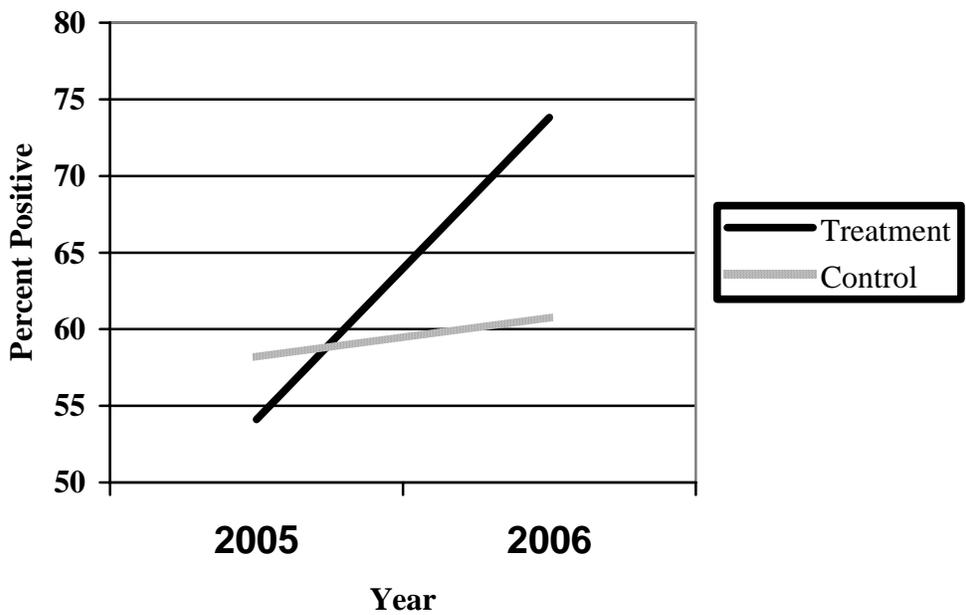


Figure 32. Ten Essentials (F = 69.84, df = 1/38, p_{Directional} < .01, Effect Size = .65)



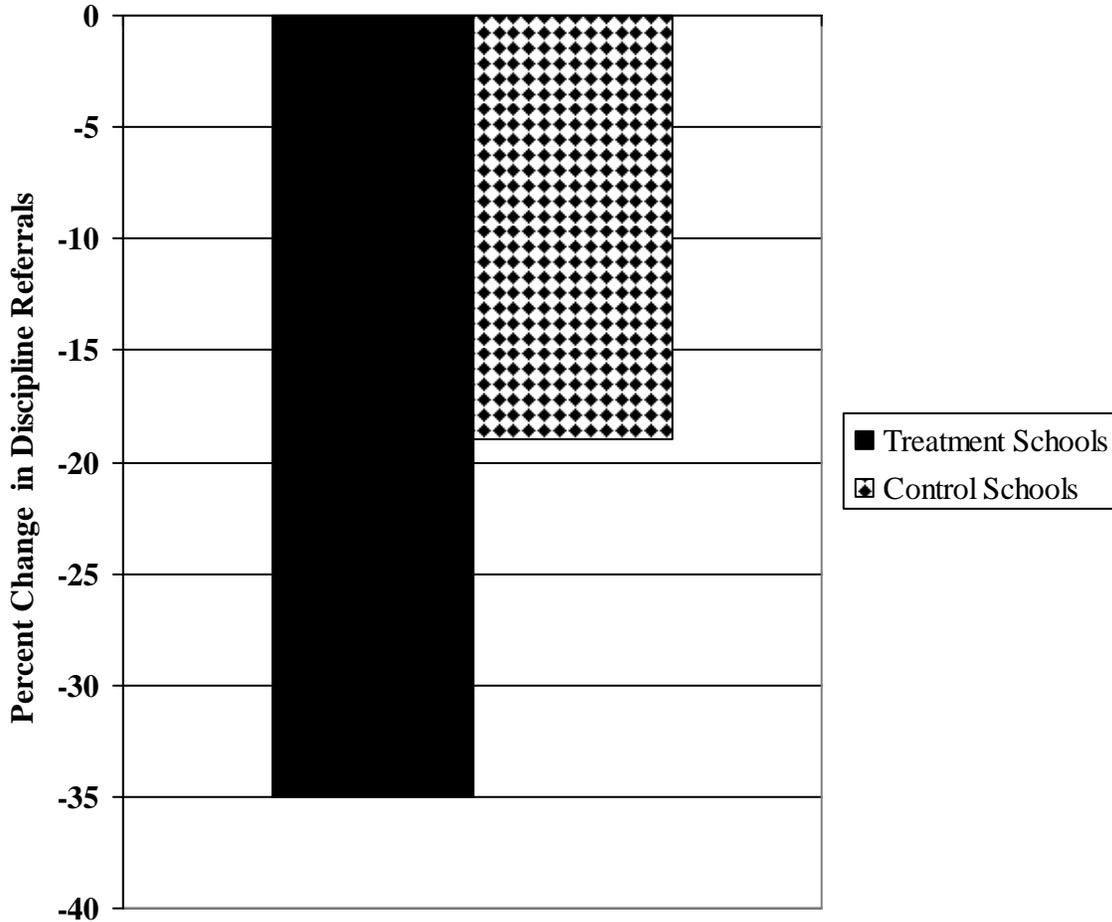
The largest effect size was for implementation of the Ten Essentials, which supports the effectiveness of the summer training and networking sessions with follow-up support from project coaches during the fall. The Staff Survey did not provide additional impact information.

Impact on Students

Results from the Student Survey suggested that there was incremental change on most factors for treatment schools compared to control schools at the elementary level. This was not found for the secondary level.

Improved Student Discipline. Student discipline referrals dropped significantly for both treatment and control schools from the 2004-2005 school year to the 2005-2006 school year. The largest drop was in the ShowMe Character™ schools (see Figure 33). When analyzed by discipline category, the average number of referrals for 2004-2005 was for treatment schools 23.52 and for control schools 21.22. For the treatment schools there was a drop of 8.21 referrals per category for 35% in 2005-2006 and for the control schools a drop of 4.08 referrals for 19%. The control schools likely showed the effects of the PBIS program and the treatment schools showed the effects of both the PBIS and ShowMe Character™. This causal connection can be accounted for by the random placement of the schools into the treatment and control groups.

Figure 33. Percent Change in Discipline Referrals by Category From 2005 - 2006 ($t = 1.87$, $df = 2318$, $p_{\text{Directional}} < .05$)



Final Comments

The results of the ShowMe Character™ implementation are particularly strong in light of the short term of the treatment. Implementation of the program showed significant impact on the school culture and climate, both at the organizational level and the classroom level. The impact was strongest in the elementary schools. Student pro-social behavior was directly impacted as shown in the large drop in discipline referrals.

Section 5: CHARACTER^{plus}®
Missouri CHARACTER^{plus} State-Wide Implementation
State Funded Project
July 1, 2001 – September 30, 2006

The Missouri CHARACTER^{plus} state program is the longest continuous implementation of the CHARACTER^{plus} process with annual assessment of staff, students and parents. This process has been funded by the State of Missouri since 2001. The initial schools were selected through a state-wide application procedure. Eighty schools were selected for assessment and training services. During the following five years, over 120 schools have availed themselves of the services provided for one, two, or more years. Twenty-nine schools have continued with the program from its inception. These are the schools included in this study.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process for this program is the pretest-posttest assessment of schools that have self-selected to be with the program for all five implementation years. Survey data were collected each February starting 2002 and continuing through 2006 from parents, staff and 4th, 8th, and 11th grade students. The annual data producing samples for the 29 schools were about 750 parents, 800 staff and 2,400 students.

The staff members were administered the Implementation and the Staff Surveys each year. The Implementation Survey was organized around the Eleven Principles established by the Character Education Partnership and included items representing both the Eleven Principles³⁸ and the Ten Essentials³⁹. The Staff Survey included the following five factors: Students' Feelings of Belonging; School Expectations; Parent & Staff Relations; Staff Culture of

³⁸ See Section 1: The CHARACTER^{plus} Process for definitions of the Eleven Principles.

³⁹ See Preface for definitions of the Ten Essentials

Belonging and School Leadership. The Student Survey included the following six factors: Feelings of Belonging; School Expectations; Sense of Autonomy & Influence; Sense of Altruism; Feelings of Competence; and Parent Involvement. The Parent Survey contained the following four factors: Students' Feelings of Belonging; School Expectations; Parent and Staff Relations; and School Quality. High scores on the surveys represent a healthy school culture with a positive climate.

Program Description

The Missouri CHARACTER^{plus} implementation project consisted of the following three components: Assessment and Planning; Training; and Support. During February, each year, the parent, staff, student and implementation surveys were administered within each school. The data report was provided schools either in the late spring or early fall for use in planning.

Training consisted of regional meetings for the Ten Essentials process, instructions for administration of the surveys to schools, and focus workshops offered to schools. These site-based workshops included such topics as bullying, strategies for integrating character education, and implementation strategies for the Ten Essentials.

The program staff conducted the training and met locally with School Leadership Teams. These teams typically included an administrator, parent or community member, and three professional staff members. Most of the support and training was based on the expressed needs of the schools. All schools were visited by project staff at least twice a year and some schools were visited as much as six or seven times during a year.

Results

Healthy Schools: Positive Change in School Culture and Climate

CHARACTER^{plus}® is focused on the improvement of school culture so that the school is a healthier place for both staff and students. The school culture is represented by both the Ten Essentials and the Eleven Principles of a school of character. School culture was assessed using the Implementation Survey, administered to certified school staff in each school. Repeated measures analyses for the 29 participant schools provided strong positive results for all Eleven Principles. Analyses showed large significant ($p < .01$) gains over the five-year span of the program. The effect size⁴⁰ for CHARACTER^{plus} was very large.

Over the five years of participation in CHARACTER^{plus}, there were the following school and classroom outcomes:

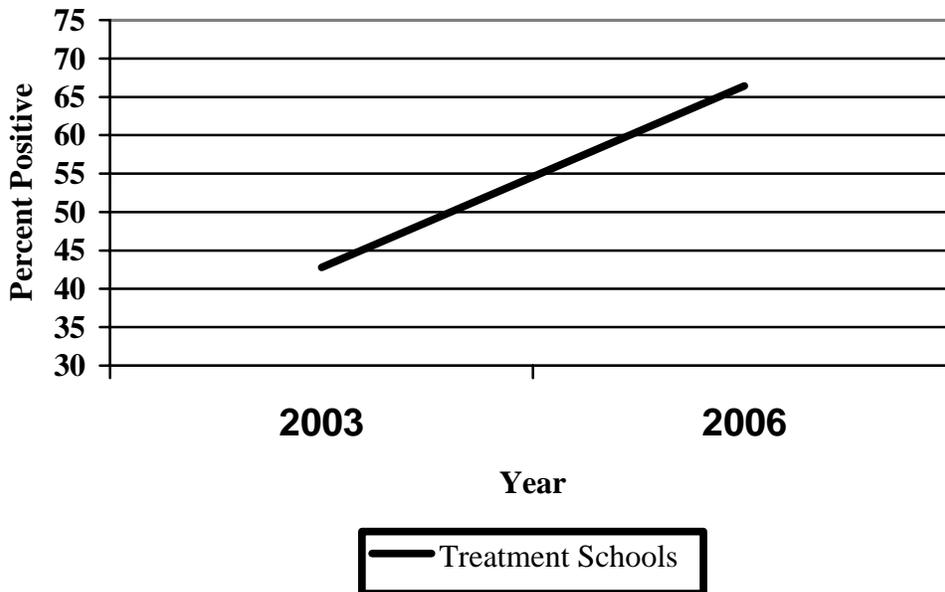
- **Agreement on Core Values.** Parents, staff and others more frequently determined the core ethical values (or character traits) for their schools.
- **Improved Moral Leadership.** Both staff members and students are more involved in carrying out the character education processes in the school; staff members are more likely to provide moral leadership.
- **Improved Adult Role Modeling.** Staff members are more likely to model character traits, engage in character-related discussion groups, and help to carry out the character education program.
- **More Opportunities to Demonstrate Character.** Schools are more likely to provide students with opportunities to carry out moral actions.

⁴⁰ Effect size (ES) is the name given to the index that measures the magnitude of a treatment effect. Small $ES \leq .06$; $.06 < \text{Medium ES} < .14$; Large $ES \geq .14$. See <http://web.uccs.edu/lbecker/Psy590/es.htm>, October 11, 2006. The overall effect size for CHARACTER^{plus}® was .74.

- **Improved Academics with Integrated Character Development.** Students are more likely to be provided age appropriate academic opportunities for learning and to develop their special abilities; character development is more often integrated into these academic activities.
- **Increased District Support.** Schools are more likely to have a planned, proactive character education program supported by the district that provides opportunities for students to learn good character.

These fundamental changes in school culture are illustrated in Figure 34 with an overall analysis of aggregate school implementation information.

Figure 34. Implementation Levels for 29 CHARACTER^{plus} Missouri Schools on the Eleven Principles
($F = 8.34$, $df = 1/28$, $p < .01$, Effect Size = .74)



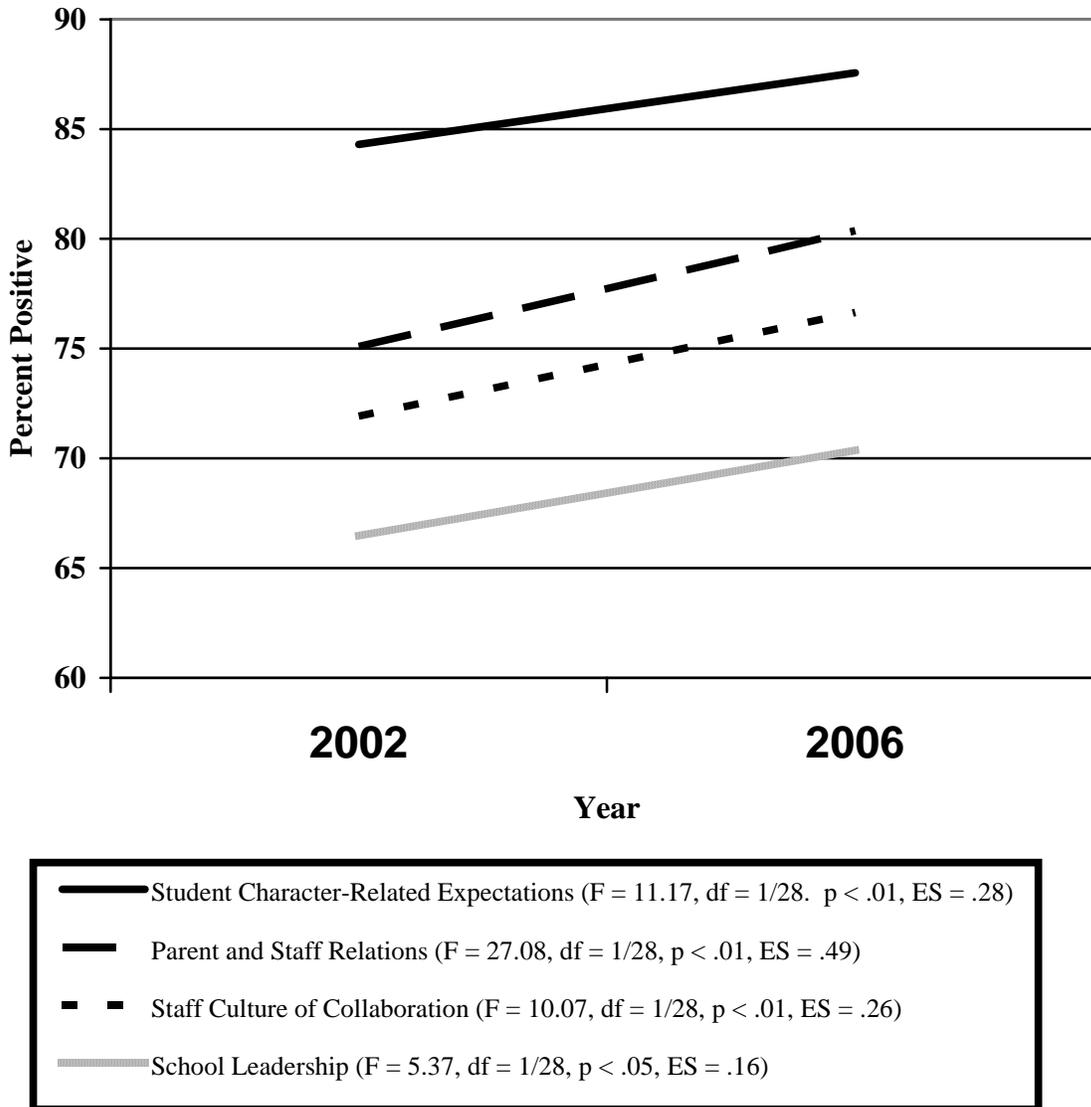
This impressive improvement in school culture and climate was reinforced by the results from the Staff Survey. These schools demonstrated⁴¹ positive change on four of the five factors assessed. These gains, with large effect sizes⁴², are listed below (see Figure 35).

- **Improved Students' Feelings of Belonging.** Students are nicer to each other; they work better together and get along better; they take better care of school property and make new students feel welcome; they respect their teachers and are more responsible; they treat each other more fairly, think it's more important to be good citizens, and tell the truth; they more often feel that they are treated fairly by the adults in the school.
- **Improved School - Parent Relations.** School staff members become more caring about parents and their families, treat parents with respect, make parents feel welcome at school, value parents' ideas and input, more often encourage parents to be involved at school, and communicate more effectively with parents.
- **Improved Staff Culture of Collaboration.** School staff members are more supportive of one another, more cooperative and help each other more, and more often provide good counsel when there are teaching problems; more often share the same beliefs about the central mission of the school; less likely to fall into conflicting cliques.
- **Better Leadership.** Both the administrators and teachers take more active roles in school activities; things are better organized; the needed resources are more often available to get the job done; staff members are more frequently recognized for a job well done; staff members are more likely to be involved in decisions which affect them; there is greater interest in the school in innovation and new ideas.

⁴¹ The results were analyzed based on school aggregate data using repeated measures design comparing 2002 baseline and 2006 outcome results.

⁴² ES \geq .14.

Figure 35. Significant Staff Factors for Missouri Implementation Schools



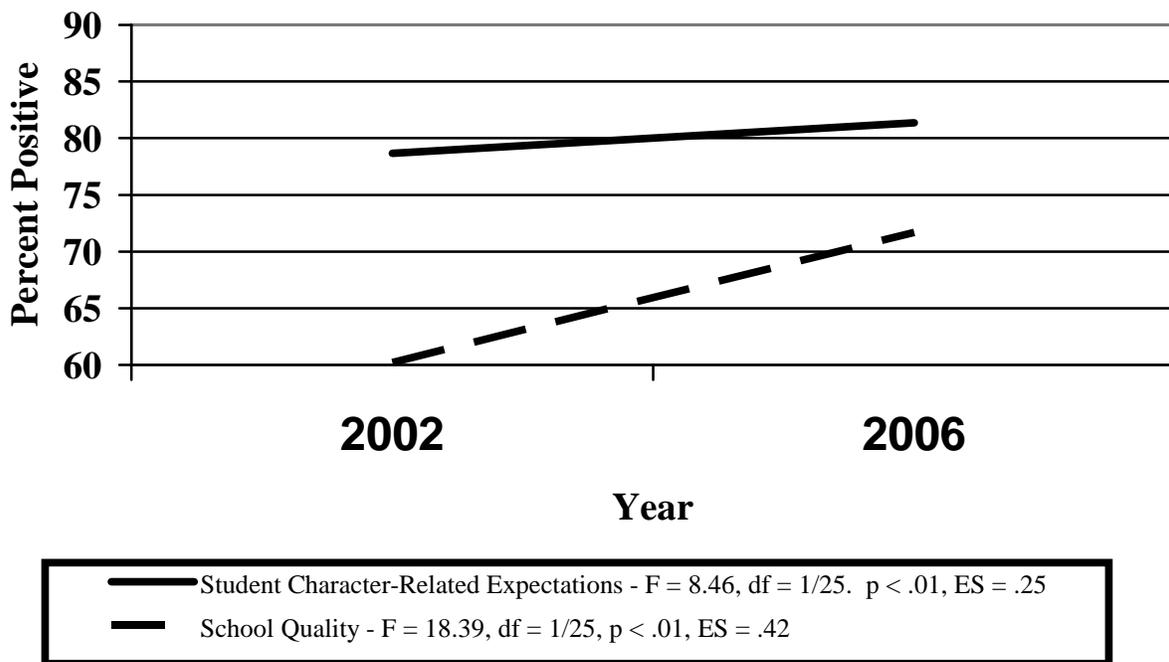
These outcomes suggest that when CHARACTER^{plus}® is implemented large changes in school health occur resulting in better learning environments for both staff and students.

Impact on Parents and Students

Parent results were determined using repeated measures design for the 2002 and 2006 survey data. Most of the factors were stable over this time period; however, there were

significant ($p < .01$) positive changes in parents' perceptions of students' character-related expectations and their ratings of school quality (see Figure 36). No significant changes were found on the student surveys.

Figure 36. Significant Parent Factors for Missouri Implementation Schools



Final Comments

The results of the Missouri CHARACTER^{plus}® implementation process over five years in 29 continuously participating schools provide strong relational evidence of impact of the process on the culture and climate of schools. The result of implementing the CHARACTER^{plus}® process is healthier schools for both staff and students.