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A Meeting of Character: An Examination of Teaching Social

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A MEETING OF CHARACTER: AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHING SOCIAL DECISION MAKING/SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING (SDM/SPS) CHARACTER EDUCATION USING CLASSROOM MEETINGS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BY
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Tom, my Husband, my rock, my strength.

My Dad, George Olson, my first editor, who spent countless hours helping me revise, deserves his own diploma in editing.

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My Committee – Dr. Randy Larsen and Dr. Ernestine Riggs, and finally my Chair, Dr. Brigid Schultz, for your support through this endeavor to complete this project.
DEDICATION

To all the people in this world who make a difference…anyway.

Anyway

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered; forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; give the world the best you have anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God; it was never between you and them anyway.

– Mother Teresa
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ABSTRACT

The study’s purpose was to examine student and teacher perceptions of classroom meetings by using the lessons in Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS)—as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005). The research problem determined whether SDM/SPS lessons taught in classroom meetings were a good strategy to teach character education.

The study quantitatively measured participant perceptions of classroom meetings regarding the classroom environment while implementing the character education program SDM/SPS. First, students’ perceptions of classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, were quantitatively measured using a survey. Second, teachers responded to a survey to identify their perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits. Finally, students’ perceptions of their peers were measured using a quantitative survey to identify students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits.

The research questions were: (1) What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers? (2) What is the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within
the context of classroom meetings? (3) What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?

Findings revealed that classroom meetings are an effective tool to teach character education, where the classroom teacher teaches SDM/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, as measured by students’ perceptions of their peers’ character traits and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits. Within these classrooms, teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits had many statistically significant correlations. In addition, students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits had several statistically significant correlations.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, leaders in religion, politics, and the community have sought to instill their moral values into their social groups. Although the definitions of “moral” varied, the effort to impose standards of behavior based on moral values remained consistent. Lickona (1991) offers several workable definitions; for example, character is “moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior” (p. 51). Lickona continues by defining good character as “knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action” (p. 51). Lickona describes character education as “the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values” (p. 32).

In education, the reality is that schools are experiencing more violence and need more proactive and preventive measures in place to deal with school violence (Belkin, 2009; Turchin, 2008). The media increasingly report that gang activity, teenage sexual activity, teenage suicide, and underage drinking all have increased; these increases show the need for moral education (Eckholm, 2008; Harris, 2007; Sigal, 2008). Clearly, students need effective tools to deal with the emotions and conflicts that they encounter personally.

Educators must also consider the diverse student populations, which include different family structures, different cultural considerations, and different emotional
needs. These factors impact student learning, and educators must adapt their instruction to compensate (Edwards, 2000). Compounding the challenges are the students who have had traumatic experiences, difficult peer relationships, or problematic home environments. Often they are not mentally available to participate in learning or social interactions; they behave more provocatively and aggressively and often have a difficult time regulating their emotions (Edwards, 2000). This individual student behavior can be disruptive and create chaos within a classroom community. Frequently, this behavior is a byproduct of underdeveloped social skills (Edwards, 2000).

The goal of character education is to teach behavioral goals that will achieve a positive instructional setting, which can facilitate improved student behavior and academic achievement. Students must feel connected, welcomed, and safe in their schools; otherwise, they will not benefit from instruction (Korinek, Walther-Thomas, McLaughlin, & Williams, 1999). For students to maximize their learning potential, they must be emotionally available and also feel safe within the context of their individual classrooms. Students need opportunities to share things about themselves, to vent, and to feel safe in a supportive educational community (Obenchain & Abernathy, 2003).

There are different types of character education programs, but few character education models go beyond a didactic presentation of character traits. Currently, character education programs usually focus on lessons or activities teaching universally accepted virtues or traits such as trustworthiness, respect, honesty, civic responsibility, kindness, and courage. Instead of measuring student behavior quantitatively, much of the research qualitatively measures how teachers, students, and parents perceive that
character education programs have improved student behavior (Anderson, 2005; Costanzo, 2005; Goldberg, 2003; Hawkins, 2003; Headen, 2006; Moore, 2005; Olsen, 1995; Zimmerman, 2004). Educators need to address student relationships, social knowledge, and social behavior. There are age-appropriate, social competencies that students should acquire, such as using common courtesy, showing respect for teacher authority, not interrupting, and appropriately using “please” and “thank you” (Harriott & Martin, 2004). Students should demonstrate responsible social behaviors because classroom community-building activities foster necessary social competency skills (Harriott & Martin, 2004; Korinek et al., 1999).

Students also need to develop a repertoire of social competencies and prosocial skills (Korinek et al., 1999). Prosocial skills enable success both inside and outside the classroom (Korinek et al., 1999). Students experiencing social and emotional situations outside of the classroom often distract other students from learning. Control of emotions enables students’ ability to pay attention (Smith, 2001). Empathy in students can reduce school violence, and social competency can improve self-control (Smith, 2001). Students who possess developed social skills create a better learning environment in the classroom (Smith, 2001). For example, a student might not have the social skills to make a friend, which leads to social rejection and the student feeling isolated and lonely. This can lead to the student not focusing on classroom work. Teachers have the responsibility for teaching social competency skills (Harriott & Martin, 2004). So it follows that improved social competency will improve emotional control, thereby improving the education of the whole student (Smith, 2001).
Evolution of Character Education

The meaning of “character education” has evolved throughout history, and it includes shifts that mirror the social, moral, and political changes in our society. Christian beliefs served as the platform for early character education in the United States (McClellan, 1999). How this early form of character education evolved under sociopolitical forces provides valuable insight for educators. Seventeenth-century American colonists instilled their moral and social values through education, which was designed to spread the Christian faith and promote the Protestant work ethic (McClellan, 1999). The Puritan colonists brought with them a new emphasis on education that did not exist elsewhere. The motives were religious (Luedtke, 1992; Needleman, 2002; Perkins, 1957); many Americans believed that the most important establishment was the church (May, 1976). Colonial leaders hoped to use education to achieve their goal of becoming a pure community of Christians, which would then serve as an example to the rest of the world. During this period, New England colonies passed legislation that required literacy for children and the hiring of schoolmasters in towns. In Puritan New England, all children had to recite Puritan doctrines in school (Hunter, 2000; McClellan, 1999).

Around the time of the American Revolution and after, religious zeal in the New England colonies began to yield to principles of individual liberty, which was the underlying philosophy of John Locke; this gave birth to Revolution. These principles also influenced child rearing and evolved to allow significantly more time dedicated to play (McClellan, 1999). Nevertheless, schools in this period were still required to provide moral education for students (Hunter, 2000; McClellan, 1999).
Beginning in the 1830s, education reformers such as Horace Mann began to champion public schools for the masses, but even within the early public schools, character education remained dominated by Protestant values (Howard, Berkowitz, & Schaeffer, 2004; Hunter, 2000; McClellan, 1999). Public schools used morality-packed textbooks and the Bible to ensure that students received proper moral training (Field, 1996; McClellan, 1999). Schools taught strict obedience to religious beliefs, and the public law reinforced that attitude by requiring responsible and moral behavior in the communities (Hunter, 2000; McClellan, 1999). Christianity was important on the frontier and was an integral part of the American way of life (Luedtke, 1992; Perkins, 1957). In this period, the purpose of schools was to teach morality and religion (Hunter, 2000; May, 1976).

Beginning in the 1840s and 1850s, the Catholic population rapidly expanded in America. The incongruence of Catholicism with the established Protestant beliefs led Catholics to establish parochial schools, which taught Catholic traditions, morals, and beliefs. Meanwhile, Protestants continued to use the public school system as an avenue for spreading their doctrine within the context of character education (Howard et al., 2004). Religion remained pervasive in the American culture and still influences society today (Ledeen, 2000; Luedtke, 1992; May, 1976; Needleman, 2002).

Between 1890 and 1940, the changing needs of an increasingly industrial society in America led to corresponding changes in the education system. For example, the Modernist movement in education argued that vocational skills should be a necessary element of the curriculum, and educators sought to better prepare students with practical
skills (Hunter, 2000). Although the drive to preserve moral education and religious training in public schools remained strong, academic achievement, as well as the needs of industry and agriculture, received ever-increasing attention (Hunter, 2000).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, education theorist John Dewey promoted a radically different approach to moral education that paralleled the importance of social issues within the Progressive Movement. As a result, schools began focusing more attention on social issues than morality (Field, 1996; McClellan, 1999). Dewey felt that students needed to engage in social activities to become complete citizens and uphold social justice (Howard et al., 2004). These social movements and the appreciation of how conditions can affect individuals gave rise to a new moral relativity to replace absolutism in the realm of morals (Hunter, 2000; McClellan, 1999).

During the 1940s and 1950s, moral education began to erode as postwar leadership shifted emphasis to cognitive skills and academic pursuits while deemphasizing religious, moral, and social education (Field, 1996; McClellan, 1999). Traditional values were changing because of continued large-scale immigration, cultural pluralism, and growing apprehension about the influence of teaching morality (Howard et al., 2004). Moral education continued to erode because of these social and cultural changes (Field, 1996; McClellan, 1999).

The social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to a further decline in moral education in schools. Before the 1960s, schools were overt vehicles for teaching morality and defining character (Arum, 2003). The transition from moral education to purely academic pursuits became law in 1963, when a New York court ruled that devotional
Bible reading was a violation of the Constitution (Hunter, 2000; McClellan, 1999). In subsequent court cases, religious instruction and practices were severely restricted within the public school system. These cases signaled the end of religious-based moral education in public schools (Hunter, 2000).

From the 1970s to today, policy makers have struggled with the constitutional prohibition of religious-based moral education and the perception of a general decline in morality and safety in society and in schools (McClellan, 1999). McClellan states that political officials used “alarming rates of teenage suicide, crime, drug use, and unwed pregnancies” (p. 91) to push moral education. A perception of moral erosion helped a campaign for character education programs. During the Clinton presidency, the idea of non-religious-based character education took flight. Subsequently, President George W. Bush was specific about his agenda for education reforms and unveiled plans to improve safety in schools and to promote character (Robelen, 1999). On January 8, 2002, he signed into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Its third strategic goal speaks specifically to character education. Under the Act, educators can receive substantial grants in support of character education programs.

**Statement of Problem**

Character education has always been a component of American schooling. Early on, character education was an extension of the governing religious doctrine, dogma, and politics (Ledeen, 2000; Luedtke, 1992; May, 1976; McClellan, 1999; Needleman, 2002). Puritan religious beliefs defined good character and were accepted because society was more homogeneous. Today, classrooms are diverse in terms of culture, race, family
structure, and religion. Character education becomes more important to create a common baseline of acceptable behaviors in diverse classrooms and to facilitate more empathy and acceptance (Lickona, 2004). Teaching in this diverse setting makes the job of teaching character education significantly more complicated because individual students have unique needs driven by family, peer groups, language, and elements of social diversity. However, educators have an ethical responsibility to address the increasing diversity in their classrooms; they are responsible for creating a community conducive to learning and inclusive of all students. This is critically important, especially in light of the requirements for educators as a result of No Child Left Behind.

The problem is that with the increased demands of No Child Left Behind, teachers must focus on student academic achievement and therefore will have less time to teach other non-academic skills. Given that No Child Left Behind requires high levels of academic focus, teachers need a structure that allows them to teach character education within a short period. Classroom meetings offer one such structure to teach character education. Within the classroom meeting structure, various strategies may be used to structure the meeting. This study proposed using Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS)—as prescribed by Elia and Butler (2005)—to teach character education within the structure of a classroom meeting.

**Importance of the Study**

Illinois Learning Standards require teachers to address character education in the Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) Goals and Standards section. First, Illinois educators gain from this study because it provides a proven methodology for creating responsible
citizens and for improving the classroom environment. Second, teachers have a tool for improving the classroom environment, while teaching the SEL Goals and Standards using SDM/SPS. Third, counselors and teachers gain a model for group process with classroom meetings. Fourth, the study equips administrations with content for professional development seminars and a system for measuring the impact of character education on their constituents.

The Purpose of this Study

Current studies suggest that classroom meetings decrease the instances of classroom conflicts and improve the learning environment (Edwards & Mullis, 2003; Frey & Doyle, 2001; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher taught SDM/SPS, as prescribed by Elias and Butler’s (2005) lessons, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers, the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits, and the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits. The researcher quantitatively measured participants’ perceptions of daily meetings about the classroom environment: Are classroom meetings a good strategy to teach character education?

This study is valuable for educators because it shows whether or not classroom meetings weave character education into daily activities, thereby improving the classroom learning environment.
Definition of Terms

For this study, an ideal classroom community is one wherein students feel a sense of belonging, experience human connectedness, and are individually valued. The community promotes inclusive activities and creates an accepting atmosphere. It is a safe place for expression, sharing of selves, compassion, and empathy. Also, it allows the students to be vulnerable and encourages risk taking.

In this study, the researcher defines classroom meetings as “regularly scheduled, structured meetings for both formal and informal purposes.” For purposes of this study, meetings may include a “meet and greet,” sharing time, problem-solving time, and/or a group activity or game. A classroom meeting is a format in which the entire class participates in discussions of various dilemmas or “getting to know you” activities; these discussions teach character education lessons such as empathy and communication. Classroom meetings function as a moral community, teaching students to respect each other and develop friendships. Classroom meetings can occur in a class for approximately 20 minutes at any time of the day. These meetings are a forum for students to learn about themselves and their classmates and to develop interpersonal skills. Generally, classroom meetings use a circle setting, wherein everyone faces everyone else. In this setting, one student talks at a time. Classroom meetings vary, but they usually include constructive activities such as a sharing session or a social skills game. Classroom meetings do not allow negative behaviors such as put-downs, negative comments, or snide remarks. Students learn to listen attentively to each other, hear different points of view, respond to one another, and understand nonverbal cues. Classroom meetings provide a venue for
social skills to develop. However, there is little contemporary research on classroom meetings and (more specifically) on the impact of SDM/SPS as an adjunct to classroom meetings.

SDM/SPS as prescribed by Elias and Tobias (1990) is defined as a character education program that teaches problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution. Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) goes beyond defining virtues or discussing socially acceptable norms (Elias & Tobias, 1990). It is an evidence-based approach to teaching students social skills. The program targets elementary and middle school students. This program uses 29 topics at each grade level that teach questioning exercises and decision-making skills (see Appendix P, Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving Sample Lesson). Each topic has a set of objectives, materials, various assessments, modeling activities, assignments for skill practice, follow-through activities, and parent suggestions. Every topic includes a reflective summary for the students. The program teaches students how to handle frustration and challenges and how to resolve conflicts. Students learn how to practice self-control, care for others, and talk about emotions. Skills are first introduced, and then students practice skills through a variety of activities. The SDM/SPS approach gives students practical experience, understanding, and exercises so they can apply these lessons in real life. SDM/SPS trains the students in how to use their social tools.
Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers?

2. What is the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?

3. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?
CHAPTER II
DEVELOPING AND DEFINING CHARACTER EDUCATION

Although character education has always been part of the fabric of American schools, it is only in the past two decades that the term has emerged as a buzzword in education. For generations, moralists like David Hume, Blaise Pascal, and Thomas More showed the need for character education by declaring the moral demise of the next generation. Ross (2008) states, “The demise of the traditional family threatens the education of a generation of children” (p. 3). During the 1640s, the Puritans first embedded a moral code into the school curriculum; this was aided by the fact that the Bible was the tool of choice to teach literacy, and schools were entirely private and religious. In recent times, the advent of a public school system that is thoroughly secular and pluralistically serving a diverse range of social groups has resulted in a movement to construct a new paradigm of character education in a universal vocabulary that can succeed in a postmodern, secular, and multicultural public education system. This new paradigm is based on core ethical values such as concern, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others, which are incorporated in Christian thought but are also common in other cultures.

McBrien and Brandt (1997) of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), define character education as follows:
Character education involves teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect. The goal is to raise children to become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens. Problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution are important parts of developing moral character. Through role-playing and discussions, students can see that their decisions affect other people and things. (pp. 17-18)

Congress acknowledged the need for legislation regarding character education in 1994 when it passed the Character Education Program, and again in 2001 when it passed No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Today, programs such as CHARACTER COUNTS!, the Six Pillars of Character, CHARACTERplus, Community of Caring, Character Education Partnerships, National Youth Leadership Council, Tribes, and other programs continue promotion of, and instruction in, character education. Examples abound. The Partnership in Character Education Pilot Projects Program gave grants to schools participating in character education programs totaling $36 million in 1994 (Robelen, 2001). From the grants, schools and teachers were expected to create and implement curricula consisting of “programs [that] emphasize caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness” (p. 27). President George W. Bush, during his first term, tripled the Character Education fund to $25 million a year, establishing a federal inducement, because he saw character education as a political vehicle to “foster moral character and civic virtue in young people” (p. 27). Much of the research into character education has taken place since the adoption of this federal legislation.
Character education takes many forms. Character education programs associate with certain virtues such as respect, courage, kindness, honesty, civic responsibility, and trustworthiness. Some schools use school-based character education programs or faith-based programs, while others purchase curricula from various publishing companies. Most programs implement lessons to increase virtuous behaviors and expect positive behavioral or academic outcomes. Some of the many programs include CHARACTER COUNTS!, WiseSkills, justCommunity, CHARACTERplus, LIFESKILLS, STAR, C.H.E.E.R., and MindOH! (to name a few). Programs take different forms and methods once implemented in schools.

**Dewey Foreshadows the Need for Moral Instruction**

Although he wrote long before the recent character education movement began, Dewey was an early education leader who laid the foundation for public education, and his writings foreshadow the need for character education by speaking to the need for the moral instruction of students (Dewey, 1909). At the turn of the twentieth century and the beginning of the foundation of modern educational theory, Dewey spoke to the need for moral instruction in education in a way that foreshadowed the need for the modern character movement that took place in the past few decades.

Dewey (1909) based his work on Piaget and Vygotsky, who believed that learning happens when someone actively constructs new knowledge through his or her preexisting background knowledge and experiences. Dewey applied the same theory to moral development because he believed that moral development is constructed through a
person’s experiences. His views on moral development are those of a moral constructivist.

Dewey (1909) posits:

The business of the educator—whether parent or teacher—is to see to it that the greatest possible number of ideas acquired by children and youth are acquired in such a vital way that they become moving ideas, motive forces in the guidance of conduct. This demand and this opportunity make the moral purpose universal and dominant in all instruction—whatsoever the topic. (p. 2)

Dewey believed that schools should educate children to be obedient and to be leaders. Schools should instruct students on a moral level as much as they do on an intellectual level. “The end of education is said to be the harmonious development of all the powers of the individual” (p. 12).

Dewey (1909), in his true constructivist nature, argues that learning recitations of morals or any other matter does not cement the principles. He suggests that students need opportunities to apply these virtues and judgments. Schools must teach social intelligence, allowing students to put into practice what they have discussed within the classroom. “What we need in education is a genuine faith in the existence of moral principles, which are capable of effective application” (p. 57).
Proponents of Character Education in Public Education

Over the years, there have been many leading proponents of the need for character education in public education. This section outlines character education proponents and their views of character education throughout history. Proponents generally divide into two groups: care theorists and those who favor direct instruction on virtue. The care theorists, Wynne (1982) and Noddings (2002a), believe that students should learn from caring people. This school of thought posits that if educators care for students, the students will learn how to care for themselves and others. The care theorists rely on establishing conditions to encourage goodness, rather than on the direct teaching of virtue. In contrast to the care theorists, Lockwood (1976) argues in favor of instilling values in students through “values clarification,” which helps students choose good values. Likewise, Lockwood, Nash (1997), Wynne and Ryan (1997), Ryan and Bohlin, 1999, and Lickona (2004) all rely on developing virtues as the foundation for instructing character education. In particular, Nash favors direct teaching of virtue. In addition to making the general argument that character education classes are needed, these proponents also focus on what character education classes should do and what factors would make them effective.

Although philosophical differences exist among the proponents as to the manner and means, character education proponents all concur in their desired result that students will exhibit more prosocial behaviors and better ethics when students are part of a character education program (Lickona, 2004; Lockwood, 1976; Nash, 1997; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999; Wynne & Ryan, 1997). Also, these same proponents all call for the need to
address students as moral persons and to take instruction in the classroom away from a nonjudgmental approach to student behavior that emphasizes cultural relativism and toward a comprehensive approach of caring for students as ethical beings, which helps to develop good virtues and a better society for tomorrow’s students (Lickona, 2004; Lockwood, 1976; Nash, 1997; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999; Wynne & Ryan, 1997).

The Care Theorists

Care theorists, such as Wynne (1982) and Noddings (2002b), believe that humans must be nurtured and cared for before they can care for someone else. Generally, this view references the family as the emotional foundation for the child. Teachers provide groundwork for students because they serve as examples and mentors who can influence and mold them. Given the right conditions to infuse these values, care theorists believe that students will eventually learn to become moral citizens.

Wynne (1982), a care theorist, discusses concern for youth in terms of adolescent conduct, with specific attention to destructive behaviors, the use of drugs, the rise of homicide, and the rise of suicide from the 1950s to the 1970s. He concludes that individuals in society need to care about each other and “if ‘right’ values are not deliberately inculcated, other values will be” (p. 9).

Individual moral motivation is the foundation of character education. A care theorist believes that children should learn from people who model ethical virtues and that children will eventually learn these virtues from the same adults they know, trust, and care about. Noddings (2002a), another care theorist, states, “Care theorists rely more heavily on establishing conditions likely to encourage goodness than on the direct
teaching of virtue” (p. 1). Care theorists focus on ethical dilemmas and decisions. Noddings argues against traditional character education programs because the programs do not teach lessons in context. For example, parents immediately correct children when they do something “bad.” Teachers also instantly correct students when they do something wrong. The traditional character education program has planned activities that are often abstract and out of context, without a direct lesson. The crux of care ethics, as Noddings defines it, says,

- The educational task then is to educate the passions, especially the moral sentiments. Faced with evil, we must feel revulsion. Faced with another’s pain, we must feel the desire to remove or alleviate it. Faced with our own inclinations to cause harm, we must be both shocked and willing to face reality. Then we can invite reason to serve our corrected passions. (p. 8)

The most important way to teach morals is for the adults interacting with students to be exemplary models of moral behavior for students.

Nel Noddings (1992) bases her framework on Judeo-Christian values. She believes that students should be educated around caring ideals and that teachers must create caring relations with students. Noddings defines caring as when “I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey” (p. 16). People need an appropriate response that indicates that someone both listened and reacted, which shows that he or she cares for the child’s moral development. She posits that there are four components in moral education: “modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation” (p. 22). Further, Noddings suggests using cooperative planning among teachers to develop centers of care. Students should
practice and be immersed in the four components of moral education within the classroom. She states, “Moral life so defined should be frankly embraced as the main goal of education” (p. 173).

Noddings (1993) also discusses how Christian beliefs influenced American schools. She believes that regardless of personal beliefs, discussions about religion need to take place. Teachers and society cannot continue to ignore the fact that students need to discuss their beliefs. Noddings states that for teachers to ignore religious views is “morally reprehensible” (p. 133). For teachers to present contrary beliefs, they need to go through rigorous training in religious and existential questions. In this way, teachers can engage the students’ natural questions.

**The Direct Character Instruction Theorists**

The following theorists believe that the direct teaching of morals and virtues creates ethical students. These theorists discuss how to weave character education into the classroom to create good citizens.

Nash (1997) believes that educators must instruct the moral aspect of children directly. He calls character education “the formation and practice of personal virtues and the avoidance of particular vices” (p. 14). Nash feels that one cannot separate moral reasoning and moral conduct. He further states that moral character “is who we really are when no one is looking” (p. 15). Nash says that it is essential for all teachers to think about their own virtues. A public moral language would bring people together in a classroom setting through rich discussions.
In contrast to Nash’s focus on direct instruction, Wynne and Ryan (1997) focus more holistically on the effect of the disciplinary system on the educational environment. They posit that schools should establish firm rules, a disciplinary system, and a list of what might cause classroom misconduct: “classroom work that is too easy or too difficult, boring instruction, confusing instruction, unclear pupil expectations, poor school or management techniques, ineffectual or unenforced punishments” (p. 89). They further state that the ethos of the classroom and attitudes of students impact the moral quality of a classroom. Wynne and Ryan firmly believe that “teachers have succumbed to cultural relativism: the belief that a culture can only be judged relative to the values inherent in that culture” (p. 131). The nonjudgmental approaches that are preached to teachers hurt the development of moral education in our youth (Wynne & Ryan, 1997).

Ryan and Bohlin (1999), direct character instruction theorists, define good character as “knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good” (p. 5). They look at the virtues of wisdom, justice, and courage throughout history and in various cultures and note that these virtues appear in every age and in every culture. In contrast to Noddings’s focus on Christian beliefs, these authors look for beliefs that permeate all of Western civilization. Further, Ryan and Bohlin (1999) opine that wisdom enables students to make better judgments; justice permits students to be fair, and courage commits students to doing what is right. “Character, then, is very simply the sum of our intellectual and moral habits” (p. 9). To these authors, character defines who the individual becomes and how he or she behaves as a person. To develop character, an individual must practice standards within a social setting. Ryan and Bohlin further state
that teachers should choose what is most important and help students wrestle with their own morals. Teachers have opportunities to present these topics through the formal, hidden, and null curriculums.

Lockwood (1976), a direct character instruction theorist, believes that the basis for character education comes from teaching virtues. Lockwood, a character education proponent, states that the purpose of values clarification “is to help students choose values which can serve as satisfactory guides for their lives” (p. 9). He looks at ways to apply the teaching of values in the classroom and at ways to respond to students. He defines a “value” as something chosen freely, from alternatives, and with careful consideration. According to Lockwood, the values analysis approach is a way to think logically and scientifically about a problem before acting on a probable solution. The approach used in the classroom, through discussion or debate, would help mold students into responsible citizens. Ethical students become moral citizens and make the world a better place.

Elsewhere, Lockwood (1997) discusses how character educators are reluctant to define “virtues” or what “good virtues” are in fear of political problems associated with the topic. He states that character educators should “emphasize a discrete set of skills; claim a focus on citizenship; or, more largely, define character education as everything that takes place in a classroom or school” (p. 5). However, he says that the other character education proponents often dance around defining “virtues.” In staunch opposition to that approach, Lockwood writes that “ethical relativism is unacceptable” (p. 6).
Table 1 contains a semantic feature analysis of character theorists to compare and contrast the different approaches, theorists, philosophies, and classroom applications.

Table 1

Semantic Feature Analysis of Character Theorists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Theorists</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Classroom Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Instruction Theorist</td>
<td>Dewey (1909)</td>
<td>Moral purpose dominant in all instruction.</td>
<td>Teach social intelligence and give students opportunities to apply lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care Theorists</td>
<td>Noddings (2002a)</td>
<td>Children learn from caring people.</td>
<td>Educators care for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wynne (1982)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers are examples and mentors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish conditions to encourage goodness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lockwood (1976)</td>
<td>Instruct the moral aspect of children directly.</td>
<td>Character education classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nash (1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ryan &amp; Bohlin (1999)</td>
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Focus on Societal Factors and the Need for Character Education

Although most proponents focus on the classroom environment, other researchers note the importance of outside factors such as parental influence. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) discuss parental influence and note that “the most profound impact on students’ development comes from their families, notably their parents—whether we look at social, moral, behavioral, or academic development” (p. 64). Parental influence is the key to a successful character education program. Parents must partner with the schools to reinforce the skills and to be resources. The Character Education Partnership (CEP, 2005) defines character as “understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values” (p. 65). For a character education program to receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s Partnerships in Character Education, the program must include parental involvement; this involvement can include anything from parents reading the home
newsletters and reinforcing lessons to having parents work within the classrooms (CEP, 2005).

According to Schaeffer (1997), the electronic media constitute another factor acting on the morals of students. He maintains that children suffer more exposure to morally inappropriate experiences than in the past because of the Internet and other media. Schaeffer believes that specific frameworks are necessary to develop good character and that these principles require inclusion in everything that educators do with students. Schools must play a major role in developing the students’ character.

Because of the influence of students’ negative environment outside the classroom, Lickona (2004) calls for a comprehensive approach to character education; he states that the teacher must be a caregiver and mentor, model moral behavior, establish democracy in the classroom, encourage reflection, and promote conflict resolution. He believes that building relationships between school and home is vital for character development because “parent involvement is the leading indicator of school success” (p. 60).

Lickona (2004) also discusses ways to build caring teacher-student relationships and suggests that teachers should teach about relationships, handshakes and bonding and be positive role models. Character and academics should be taught simultaneously, integrating the virtues of character throughout every lesson in all subjects. Character needs to be at the root of everything taught; character should be visible and worked on from the top down and from the bottom up, and character should influence how to set up classroom management and how to display our own (i.e., teachers’) character. The entire
community must work together and commit to becoming a community of character (Lickona, 2004).

**Research on Character Education**

This section examines the findings of rigorous research completed on some of the many character education programs. It is important to examine the implementation of character education programs and their outcomes to understand what works in character education. It is difficult to measure the effect of character education programs in the same way that we measure learning comprehension because character education cannot be measured by pencil-and-paper tests. Survey results that come from preimplementation and postimplementation of a character education program are perhaps the only objective, quantifiable measure of success in these programs. In conducting these surveys, most research measures how teachers, students, and parents perceive character education programs.

As difficult as it is to measure and quantify something as abstract as character, it is equally as difficult to decide what should be the goal of character education programs.

**High School**

High schools shape students academically, socially, emotionally, and morally. The Federal Government has legislated character education for high school training (Robelen, 2001). Still, there is a growing national perception of increased violence and moral decline among high school students. Egan (2009) states, “Nearly 17,000 Americans are murdered each year—about 70 percent by guns.” Statistics point to a need
for character education based on the documented rise of violence and immoral behavior.

In 2002, the Arizona Department of Education reported,

    Students admitting they cheated on an exam at least once in the past year
jumped from 61% in 1992 to 74% in 2002; the number who stole
something from a store within the past 12 months rose from 31% to 38%,
while the percentage who say they lied to their teachers and parents also
increased substantially; cheating rose from 71% in 2000 to 74% in 2002;
theft increased from 35% to 38%; and those who said they would be
willing to lie to get a good job jumped from 28% to 39%. (Arizona
Character Education Foundation, 2009)

These statistics clearly indicate an increasing moral decline. Boards of education
and the Federal Government spend millions of dollars each year buying the latest and
greatest character education programs, even though many are not effective. Character
education advocates see these alarming statistics and use that social pattern to justify
more research, which will help determine which character education programs actually
work (http://www.ade.az.gov/charactered/background.asp).

High school students have many obstacles to negotiate and challenging situations
to confront. Character education programs give students tools to deal with typical teenage
circumstances (McClellan, 1999). A review of research about high school character
education programs based on Johnson (2002), Gosset (2006), Moore (2002), Morrison
(2006), and Freado (1997) follows in this section; the review of research examines
discipline, referrals, good character modeling, and professional development.
In a study designed to focus on the best method for teaching character education, Johnson (2002) analyzed the teaching of character education at a Christian school in a secondary social studies classroom. A random sampling of teachers responded to a survey to measure teacher tendencies to teach character traits and to identify teachers’ chosen methods. The survey comprised 10 character traits and 10 teaching methods, and Johnson sent it to 100 schools. From the returned surveys, “modeling” was most important, “planned lectures or discussions” was second, “impromptu teachable moments” was third, and “informal counseling” was fourth.

In a study that centered on the reduction of discipline and the perception of improvement in student behavior, Gosset (2006) analyzed a character education program within the high school where she taught, using quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study, she surveyed parents, teachers, and students, using a Likert scale and archival data. Research included surveys from parents of randomly selected students and surveys from all teachers. The majority of respondents felt that the introduction of a character education program would improve student behavior and reduce the number of discipline problems. An interesting discrepancy appeared between student and teacher responses to a question that asked whether adults and students care about each other. Of the students, 66% disagreed, answering that adults and students do not care about each other, but only 17% of teachers also disagreed with the statement. As to which programs were popular, the results indicated that parent conference nights promote community and character development. Gosset stated, “76% of the students, 89% of the teachers, and 87% of the parents agreed that a more orderly environment is likely to have a positive effect on
academic achievement” (p. 102). The survey results continue to demonstrate that the staff believes that the character education program helps prevent violence. Overall, the study showed strong support for character education in the community. The limitations of this study are that there was only a limited amount of data on the subject, it was conducted in only one building, and the researcher works in the building where the study was conducted.

Focusing on discipline referrals, Morrison (2006) used a non-experimental method of causal-comparative research to explain differences; he studied the impact of character education on students and targeted the number of reported referrals that students received. The study, which started in fall 2002 and ended in spring 2005, included all schools in Texas (approximately 1,200) for three school years. The study categorized and compared both schools that had implemented another character education program and schools that had not implemented any character education program against schools using the CHARACTERplus program. For the study, the researcher used the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), a system mandated by Texas law to record discipline referrals. Morrison’s conclusions were not consistent with the other findings. There was no decrease in discipline referrals in schools that employed character education programs; in fact, the opposite was true. Contrary to most studies, the referrals actually increased during the time of the research period.

In a study about professional development, Moore (2002) examined the impact of professional development in CHARACTERplus project schools in Missouri based on a pilot study in a middle school and a high school during 1999-2001. Moore describes
CHARACTERplus as “a program disseminated through the nine Missouri Regional Professional Development Centers designed to assist schools in implementing a character education program” (p. 13). The premise behind CHARACTERplus was to provide professional development to participants who would implement a character education program. Participants attended professional development training; CHARACTERplus trainers met with each school’s team, with parents, and with community members to design the plan. The faculty participated in presurveys and postsurveys that measured school officials’ perceptions of the implementation of CHARACTERplus. The surveys measured the perceptions by using a Likert scale from the “Eleven Principles Survey (EPS)” of 29 schools. This survey resembles the “Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education” (Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 1998). From this study, the researcher concluded that professional development positively affected the participants’ perception of character education. This conclusion was based on the comparison between those who did participate in professional development and those that did not participate in the professional development of CHARACTERplus program training.

Freado (1997), in his analysis of character education, conducted a study rating popular character education programs. Programs such as “Twelve Strategies for Engaging the Community in Character Education” and “Stop-Think-Act-Review” (STAR) were examined. The study focused on the principals at schools that had implemented these character education programs. The researcher sent two rounds of surveys and interviewed principals to gather further insights and themes. Freado reports that when implementing a program, “the leadership of the building principal, the
inclusion and involvement of all stakeholders and the importance of effective communication stand out as the most important strategies” (p. 60).

**Middle School**

Many character education programs exist at the middle school level, but they are not all grounded in research. Oftentimes when a character education program is implemented, students will perform better on many levels. For example, one study by the American Youth Policy Forum (1998) reported dramatic improvements in positive behavior and academic performance at a middle school after it implemented a character education program. This section outlines research from Lewis (2007), Tapper (2007), McDonald (2002), Anderson (2005), Passa (2007), Joyal (2005), and Tatman (2007), based on character education programs at the middle school level.

One study conducted by Lewis (2007) examined the practice of sixth grade teachers in Massachusetts, using character education over a 6-month period. The qualitative study looked at the teacher beliefs and professional development in a natural setting by using questionnaires, journals, field notes, and interviews. In the study, the teachers formed two teams. Each team devised its own “word wall,” which would become the focus of the team’s character education courses. One team devised a word wall of “Compassion, Courage, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility,” and the other team chose “Cooperation, Courtesy, Kindness, Loyalty, and Respect” (p. 86). Twelve sixth grade teachers answered the questionnaire, which asked questions about teachers’ familiarity with character education and their experience in teaching character education. It also asked whether teachers would be willing to read character education texts and
whether they would be willing to participate in a research study. The study found that after the program was implemented, teachers felt that students’ character development benefited because students received fewer behavior referrals. Lewis states, “Teachers reported that their relationships within the classroom with students now benefit from the use of common language in managing incidents involving young adolescent decision-making around respectful behaviors” (p. 80). This study also found that teachers believe that using a structured program, which includes collaboration with colleagues and reflection on their own practice, helps student performance and growth.

In a survey that studied the perceptions of principals, Tapper (2007) looked at a character education program in Texas through surveys mailed to 181 principals at the middle school level. These schools had implemented the character education program for 3-4 years. The study asked principals about student behavior and the school climate from the CHARACTERplus programs in grades 5-8. Based on survey results, Tapper found that according to the participating principals, “responsibility, respect, integrity, and honesty were most important and appropriate for teaching in public school” (p. 93). Forty-four of the 47 principals believed that character education integration was important, as noted on one of the survey questions, and 76% of the principals credited positive school change to character education programs. Yet, only 43% of the principals had fully implemented the program.

In a study of teachers’ opinions about a popular character education program, McDonald (2002) studied a school that implemented the character education program, CHARACTER COUNTS!, and he conducted a qualitative and naturalistic case study of
11 teachers at a Catholic middle school. The teachers’ survey supported most strongly the following three principles: character education coupled with religious education is more effective, character education develops incrementally, and a key component in a successful character education program comes from teacher modeling.

In yet another study about CHARACTER COUNTS! and discipline reduction, Passa (2007) looked at systematically implementing a character education program and observed the effects that the program had on 148 students’ social and emotional development in seventh grade. Students in the study were in an urban, low-income school in the New York Capital District. In the experiment, Passa applied two different settings in four schools: an experimental group implementing the character education program CHARACTER COUNTS! and a control group that did not implement the character education program. In the experimental group, teachers reviewed character traits weekly, and parents received monthly newsletters regarding the character traits as a school-home link to discuss with their children. In the reviews, teachers reported that the student program had a positive effect on student behaviors based on teacher ratings. Students who received the character education program improved their behaviors as compared with the students who did not have CHARACTER COUNTS! The researcher also developed student questionnaires using a Likert scale, administered the surveys, and then divided the surveys by traits. Passa grouped the different traits “to reflect the six social skills: respect, responsibility, caring, fairness, trustworthiness and citizenship (which make up the Six Pillars) . . .” (p. 40). Students in the experimental group had fewer conduct problems. It follows that students in the experimental group are less likely to be
“getting into fights, lying and cheating, and they are more likely to display socially
desirable behaviors such as being respectful, caring and teamwork oriented” (p. 99).

Conflicting results appeared when Joyal (2005) conducted a study at the middle
school level, using the same popular character education program. Joyal examined at-risk
behaviors of seventh grade and eighth grade students in the CHARACTER COUNTS!
program. The study used the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and looked at scores
from 278 students participating in CHARACTER COUNTS! in a Midwestern city in
2001 and 644 students participating in 2003. The six categories measured on the YRBS
are injuries and violence, tobacco, drug and alcohol use, sexual behaviors, dietary
behaviors, and physical activity. The results showed significant increases in risky
behavior from 2001 to 2003, which would indicate that the pillars of character did not
decrease risky behaviors.

Research about character education at the middle school level implies that
classroom education improves student academic performance, school environment, and
student behavior. The next section focuses on character education at the elementary
school level.

**Elementary School**

Much research focuses on character education programs at the elementary school
level. This section examines character education studies at the elementary school level
and the different methodologies of measuring the impact of character education
programs. The analytical research tools include behavioral and discipline metrics,
interviews, and surveys. Although they show an overall positive influence on students, some are better suited to measure the impact of character education programs.

The first group of studies looks at behavioral and discipline metrics to measure the effects of character education. In the first study, Vona (2005) examined and implemented a character education program that tried to decrease violent behavior within an elementary school setting in western New York. The behavior modification program that Vona used was an experimental design for a program titled “Children Help show Extraordinary Examples of Responsibility (C.H.E.E.R.).” She hypothesized that C.H.E.E.R would effect a meaningful decrease in violence. The researcher trained the teachers on the program and developed five very simple lessons (one per week) for the participating teachers to use. In the program, students received rewards for good behavior. Teachers gathered data on referrals before implementing C.H.E.E.R. Following the implementation, interviews with teachers showed that C.H.E.E.R. created a positive impact on student behavior. Vona stated, “Teachers appreciated the structure, student centered activities and the behavior modification techniques incorporated in the program” (p. 52). The results showed a significant decrease in violent behavior after the execution of C.H.E.E.R. and a decrease of time that teachers spent disciplining students.

In some cases, studies combined a hybrid of these behavioral metrics with interviews. In a study about behavior choices, Glennon (2006) conducted a case study at an elementary school in one classroom and analyzed a character education program through quantitative and qualitative methods. Glennon implemented character education goals, assemblies, a reward system, resource teachers, and a teacher study group, and
Glennon provided teachers with discipline data. In addition, the researcher reviewed artifacts based on discipline records, memos, agendas, and testing data. Further, the researcher conducted five open-ended interviews (one each with a special education teacher, a classroom teacher, an administrator, a parent, and a student) and used “thick descriptions” to report findings. Study results showed a decrease in behavioral metrics (such as the number of student detentions). Interviews showed an increase in the students’ ability to use words to express their feelings.

In another program looking at a decrease in discipline referrals, Goldberg (2003) examined the effect of the implementation of the WiseSkills program on classroom climate development and prosocial development in a low-income to middle-income socioeconomic suburban setting. The quasiexperimental methodology included daily and weekly student and teacher questionnaires. The school psychologist delivered lessons in fourth grade classrooms three days per week and used respect and responsibility as the focused traits. There were 12 total lessons on respect and responsibility, each running 30–35 minutes. The researcher recorded the number of discipline referrals for inappropriate behavior, both before and during the implementation of the WiseSkills program. This study found that when stakeholders, parents, and teachers work together, the classroom climate improves, and teachers reported a decrease in discipline referrals. Students interviewed at the conclusion of the study reported that they found value in the program.

A similar hybrid study of discipline metrics and interviews by Headen (2006) found a decrease in discipline and violence in 1995 after the administration had implemented a Uniform Discipline Code policy. This policy not only represented the
rules of student behavior but also (and more important) the teaching of proper student behavior and character education. This policy was responsible for a decline in certain discipline metrics such as violations of the school’s rules. Headen stated that the violations were coded into seven categories: “Verbal Threats, School-Wide, Physical Altercation, Classroom, Out-of-Uniform, Assault of Staff, and Weapons and Illegal Contraband” (p. 86). In 1995, there were 612 violations against the Uniform Discipline Code, and in the 2003-2004 school year, there were only 213 violations. Verbal threats decreased the first year by 16% and continued to decrease each year; by the last year of the study, there were only 32 verbal threats reported. Physical altercations decreased from approximately 100 in the first year of the study to 31 reported in the last year.

Headen (2006) also used an urban elementary school to examine a character education program through a qualitative study. The study conducted interviews with teachers and students and used classroom observations to identify themes. Character education activities included monthly character trait postings around the school, posters, assemblies, parent workshops, projects, and more. In interviews, teachers opined that they felt that the program positively affected students, but students did not feel as satisfied with the program. Parents responded positively when interviewed regarding how they felt that the program affected their children. Community members were satisfied with the program because of the decrease in unsuitable behavior outside of school.

In a study focused on virtuous behaviors, Zimmerman (2004) examined a character education program in one elementary building and conducted interviews with the teachers to discover whether the teachers believed that the character education
program fostered moral growth. Zimmerman found that, based on teacher interviews, when students witnessed modeled moral conflicts and participated in modeled lessons, on either a daily or weekly basis, student behavior improved.

Some studies combined interviews with observations. For example, Hawkins (2003), using a case study in a Title I, urban elementary school, explored another popular character education program in the Midwest titled “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Students (SHHES).” This program promoted the following traits: “Cooperation, Courtesy, Honesty, Perseverance, Pride, Respect, and Responsibility” (p. 58). In the SHHES program, class meetings occurred at least once per week to teach these virtues through dialogue and reflections. The program focused on problem solving and decision making. During literature circles and guided reading, teachers used questions to prompt students into character discussions. Posters with SHHES focuses were located in all classrooms. Parents became part of the program by reinforcing the topics at home. The researcher used three formal observations in the natural setting and 30 informal walk-through visits. The researcher interviewed both focus groups, with representatives from all the stakeholders, and held member-checks with colleagues. The researcher looked for emerging themes (such as artifacts, values, and basic assumptions) from all of the stakeholders: students, teachers, parents, and administrators. The findings showed that the character education program had a positive influence on the school, creating a more positive environment and a more caring culture. The study also found that respectful relationships developed between students and adults in the building.
Although interviews enable a researcher to measure results through the eyes of educators, they lack the structure and scale of surveys, which constitute the most widely used methodology. Using a character education survey, Costanzo (2005) conducted a study examining character education programs in nine Connecticut public schools. The researcher sent surveys based on the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education to schools. Results showed that 78% of schools in the study conducted character education programs at some level. A “caring community” is one of the terms that Lickona et al. (1998) use to describe an effective character education program. Students, teachers, and community members determine whether a community is considered a caring community based on their perceptions from answers to survey questions. Caring communities find both staff and students caring about each other and getting to know one another. In a caring community, students feel a sense of belonging and responsibility toward one another. Further, students feel positively toward classmates. Costanzo collected qualitative data, using 10 randomly selected students in a group study, to compare the quantitative data obtained by observing the natural setting and found a caring community in the buildings where a character education program existed.

In another study using surveys, which included 174 fifth grade students, Lewis (2006) analyzed the Stop-Think-Act-Review (STAR) program and its effects in one school compared with a school that used the traditional Michigan Curriculum Framework, which internally addresses character education. Students completed three different surveys asking for information about student competency in self-control. The results showed that the STAR program, in contrast to the Michigan Curriculum
Framework, did not improve character education, whereas the Michigan Curriculum Framework improved students’ interpersonal self-control.

In a survey of teacher opinion on student self-control and student-teacher relationships, Olsen (1995) studied teachers’ perceptions of the effect that the implementation of a character education program had on student behavior in kindergarten through sixth grade in a rural environment. Teachers received in-service training on character education lessons, and role-playing occurred once a week. Students participated in half-hour sessions about the character development program. For example, one of the lessons focused on “Listening Skills,” and another lesson focused on “Self-Esteem.” Olsen conducted the study from October 1993 through April 1994. Teachers responded to presurveys and postsurveys. Olsen’s survey contained four categories: respect for authority, courtesy, self-respect, and responsibility. On the postsurvey, teachers felt that the program had a positive influence on student behaviors. Survey results also showed that teachers believed that students developed better self-control and student-teacher relationships. A sense of community was another product of the implementation of the program. Olsen concludes, “The character education program was statistically significant at all grade levels” (p. 96).

A researcher can adjust the surveys based on the needs of the study, such as the creation of a moral judgment test. Aligned with Vona (2005), DeVargas (1998) conducted a study titled “Lessons In Character” in a Texas elementary school setting with fifth grade students. DeVargas used pretests and posttests with six control schools and nine treatment schools. The control schools did not implement Lessons in Character.
Teachers used Lessons in Character at the treatment schools. The mean pretest and posttest difference of the treatment was .13 and showed growth in moral judgment from the treatment schools that implemented Lessons in Character, which suggests that Lessons in Character is an effective curriculum to promote moral growth.

Some studies combined surveys with interviews. Using a popular program, Anderson (2005) conducted a qualitative case study examining students’, teachers’, and parents’ perceptions of the character education program LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines. The setting was in an eastern Tennessee, urban, public elementary school during the first and second semesters of a school year. Twenty first and second grade students from multiage classrooms participated in the study. Nineteen parents completed open-ended surveys, and the researcher conducted interviews with teachers and students. “LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines are the social outcomes [and] ... expectations for students’ and teachers’ behavior and performance at school and in the outside world” (p. 35). There are 18 LIFESKILLS and five Lifelong Guidelines, and the school implemented them all beginning on the first day of school, reinforced them during “teachable moments” and daily instruction, and modeled them through teacher actions. In discussing the survey results, Anderson states that the “LIFESKILLS and Lifelong Guidelines program is perceived as an effective program by the students, teachers, and parents involved in the study” (p. 99). These survey results demonstrate that these groups perceived the program to be effective.

These studies show a trend of positive influence wherever character education programs are used. However, they also suggest that this positive effect on behavior may

The aforementioned studies provide information and insight into the use of character education programs. However, one limitation of these studies is the concern that the research is based on perceptions. Although these methods provide useful information, perceptions are subjective in nature.

**Methods for Teaching Character Education**

Although this research evaluated methodologies for studying the effects of character education, teachers use many different strategies to teach character education. The first of these strategies is specific instruction about character education. Some schools teach behavior codes that reflect their core values for both students and teachers (Huffman, 1993).

While the first strategy prescribes a program to build character education, the next strategy requires using material that teachers already have, but it asks teachers to change the way something is structured. Sanchez (2005) suggests using history as a platform for storytelling to promote discussion and to examine human struggles and decisions. Humans erred in our history. Characters from our heritage faced challenges and failures, and history allows students to see these strong values and how the values helped characters grow and make it through their struggles. Kristjansson (2004) and Singh (2001) both recommend the use of literature to inspire students to replicate the behavior of the characters from the stories. The use of children’s literature fosters discussions
between students and teachers on conflict resolution. Also, teaching citizenship and responsibility fits into the social studies context of the classroom (Singh, 2001).

A third strategy instills character education through the use of activities. Parental and community involvement in the schools help successfully build character. Another activity to teach character education is classroom meetings.

**Classroom Meetings**

Some refer to classroom meetings as “morning meetings” or “daily meetings.” Classroom meetings can take many forms. Most often, classroom meetings occur in the elementary school setting. This study defines a classroom meeting as a safe formal or informal meeting. Classroom meetings are scheduled daily to provide a systematic approach and enough frequency to reinforce the new behaviors. The entire class and teacher participate to generate “teachable moments” on social behaviors and to develop student-teacher and student-student relationships through various activities. This section discusses and defines various ways to design classroom meetings.

Classroom meeting structures have evolved, but Glasser’s (1969) original foundation included these elements: students sitting in a circle, meetings lasting 10-45 minutes with problems discussed, and participants moving toward a solution. Glasser describes three types of classroom meetings. The first type is an open-ended meeting, in which students discuss any topic of interest or importance to the group; the second type addresses classroom behavior or personal issues; the third type is diagnostic. Students must show knowledge or understanding of specific curricular topics. Glasser’s format was the catalyst for many others.
Some teachers structure meetings to take place every day, but other teachers structure meetings to take place only once a week. Meeting formats can range from informal to strict. Earlier studies follow Glasser’s (1969) design of classroom meetings, but subsequent studies have evolved to include problem-solving games.

The work of the behaviorist psychologists is instructive here. Bandura (1977) believes that when students do not have the correct social skills, they need corrective experiences. Skinner (1968) reasons that programmed instruction can change behavior. Through the classroom meetings, students repeat reinforced behavior. Also, the meetings serve to reinforce socially acceptable behavior in that the students in the meeting are able to express their views and model behavior to the other students and the teacher is able to reinforce good behavior and admonish the bad behavior. Based on the foundational work of these behaviorist psychologists, it follows that classroom meetings are an application of the behaviorist theory in that they create an environment that fosters acceptable behaviors.

Glasser (1969), founder of classroom meetings, believed that all students need a sense of belongingness, power, freedom, and fun. However, to some students, school can mean experiences of isolation, alienation, and polarization (Osterman, 2000). Classroom meetings provide students with an environment conducive to developing personal relationships, membership in a community, and character. Glasser (1969) originally used classroom meetings to help problem students function and become more socially accepted (Osterman, 2000).
Glasser (1984) said that students need to learn how to meet their own needs. Many students do not understand that meeting their individual needs may preclude another student from accomplishing the same. Classroom meetings help all students learn how to meet their needs in a socially acceptable manner.

Glasser (1984) addresses classroom meetings as a method of forging character education and as a positive experience, especially for learning-disabled children. Students learn to care for one another. When a conflict arises, students will feel empowered because they will have the tools and confidence to resolve the issue. Students begin to feel autonomous and free to express their opinions, ideas, and problems. Students with disabilities often face many difficult social issues because nondisabled students are not always accepting of students with disabilities. Glasser’s theory indicates that classroom meetings allow students with disabilities to develop relationships with other students, to be more open, and to take risks in their classrooms. Classroom meetings engender a sense of belongingness and a sense of security, which can spark academic interest, not only in the disabled student, but also in the mainstream population. These important lessons not only educate students regarding behaviors in the classroom, but also provide valuable character education lessons that can be applied outside the classroom.

Theorists suggest different classroom meeting structures. The following theorists’ recommendations include the classroom meeting time frame, the meeting setup, the typical format, the physical setting, the atmosphere, the language to use, speaking and listening, and setting expectations.
Edwards and Mullis (2003) propose that meetings start at the beginning of the school year. Lundeberg et al. (1997) suggest that because counselors are experts, they should help facilitate and train staff in the classroom meetings. Lundeberg et al. further suggest that educators should participate in their own classroom-type meeting as an entire staff.

According to Emmett and Monsour (1996), classroom meetings should last 10-45 minutes, but Edwards and Mullis (2003) suggest meetings of 20-45 minutes. Students should be able to express thoughts and feelings and also listen to other students express their thoughts and feelings. Meetings should be scheduled regularly and include all students. Moreover, Edwards and Mullis support sustaining character education by shaping meetings to go deeper as the students’ age. Further, as students get older, Landau and Gathercoal (2000) suggest that meetings can move from concrete to more abstract topics.

Students sit in a circle to signify the start of the meeting, the movement of the conversation, and the equality of power among the individuals. The reason for this seating arrangement is that the circle represents completeness and continuity, equality, unity, and wholeness (Edwards & Mullis, 2003).

According to Vance and Weaver (2002), character education demonstrates that “respect is key in ensuring a safe, positive environment in class meetings—in the classroom and school settings. It is the foundation upon which a caring atmosphere is built” (p. 4). Schools should take steps to ensure that all students feel safe, so they can make progress in their social and emotional development. When students feel liked and
accepted as members of a school community, they contribute more to the educational and social aspects of a classroom (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Theodori (2001) suggests that a person with a higher level of satisfaction and attachment within a community will have a higher level of perceived well-being. Students need to feel a part of their classroom community.

Frey and Doyle (2001) explain why meetings should be student driven. Students should decide what topics they want to discuss, and the responsibility should be on the students. If a student wants to discuss an issue, he or she should be required to fill out a form. However, Frey and Doyle also illustrate some problems that might arise from the student forms. Many times, the same students will fill out request forms each week or even each day. As a practical matter, Edwards and Mullis (2003) advise that students should be required to obtain permission to bring up topics in meetings. Sometimes there might be too many request forms to address everyone’s issues, and tattling can become prominent on the forms. Also, conversations can go on forever, if allowed. Edwards and Mullis propose using an egg timer to manage the conversations.

Character education recommends that students use “I” messages to describe their feelings (Bippus & Young, 2005). The “I” message describes the speaker’s feelings and perception of the event or exchange. It does not focus on the other participant. “I” messages help students communicate what they want from the other students. The “I” messages do not blame individual students. “You” messages are unacceptable because they place blame and create an adversarial environment. Lundeberg et al. (1997) remind participants to focus not on the emotions, but on the behaviors. The goal is for students to
understand that they are responsible for their own behaviors and to begin to feel control over their emotions.

Educators should set the ground rules for the classroom meetings (Emmett & Monsour, 1996). Edwards and Mullis (2003) propose that teachers guide the participants in establishing complete confidentiality. With confidentiality established, students will speak more freely. Teachers should recognize appropriate listening and encourage other students to model that behavior. Good and active listening skills develop when only one student speaks at a time (Frey & Doyle, 2001; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000). Body language, facial expressions, and eye contact should all be a focus when learning how to be good listeners. Students should learn to be approachable. They also need to understand the nonverbal messages they are sending other students and be able to translate incoming nonverbal messages as well. Teachers need to instruct students to speak to the current topic, recognizing that some students are master manipulators seeking to control the topic while other students will talk endlessly to prevent schoolwork from beginning (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Students also must have the freedom to pass the “speaker power” at any time without question (Emmett & Monsour, 1996).

Landau and Gathercoal (2000) recommend regularly scheduling meetings. If the need arises for an emergency meeting to solve a conflict, the teacher should act as host. Edwards and Mullis (2003) suggest that using a sign-up clipboard for student conflicts will save classroom time and that the best time for holding classroom meetings is before a recess or daily dismissal because students will want to resolve issues more quickly
rather than waste instruction time. The teacher must clearly define the rules for calling a classroom meeting, including who can call a meeting.

Daily exercises in group discussion will strengthen the student vocabulary of “feeling words” (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Students will learn that there are many ways to describe how they feel, and teachers should force them to use “feeling words.” Younger students are less descriptive in their feeling statements. Frey and Doyle suggest having younger students repeat phrases to develop their ability to use “I” statements and “feeling words.” Here are 10 examples of the more than 2,700 possible feeling words that Hein (n.d.) uses: abandoned, belittled, confident, disliked, excited, foolish, sad, rich, popular, and marvelous (http://eqi.org/fw.htm).

The teacher is leader and facilitator and should also be an active part of the meeting (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Teachers should take an interest in the meetings because students need to experience teacher involvement. However, the teacher does not dictate the topics, nor does the teacher control the flow of the classroom meeting; teachers need to surrender some measure of control to the students to have a successful meeting. Teachers enforce the ground rules, guide students to conflict resolution, ask follow-up questions, keep time frames, and stay grounded in the goals of character education. Teachers should be very careful about censoring what students discuss and offering solutions or advice in conflict resolution (Edwards & Mullis, 2003).

The primary activity for the teacher should be that of an active listener, demonstrating faith in the students’ ability to run the meetings. Lundeberg et al. (1997) remind teachers not to react when students say something highly sensitive, but to remain
nonjudgmental and preserve their trust. Students will share much more information when they feel trusted. Teachers must maintain unconditional acceptance of student conversations, as long as the conversations follow the meeting ground rules. Successful classroom meetings require a commitment by the students and teacher to the ground rules, confidentiality, and acceptance.

Meetings can start with a greeting or a welcome. For example, each student shakes the student’s hand on either side and says, “Good morning, (student’s name).” Teachers must constantly remind students of the correct way to greet a person (i.e., a firm handshake and direct eye contact).

Complimenting is an approach sometimes used in character education. Frey and Doyle (2001) require a five-minute period devoted to complimenting. Edwards and Mullis (2003) feel that at the beginning of the meeting, students should show appreciation or concern for one another. Students are to compliment or thank one another for actions deemed “good” by other classroom members. Both the recipient and deliverer will acquire positive feelings from a compliment. Students will not only learn how to give compliments, but they will also learn how to accept compliments. Accepting compliments graciously is an acquired skill, and the classroom meetings are a safe place to practice.

From the complimenting session, good social behaviors will be reinforced (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Edwards and Mullis (2003) advise using a piece of paper as a billboard for each student. Each class member will write a compliment or positive comment about that student. During the course of the meetings, the class creates a billboard for every
student. Any encouragement activities or “show and tell” sessions serve as a good way to begin a classroom meeting. Vance and Weaver (2002) differentiate between acknowledgments and compliments: “An acknowledgment recognizes a meaningful interaction between people, whereas a compliment is a flattering observation about another person” (p. 13).

Students must learn to distinguish between inside and outside compliments. An inside compliment references a person’s personality traits, according to Frey and Doyle (2001). An outside compliment references something superficial, such as a person’s shoes. Students will make many more outside compliments to each other. As students become more comfortable with compliments, students will give one another more inside compliments. Inside compliments will begin as positive comments and develop into much deeper, more meaningful accolades.

Following the “compliment session,” participants use a warm-up question or a “whip” in the circle setting. Students go around the circle answering the warm-up or issue question. The warm-up should be an easy question such as, “Name your favorite cartoon.” Students may pass whenever they do not want to answer a question. The warm-ups move quickly. Sometimes a session can use an object to indicate who has “speaker power.” Only the person holding the object in his or her hand has the power to speak. Teachers must be vigilant in reminding students about the right to speak. For instance, the teacher or facilitator might need to ask, “Who has speaker power?”

Emmett and Monsour (1996) suggest that students should personalize their issues, such as, “What causes you to get angry?” Then, individually, students answer the
question in the circle setting. Role-playing playground scenarios or problem vignettes should be used (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Edwards and Mullis (2003) recommend that any student offering a solution should have the opportunity to speak. Initially, students will offer punishment rather than solution. As students develop better skills, they can evaluate each proposed solution and evaluate the respective merits. Fullan (2003) writes that conflicts are excellent moments for social learning.

Frey and Doyle (2001) advise bringing up “last week’s issue” as a reminder before moving on to a new issue. This reinforces the previously learned social skill. Before a new topic comes to a meeting, a student must write the “I” statement of an issue that he or she would like addressed on a sign-up sheet. The teacher or issue facilitator must approve the topic. During the classroom meeting, the student may read the “I” statement to the class.

When discussing an issue, Emmett and Monsour (1996) suggest not using a student’s name. They feel that using a student’s name is an accusatory action and will not foster a cooperative environment. Using a student’s name can create a trial-like atmosphere. Students should focus on the issue and its resolution, rather than on the other student. When the conversation stagnates, Frey and Doyle (2001) suggest that the teacher move the conversation to a new issue. Although students do not always have to agree, Edwards and Mullis (2003) suggest that the group choose a solution and an implementation date before ending a meeting. At the conclusion of a classroom meeting, a final discussion is required. Frey and Doyle (2001) propose that students discuss what
helped or hindered the communication to reinforce the character education lessons used in the meeting.

Although well-respected, Glasser’s work has limitations because it is not based on research, but rather on beliefs. After Glasser’s introduction of the concept in 1969, the early research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s either failed to show that classroom meetings were effective or showed mixed results. However, the more recent studies tend to be favorable toward classroom meetings and find them to be effective. The focuses of the studies differ: Some studies focus on self-identity, whereas others focus on social skills and getting along with others. Another important factor to look at is the frequency of the meetings; some happen once a week and others occur every day. There were several studies about the research worthiness of classroom meetings when they first rose to prominence. These studies on the effectiveness of classroom meetings for character education will be discussed below by looking first at the older studies and then at the more recent studies.

The Older Studies About Classroom Meetings

Solomon (1974) evaluated Glasser’s (1969) classroom meetings in a semirural school consultation program between September and December 1972. Glasser’s theory on productive classroom meetings posits that students will learn to problem solve, feel a sense of worth, and gain confidence from giving and receiving love. Glasser requires classroom meetings to include problem solving, be open-ended, use a circular seating pattern, and relate to curriculum. Meetings can last 10-40 minutes, depending on the children’s age. Moreover, the facilitator should never correct a participant’s grammar or
expressions of feeling. The researcher held informal discussions with teachers regarding
the classroom meetings to build teachers’ confidence in their ability to facilitate
classroom meetings. The researcher selected experimental teachers at random and
administered pretests and posttests to both experimental and control groups. Fourth, fifth,
and sixth grade classrooms participated in the classroom meetings. Meetings lasted 30-35
minutes per session, 2 to 3 times per week, for a total of 13 weeks. Teachers employing
classroom meetings met with the researcher 30 minutes a week.

The researcher used multiple survey instruments to measure peer relations, self-
attitudes and interests, student views of life events (either as externally controlled by
others or as internally controlled by the student), student-viewed consequences, and
dispositions toward others. Students reported liking the classroom meetings, but Solomon
(1974) found little support for psychological or social growth in students from classrooms
that implemented classroom meetings. After the study concluded, five out of seven
teachers continued to conduct classroom meetings. The fact that teachers continued the
classroom meetings indicates that further research about classroom meetings is necessary.

In a rare study that targeted student teachers, Solomon (1982) also evaluated the
effects of Glasser’s classroom meetings on the perceptions of student teachers and their
pupils. The participants included 33 student teachers from a Tennessee university,
including randomly assigned student teachers in each group. The study took place during
the first and second semesters. During the first semester, the experimental group,
comprising 18 student teachers, used classroom meetings; in the second semester, the
researcher assigned student teachers as the control group, using the traditional
curriculum. The student teachers and 765 elementary students participated in this study at a Memphis elementary school. Researchers used surveys to measure student attitudes and perceptions. Classroom meetings convened for a maximum of 20 minutes, three times per week, for six weeks. The researcher trained the student teachers for the experimental group in proper conduct for classroom meetings. The results of the study showed that the classroom meetings did not change the student teachers’ perceptions of their students. Consequently, this older (1982) study also does not support the effectiveness of classroom meetings.

In another study that found limited effectiveness of classroom meetings, Grant (1972) studied the effects of classroom meetings on social and academic success in a fourth grade classroom in central New York State. The researcher conducted the classroom meetings. This study used Glasser’s format of 10- to 45-minute classroom meetings, held in a circular seating pattern, focusing on a student’s social and academic self-concepts and the successes and failures of a student’s internal locus of control. The population included 163 students in six different classrooms and included a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group conducted 29 meetings during the study. The researcher gave pretest and posttest questionnaires to measure student social and academic self-concepts and locus of control. The researcher observed the classroom meetings in 10- to 20-minute intervals for each classroom. Teachers rated students on a behavior rating scale and analyzed verbal patterns between themselves and the class. The researcher used another questionnaire to evaluate student beliefs of personal responsibility for academic success. The findings from the study indicated that there was
no difference between the experimental group using the classroom meetings and the control group not using the classroom meetings. Notably, the researcher conducted the classroom meetings. Grant (1972) indicated that had the classroom teacher conducted the classroom meetings, more significant results might have resulted. Further, the students in the experimental group termed “deviant” had an increase in their social self-concept and willingness to accept responsibility. Because the researcher, rather than the classroom teacher, performed the classroom meetings in this study, its importance and instructiveness may be limited.

Rice-Alford (1983) looked at the effects of classroom meetings on the self-esteem of junior high school students in Lakewood, Colorado, a suburb of Denver. The researcher conducted the study in three classrooms of eighth grade students during the first quarter of the second semester of the 1982-1983 school year. This study included experimental and control groups using pretests and posttests, which were administered five weeks apart. The experimental group implemented meetings, based on Glasser’s Classroom Meeting Model, in a circular seating pattern. The population included 58 students randomly assigned to the classes; the three groups ranged in size from 21 to 28 students. Classroom meetings lasted approximately 20-30 minutes and took place two to three times each week for 10 weeks. The researcher used a survey to assess student self-esteem. Rice-Alford noted that as a result of the classroom meetings, teachers found the classroom environment “to be less ego-threatening, to reduce frequency of sarcasm, to become increasingly more patient, and also to be more readily accessible to students” (p. 105).
Winnette (1983) conducted a study looking at the effects of classroom meetings on behavior from selected students in sixth and seventh grade social studies classrooms in a mid-South, public junior high school. Students in this school reside in single-parent homes and consistently score below expectations on achievement tests. Teachers in the building found the traditional detention for discipline issues ineffective; in fact, discipline incidents had increased. Therefore, the school needed change, and Glasser’s classroom meeting format was the foundation used for developing the classroom meetings. Winnette hypothesized that the classroom meetings would modify student behavior. The researcher conducted classroom meetings for 50 minutes during six sessions and included 185 total students. This six-week study included three groups: experimental, control with guidance, and a true control. The researcher met with the teachers in the experimental group. During the six sessions, the experimental groups decided the rules of the classroom meetings collectively, brainstormed response behaviors together to trigger situations, discussed responsible behaviors, and reported successes with new strategies. The researcher used a checklist to analyze student behavior, and students received letter grades based on behaviors.

The results of Winnette’s (1983) study indicate that classroom meetings do not decrease discipline problems or modify student behavior. Winnette reported that teachers continued to hold meetings after the study concluded and that the teachers felt that more time would have helped students follow through with the lessons from the study. Students reported that they wanted classroom meetings to continue when the study ended. This
1983 study showed that classroom meetings were not effective or at least showed no improvement in discipline problems.

In contrast to the Solomon and Winnette studies, one older study by Elliot (1977) found classroom meetings to be an effective methodology. Elliot examined junior high school student attitudes using Glasser’s classroom meetings. The researcher trained five urban and five suburban school team leaders to use Glasser’s classroom meetings. The team leaders returned to their schools and trained the classroom teachers for 30 hours, over 15 sessions, on proper use of Glasser’s classroom meeting design. Then the researcher randomly chose three classrooms for the study, strictly following Glasser’s classroom meeting format. Pretests and posttests measured student attitudes, such as anxiety, misery, and stability. The researcher further divided each attitude into higher intensity, medium intensity, and lower intensity levels. Elliot’s findings demonstrate that classroom meetings improve student attitudes.

In an older study with mixed results, Glick (1972) investigated self-concept, self-esteem, and academic responsibility in emotionally disturbed boys who participated in classroom meetings. The 37 study participants, ranging in ages from 11 to 14, resided at a residential center for boys with emotional problems. Glick used five classrooms: two control classrooms and three experimental classrooms. The experimental group held classroom meetings three times per week for 10 weeks. Teachers participated in eight approximately two-hour training seminars. Students sat in a circular seating pattern during the classroom meetings, and either the leader or a class member chose the discussion topic. The leader used a nonjudgmental position and rotated places within the
circle to become part of the group. The researcher used a survey directing students to describe their perceptions of their identities and behaviors. A questionnaire asked students about their internal and external feelings of responsibility, and the researcher used another survey to examine student self-esteem. On one hand, results showed that students who participated in the classroom meetings did not differ from the control group in terms of self-responsibility. On the other hand, students who participated in the classroom meetings showed higher levels of self-acceptance and acceptance of others. Therefore, it follows that another study, in a different setting, is necessary to understand the effects of classroom meetings on student self-acceptance and acceptance of others.

During 1989-1990, LeCureux (1991) examined the classroom meeting as a teacher tool in classroom management. The participants in the experimental group included 25 students from a ninth grade law class at a junior high in a metropolitan area. The other test group included 34 students in a seventh grade science class. The researcher trained teachers, during a two-hour session, on the proper conduct of classroom meetings. Classroom meetings took place in 30-minute sessions, four to five times a semester. The teachers were participants in the classroom meetings, sharing information about themselves. The researcher used teacher surveys; the experimental group conducted classroom meetings, but the control group did not conduct classroom meetings. The goals of the classroom meetings were to develop relationships, understand consequences, and practice problem solving. LeCureux found that in experimental classrooms, teacher control of students within their classrooms increased with the use of classroom meetings. Teachers commented that the classroom meetings improved the
attitudes of students. Classroom meetings, as LeCureux stated, “force students to assume responsibility” (p. 86). LeCureux attributes the results to student freedom to make decisions and to develop relationships with the teacher and other students. This study also illustrates another benefit of classroom meetings: better classroom management and teacher control over student behavior.

Other early studies looked at the effect of classroom meetings on introverted students. For example, Lundeberg et al. (1997) found that classroom meetings were springboards for student thinking and opportunities to draw out introverted students. Students reported that challenging questions from classroom meetings helped stimulate positive changes in their behavior. Students also said that they felt empowered and that meetings helped build their own classroom community.

Teachers participating in the study performed by Lundeberg et al. (1997) reported that the learning from the classroom meetings transferred to other aspects of life. The meetings enabled the students to share material that they otherwise would have kept to themselves. Teachers felt that the meetings promoted caring for other students and honed active listening skills.

Lundeberg et al. (1997) promote three core beliefs for teachers who are committed to classroom meetings. “Knowledge is socially constructed; the classroom is a community of ideas; feelings are part of thinking” (p. 311). Students construct knowledge minute by minute. Much of what they see and think about themselves and the world comes from interaction and conversation with their peers. If their perceptions are negative and flawed, classroom meetings help to change those perceptions by promoting
clearer thinking. Feelings affect every part of the student existence. When students and teachers share feelings in a classroom meeting, they are able to validate or adjust their own emotional experiences.

Older studies examined the effect of classroom meetings on peer relationships, student views of external and internal control of life events, student-teachers’ perceptions of their students, student attitudes, caring for other students, and self-esteem (Elliot, 1977; LeCureux, 1991; Lundeberg et al., 1997; Rice-Alford, 1983; Solomon, 1974; Solomon, 1982). These older studies found that classroom meetings positively affect the classroom environment. However, there are clear research gaps with respect to the effects of implementing newer, evolved character education programs such as SDM/SPS and exploring classroom meetings in the current educational environment, which is affected by things such as NCLB.

**Current Studies About Classroom Meetings**

President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Public Law 107-110) on January 8, 2002. With the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), teachers are feeling pressure to teach more academics, and time constraints prohibit adding anything extra to the curriculum. There is not much new research on classroom meetings, and it is glaringly obvious that the research on classroom meetings is dated. Teachers feel that there is not enough time to teach character education, even though NCLB mandates character education. Teachers commonly state, “There is no time. Something has to give.” NCLB forces teachers to focus more on reading, math, and test-taking skills than on other areas. For instance, Downing (2008) reports,
The reality is that NCLB has saddled public school students with unending tests and drills. With practice tests (starting with learning how to “bubble” in kindergarten) and the tests themselves, Texas students now may spend 36 days in testing hell each year, out of 185 days (http://www.houstonpress.com/2008-04-10/news/so-much-for-no-child-left-behind/).

Because character education is not tested, teachers do not always implement character education. Teachers are feeling pressure to spend time teaching to the test. “Teachers often bemoan the fact that there is never enough time to teach the required curriculum, let alone implement a character education initiative” (Character Ed Prep, 2004, p. 1).

NCLB includes measurable academic standards and standards for teaching character education. There are no required assessments for character education in NCLB and teachers repeatedly cite the amount of time lost to other NCLB requirements (Character Ed Prep, 2004, p. 1). These high-stakes standards force schools to eliminate untested subjects so that schools have more time to focus on language arts and math (Hunt, 2008). Even with NCLB, teachers are still finding time to conduct classroom meetings (Ogden, 2002). This conflicted situation dictates a need to conduct a research study on the benefits of classroom meetings to address character education.

Little rigorous current research exists on classroom meetings in the elementary setting. This section discusses current studies on classroom meetings. These theoretical ideas state that classroom meetings create opportunities for friendships, facilitate a sense
of belonging, reduce negative behaviors, assist teacher/student awareness and understanding of each other, and increase students’ self-confidence.

Many students fail to learn appropriate social skills to deal with each other while at school (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Classroom meetings provide a means to solve these problems in that they serve to counter the competitive influences and give students both explicit instructions and practice in social problem solving. Meetings correct improper or underdeveloped social skills while nurturing proper social skills (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). One problem with school environments is that they can create competitive environments, and the classrooms can cultivate and create adversaries and strangers (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Classroom meetings challenge students to think and rethink in a safe setting about past and future behaviors. The meetings promote mental health and equip students with coping skills (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Although this has classroom implications, it does not represent scientific research. Students will learn listening skills, speaking “wait-time,” and emotional management skills. Meetings can increase self-control and problem-solving skills, and they can positively affect the classroom environment (Frey & Doyle, 2001).

Classrooms are not monocultural; instead, they are multicultural—collections of different values, religions, beliefs, and traditions. Edwards and Mullis (2003) endorse classroom meetings because they teach students to value other students’ cultures: Many cultural groups regard cooperation as being more important than competition. Classroom meetings, with their inherent spirit of cooperation, can help students from such cultures as Asian and Native American feel more included. Students who feel
alienated, even though they are from the majority culture of the school, also can feel more included by participating in classroom meetings where every voice is important. (p. 26)

Many educators feel that they have too many subjects to teach and argue that there is no time to add classroom meetings to the daily or weekly schedules. For example, Strauss (2007) quotes from a classroom teacher, “As instructional time in math, language arts and other subjects students must achieve proficiency in has risen, time devoted to other subjects has declined” (p. B01). It is worth mentioning that—although it is not scientific research—Edwards and Mullis (2003) maintain that classroom meetings would actually generate more time for teaching because there would be fewer discipline problems and disruptions. They believe that students would display better classroom behavior because of the classroom meetings, and they believe that classrooms having regularly scheduled classroom meetings had less physical and verbal aggression over time. Frey and Doyle (2001) suggest that holding regularly scheduled classroom meetings reduces delinquent behaviors, antisocial behaviors, and impulsivity, although this claim is not grounded in formal research. Further, students learned to understand different perspectives, thereby changing student reactions in confrontational situations. Using the classroom meeting experiences, students are able to work through issues versus taking class time to continue to squabble. Students are able to focus on the task at hand versus perseverating on their personal or social issues. Edwards and Mullis (2003) also found that regular classroom meetings decreased principal’s office visits and the behavior referrals.
When meetings focus on well-being, they are active, prosocial educational experiences. Edwards and Mullis (2003), through empirical research, discovered a reduction in risky behavior and fewer incidents of bullying in classrooms that regularly conducted meetings. Routine meetings send a clear, inclusive message that every student counts (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Subsequently, students felt that their school climate changed, and schools experienced a lower dropout rate. The dropout rate changed because these students did not feel alienated, but rather recognized valuable resources in their classroom communities (Edwards & Mullis, 2003).

In a study that targeted student relationships and the student sense of community, Eirich (2006) conducted an ethnographic study on classroom meetings. She studied the effects of classroom meetings in a first–second grade multilevel classroom. Eirich examined the discourse of the classrooms, observed classrooms, collected artifacts, took surveys, and informally interviewed small groups. One focus that she discussed was the importance of creating a democratic setting to coconstruct the classroom. There were a total of 22 participants out of the 23 students in the classroom. Fourteen of the students were second graders, and nine were first graders. Eirich found that classroom meetings allowed students to have peer interactions and that students reported feeling joy when sharing experiences with one another. She stated, “Classroom meetings provide a forum for teachers to engage children in discussions about the questions and concerns they have about themselves and the world” (p. 264). The collective experiences from the classroom meetings build the classroom community. Classroom meetings facilitate opportunities for
students to create relationships, foster inquiry, build friendships, develop classroom community, and fulfill a sense of belonging (Eirich, 2006).

In another study that focused on the student sense of community, Hinman (1996) examined the learning environment following the implementation of classroom meetings. Participants were from four schools in fourth grade classrooms within the Dane County (Wisconsin) School District. The study ran for 12 weeks, with meetings mandated two times per week in 20-minute sessions. Hinman instructed the control group about lessons in creativity while training the experimental group in classroom meetings and giving them lesson packets. The researcher used surveys from teachers and students to gather information about perceptions, demographics, and attitudes. Hinman randomly assigned teachers to both groups. Teachers selected for the experimental group received 4 hours of instruction about implementing the classroom meetings. All classroom meetings used the circle seating arrangement, either in chairs or on the floor. Three classrooms also used the classroom meetings during snack time. Hinman hypothesized that there would be an increase in psychological safety in classrooms having open classroom meetings, and she used a survey to measure student feelings of safety. In regard to feeling psychologically safe, she did not find a significant difference between students participating in classroom meetings versus the students not participating in classroom meetings. However, Hinman stated that teachers with a positive attitude and good communication created a “greater sense of community [that] was felt by the classroom, by both female and male students and especially by gifted students” (p. 90). Students stated that they like having time to share ideas and feelings they otherwise are not able to express. Students also reported that
the classroom meetings helped them to learn how to respond appropriately to stressful situations. Teachers conducting classroom meetings reported that the students listen better, share more ideas, are more tolerant of one another, and are better communicators. These teachers felt that they had a better understanding of students in their classrooms. Because of the perceived benefits for students, six of the seven teachers continued to conduct meetings after the study had concluded (Hinman, 1996). This study shows that there is a need to further study the impact of classroom meetings in a different setting.

Murphy (2002) studied the effect that classroom meetings had on reducing the following recess problems: playing alone, not having friends, name-calling, arguing, and fighting physically and verbally. The population was three classrooms of fourth and fifth graders in an economically privileged suburban setting, and the researcher conducted the study over a nine-week period from July to August. The school used a year-round calendar, employing tracks with nine weeks of school and then three weeks of vacation. After establishing a baseline, the teacher used classroom meetings two times a week. The facilitator met with the teachers to set expectations for the implementation of the classroom meetings and to establish some general rules for student behavior while in the meetings. Students filled out a short survey after each recess to report any problems. Teachers also rated each recess. Meetings convened in a physically tight circle, and the teacher used meetings as a forum for students to discuss present problems and solutions to social issues. At the end of each meeting, teachers summarized the meeting’s discussion. The researcher and the teachers used a form to cross-check observations. Research supported that the classroom meetings are a medium to discuss arguments and
conflicts. Murphy found that the classroom meetings reduced problems during recess, such as targeted exclusion of students from recess activities. The study showed an overall decrease in recess problems from the introduction of classroom meetings. The study shows character education to be effective at an elementary school level.

An overwhelming majority of the more recent studies about classroom meetings point to an increase in positive student attitudes, self-concept, acceptance, better friendships, feeling of belonging, and student self-confidence (Eirich, 2006; Hinman, 1996; LeCureux, 1991; Murphy, 2002). Consequently, further studies using different character education programs within classroom meetings are necessary to determine student and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the prescribed program.

Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving

Within classroom meetings, teachers use a host of strategies, such as greetings, whips, hooks, think-pair-shares, role-play, and social decision-making/problem-solving lessons or games. Many teaching strategies fit within the confines of a classroom meeting. One such element that fits into classroom meetings is the program Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS). SDM/SPS lessons vary, but the foundation uses a constructivist’s model with students to actively create their knowledge during each lesson to guide their thinking and use a series of strategies.

Social Decision Making/Problem Solving (SDM/PS) evolved to the current Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) curriculum for elementary school and middle school. The founders, Schuyler, Clabby, and Elias of SDM/PS, sought to improve student social awareness and problem-solving skills by teaching students
“listening, following directions, resisting provocation, avoiding provoking others, and self-monitoring stress and emotions” (http://www.ubhcisweb.org/tdm/aboutus/approach.htm). Another program concentration is teaching social decision making and thinking and then applying the new skills in real-life situations. The program began at Rutgers University, and its roots are embedded in psychology. The program developed from years of research by Schuyler, Clabby, and Elias about elementary parents, teachers, students, and administrators (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). As the program developed, Elias and Butler (2005), together with Bruno, Papke, and Shapiro, further refined the program. These five researchers believe that the curriculum would positively impact students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally.

SDM/SPS lessons organize into three steps similar to Crawl-Walk-Run. In the first step, called “Readiness,” students get ready by learning some basic building blocks of self-control and social awareness. Without these basic steps, character development would not be successful. In the second “Instructional” step, students receive instruction to help them think about how to make good decisions when they encounter a problem. The third and final “Application” step takes students through structured exercises and questioning so they can practice how to apply these new decision-making skills they have learned (Zins et al., 2004).

The current program’s curriculum takes students through 29 different lessons for each grade level over a year’s time, all of which relate to social and emotional issues. The 29 lessons are adapted for the different grade levels with a common vocabulary. Lessons include discussing a range of emotions, ways to express emotions, and situations that
cause the emotions. Instruction focuses on student self-awareness and self-management for school and personal success. Students monitor and identify situational cues, feelings, and perspectives of others. Accepting cultural differences and developing an understanding of anyone who is different from them is a large focus in the program. The program takes students through strategies for making and keeping friends and the causes and consequences of conflicts. The curriculum focuses on decision-making skills and teaching students responsible behaviors. Further, Elias, Butler, Bruno, Papke, and Shapiro directed teachers to use the common language of the curriculum at all levels. This way, students carry the language of the program from year to year, creating more of a coherent flow. Lesson focuses are on role-playing, cooperation, listening skills, self-control, and communication skills. Each lesson states the objectives, discusses the activity, and details how to conduct the lesson (Elias & Butler, 2005).

One lesson from the framework is the strategy FIG TESPN (Elias & Butler, 2005, p. 124). Students should use this strategy when involved in a difficult situation. FIG TESPN has students identify their feelings, set a goal, choose a solution from many possibilities, and then reflect on the outcome. Students use the acronym while role-playing different scenarios and apply FIG TESPN when faced with a challenging situation to help them make good decisions. This lesson is one example within the 29

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1F – Find the Feelings
I – Identify the Problem
G – Guide Yourself with a Goal
T – Think of Many Possible Solutions
E – Envision Consequences
S – Select the Best Solution
P – Plan, and Be Prepared for Pitfalls
N – Notice What Happened (Now What?)
total lessons. The lessons vary, but there are a host of strategies within the SDM/SPS framework. The program is within the confines of classroom meetings, builds on itself, and uses the same language throughout the curriculum so students learn to recognize appropriate clues. The SDM/SPS curriculum requires students in third through fifth grade to practice FIG TESPN.

Another lesson that Elias and Tobias (1990) suggest asks students to “Keep Calm.” The objective requires students to learn these three steps: first, stop; second, remind themselves to remain calm; and third, practice controlled breathing. A third lesson recommended by Elias and Tobias to improve communication is “BEST,” which has students examine their body posture, recognize whether they have eye contact with the speaker, and observe their tone of voice and the words they are using. Although their findings were not grounded in research, teachers, counselors, administrators, and specialists commenting to Elias and Tobias stated that once the program was implemented, students were more successful in school and society, had more confidence, made better decisions, had higher self-esteem, were thinking through problems before acting, displayed more socially appropriate behavior, and enjoyed better interpersonal relationships (Elias & Butler, 2005).

SDM/SPS not only creates a healthy learning environment that is conducive to increase academic performance, but it also gives students critical thinking skills that they can apply in specific subjects (Zins et al., 2004). For example, in language arts and literature, students can use these tools to better understand how the characters feel in the specific situations in the book.
Actual application of the program is remarkably simple for school districts. SDM/SPS is best used as a strategy of social and emotional learning. The cost is less than $20.00 per teacher volume, and student books are not necessary. Once a district decides to implement SDM/SPS, instructional leaders receive a half day of training about the program from an SDM/SPS consultant. The SDM/SPS books present each lesson’s objectives, materials, teacher preparations, instructional activities, reflections, and tips for teachers.

SDM/SPS can occur at any time of the day within a classroom meeting. This program structure complements classroom meetings because the parameters of whole-class lessons are integrated easily into the classroom meetings. These meetings often discuss behavior issues, friend issues, and home issues, and the quick SDM/SPS lessons integrated into the classroom meetings give students tools to deal with these situations. SDM/SPS lessons integrate into a normal classroom setting; however, there is very limited rigorous research on SDM/SPS, and to date there is no research on integrating SDM/SPS into classroom meetings.

That said there are reports suggesting the effectiveness of the SDM/SPS program. Elias and Butler (2005) state, that the SDM/SPS curriculum has “been validated as an Exemplary Program by the U.S. Department of Education’s Program Effectiveness Panel” (p. 359). “More recently, it has been granted Promising Program status by the Department of Education’s Expert Panel on Safe and Drug Free Schools and the Character Education Partnership” (p. 359). Elias and Butler maintain that students participating in SDM/SPS will improve their social decisions and problem-solving skills.
In addition, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) also endorses the SDM/SPS program. CASEL defines itself as follows: “CASEL is a not-for-profit organization that works to advance the science and . . . practice of social and emotional learning (SEL)” (CASEL, n.d.). It is noteworthy that Elias was a founding member of CASEL and currently holds the position of vice chair of the Leadership Team.

Beyond these, there are only two research studies on the SDM/SPS program: Bronstein’s (1992) and Churney’s (2000). Both studies found benefits from the implementation of the program. Summaries of these two studies follow.

Bronstein (1992) conducted the first study about the program Social Decision Making/Problem Solving (SDM/PS). Bronstein studied the effects of training various parent groups in an SDM/PS program in a private religious school. Students from these parent groups did not use the strategies more than students whose parents did not participate. There was no parent-child relationship showing a use of the social skills learned by the participating parents. However, parents noted that the program had a positive outcome because they reported using the program skills in their personal and professional lives. Twenty percent of the parents believed that their children learned and applied social skills from the parent training. As part of the study, Bronstein gauged the attitudes of administrators and found, “Principals perceive that character education programs have the most significant positive effect on behavior-related issues at their schools” (p. 140).
For the other study on Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS), Churney (2000) researched the social and emotional development of third graders to sixth graders using SDM/SPS. This program teaches lessons to the whole class about self-control skills, social-awareness skills, and group-participation skills. Instruction was on the BEST and Keep Calm lessons for the third and fourth graders, and the FIG TESPN lessons were used for the fifth and sixth graders. Students volunteered for surveys and interviews. Churney found that students in the program benefited and became more assertive, used more coping skills, and used more problem-solving strategies than the control group, as measured by problem-solving scenarios, interviews, and student questionnaires. The researcher found a significant difference in students who had been in the program for two years; they displayed more cooperative behavior than the control group students. At the junior high school level, only 10% of the students were able to recall the FIG TESPN steps. Students described the acronym as having too many steps to remember. However, when in a lab setting, students displayed fewer problem behaviors. The study found that students benefited from the SDM/SPS training. Students reported that the interactive lessons, which used role-playing, helped them apply the lessons in their own real-life situations. There were no differences in students’ self-concept scores, whether they participated in SDM/SPS or not. Churney states, “These results suggest that students who have experience learning and practicing various social and decision-making skills may develop more confidence in their interactions with others such that they are more assertive” (p. 116).
Conclusion


Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers?

2. What is the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?
3. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used to gather and analyze data for this mixed-methods study. The research examined teacher and student perceptions of a character education program. The teacher used Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) within classroom meetings, as recommended by Elias and Tobias (1990). Previous research in this area focused on different types of character education programs, and other research studied the effectiveness of classroom meetings. The researcher used quantitative surveys to answer the research questions. The data guided the researcher in forming conclusions based on student and teacher surveys.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers?

2. What is the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?
3. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?

**Description of Key Participants and Setting**

This research involved a vulnerable population—children—but its purpose was to understand their perception of a character education program that was currently used in the district.

The participants and setting were nonrandom and purposeful. Merriam (1998) states, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). The researcher chose the subject school district, which was located in a suburban community near Chicago. This school district required character education as an integral part of the curriculum; the district used Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) to teach character education. SDM/SPS was instituted to teach students decision-making and problem-solving skills at two schools in 1994. The district was a beta site for the program developers. Slowly over time, the program was implemented at all 12 elementary schools and three middle schools. However, some schools did not implement the program until just three years ago. The Social Emotional Learning standards of Illinois were developed, and schools needed to implement them. SDM/SPS is a research based, model program that met the requirements for Social Emotional Learning standards of Illinois. Elementary teachers were required to
weave the SDM/SPS lessons into classroom meetings. Classroom meetings were to occur each day. By the end of the year, the district’s expectation was that teachers had completed the 29 lessons of the SDM/SPS program.

The subject K-12 district served about 13,800 students and 871 teachers (http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite). The district covered about 57 square miles and was located about 40 miles west of Chicago. It comprised a total of 12 elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools. In the district, 69.5% of the teachers had earned a Master’s degree or higher. According to the 2009 Illinois School Report Card, students in the district were 83.8% White, 1.3% Black, 7.3% Hispanic, 4.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, .4% Native American, and 2.6% Multiracial/Multiethnic, and the district had a 7.7% low-income rate. Students in the subject school were 68.6% White, 1.2% Black, 19.3% Hispanic, 5.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, .6% Native American, 4.8% Multiracial/Multiethnic, and the school had an 18.9% low-income rate. Low-income rate was based on the number of students who received public aid or funds, lived in shelters or foster homes, or received free or reduced-price lunches. The teachers in the district were 97.3% White, .4% Black, 1.6% Hispanic, .6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .1% Native American; 23.9% of the teachers were male, and 76.1% were female (http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite).

Illinois Learning Standards require character education in the Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) Goals and Standards section (ISBE, 2004). Schools are required to implement a plan to incorporate lessons on social and emotional development. The three SEL Goals describe the content that schools should use to teach social and emotional
development lessons. Under each Goal are five benchmarks describing what each student should be able to do, and these benchmarks are broken down for grades K-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10, and 11-12. The subject district adopted Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) in 1994 as its character education program. The district piloted SDM/SPS, and the instructional leaders felt that the outcomes achieved district goals. The district was seeking a model to teach students problem solving and decision making, with a common language spanning multiple grade levels. The district anticipated improved decision making, fewer discipline referrals, and increased levels of responsibility relative to students’ behavior and schoolwork. Teachers in 3rd through 5th grade taught the 29 lessons and delivered the program throughout the school year. The 29 lessons were adapted for the different grade levels, and each grade level had different lessons with a common language. The district’s expectation had teachers using the common language of the SDM/SPS framework. Staff should have used SDM/SPS language in classrooms, and staff members should have been modeling SDM/SPS behaviors. The district did not evaluate teachers based on the instruction and implementation of the SDM/SPS lessons, nor did the district require teachers to teach a specific number of lessons in a week or a month, but the district expected teachers to teach all 29 lessons by the end of the school year. (The researcher acknowledged this as a weakness of this study.) However, participating teachers had committed to teach 25 of the 29 lessons by the middle of May. The program also included posters of SDM/SPS strategies to display in all classrooms, hallways, and common areas. Instructional leaders in the district received a half day of training from the program authors, and administrators received training from an
SDM/SPS consultant. The district expected teachers to integrate SDM/SPS lessons into their classroom meetings throughout the school year. Teachers received 1 day of training about classroom meetings and the SDM/SPS program, and they also received the book *Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving: A Curriculum for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning* (Elias & Butler, 2005). There was a yearly district student survey of student perception of SDM/SPS; however, the survey did not have proven validity. Because students were in the program all year, the end-of-the-year survey assumed that teachers had completed all 29 lessons with students by the end of May. The district’s survey measured whether or not students applied lessons from SDM/SPS to their lives and whether or not students could identify the acronyms and terms used in the program. The language included terms from SDM/SPS lessons such as *listening position*, *FIG*, *BEST*, and *Keep Calm*. Because this district chose SDM/SPS as its vehicle for teaching character education, rigorous research was necessary to determine whether the SDM/SPS program was the right path for the desired outcomes.

The district’s limited-English-proficient rate was 3.6%; the chronic truancy rate was .2%; the attendance rate was 95%; the mobility rate was 6.6%. The school’s limited-English-proficient rate was 12.7%; the chronic truancy rate was .9%; the attendance rate was 95.3%; the mobility rate was 14.2%. The district had one certified staff for every 13.3 students ([http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite](http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite)). The average class size in the district was 23.8 students in first grade, 24.3 students in second grade, 23.9 students in third grade, 24.3 students in fourth grade, and 25.1 students in fifth grade. The average class size in the subject school was 18 students in first grade, 26 students in second grade,
23.3 students in third grade, 21.0 students in fourth grade, and 23.3 students in fifth grade.

In 2009, the subject district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as required by the State of Illinois. Despite the fact that 89.3% of all students in the district made AYP in Reading, two subgroups fell below the “Safe Harbor Target Range”; therefore, the district did not make AYP. When the subgroups broke down, the data showed that only 47.9% of students with an “LEP” and 61.2% of “Students with Disabilities” made AYP in Reading. However, 92.4% of all students in the district made AYP in Mathematics. The district met AYP Attendance Rate at 95.0% and Graduation Rate at 98.4%. The subject school met AYP for all categories in Reading at 84.3%, Mathematics at 93.7%, and Attendance at 95.3% (http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite).

The district’s composite ACT score for 2009 was 23, the state average was 20.6, and the national average was 21.1. The subject district’s students whose test scores met or exceeded the state learning standards in 2009 totaled 90.0% for all state tests: 92.7% for the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and 78.5% for the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). Approximately 92% of students in the subject district went to college (http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite).

The participants were teachers and students from the third grade through the fifth grade in one school of the subject school district’s 12 elementary schools. The subject school was chosen because the researcher was employed as a fourth grade teacher in the building. This study included 161 total participants (8 teachers and 153 students). There
were three sections of each grade level at the subject school. Students ranged in age from 8 to 12 years old. A total of 50 third grade students, 29 fourth grade students, and 74 fifth grade students participated in the study. Teachers ranged from early practitioners with four years of experience to extremely experienced practitioners with 30 years of experience. Teachers in the district had an average of 11.5 years of teaching experience. First through fifth grade teachers in the subject school had an average of 12.4 years of experience. The three third grade teachers had an average of 6.3 years of experience. The two fourth grade teachers had an average of 8.0 years of experience. The three fifth grade teachers had an average of 23.0 years of experience. The researcher did not use any of her own students for this study.

The founders of SDM/SPS (Schuyler, Clabby, and Elias) sought to improve student social awareness and student problem-solving skills. There were 29 lessons in the SDM/SPS program. There were only two research studies about the SDM/SPS program. Bronstein (1992) conducted the first study on Social Decision Making/Problem Solving (SDM/PS). Twenty percent of the parents believed that their children used the skills from the program. The second study, completed by Churney (2000), found that students in the program became more assertive, used more coping skills, and used more problem-solving strategies than the control group students. Churney found a significant difference in students who had been in the program for two years: They displayed more cooperative behavior than the control-group students did. Students reported that the interactive lessons, especially role-playing, helped them apply the lessons in their real-life situations.
The researcher worked in the subject school as a classroom teacher, but did not include her own students in the research. The researcher understood that the existing teacher-teacher and teacher-student relationships posed special concerns related to recruitment, informed consent, and confidentiality of research data.

**Gaining Consent**

The subject school district authorized the researcher to conduct the prescribed study (see Appendix I: Permission Letter from District). Upon acceptance by the Loyola University Internal Review Board, the researcher gained consent from teachers and students. The researcher obtained permission, using informed-consent letters from the building principal (see Appendix A: Administrator Consent Letter). Cooperating principals and teachers (see Appendix B: Teacher Consent Letter) signed consent forms. The researcher explained the research instruments at a staff meeting and then asked teachers to sign the consent letter. The researcher asked participating teachers to send home Parental Consent Letters in student mailboxes, collect returned Parental Consent Letters, administer Student Assent Letters, administer student surveys, and collect student surveys. The researcher asked participating teachers to read scripts for Student Assent Letters and surveys and return both to the researcher. The researcher provided participating teachers with separate manila envelopes to collect Parental Consent Letters, signed Student Assent Letters, and student surveys. Only consenting teachers participated. The researcher also administered both qualitative and quantitative teacher surveys (see Appendix E: Scale of Character Traits and Appendix G: Teacher Questionnaire).
The researcher distributed Parental Consent Letters inside a manila envelope in each teacher’s mailbox. Teacher mailboxes were located in the Teacher Work Room in the front of the school attached to the School Office. Each manila envelope had a class list attached. Participating teachers placed Parental Consent Letters in student mailboxes one week before asking for student participation (see Appendix C: Parental Consent Letter). Student mailboxes were located inside each classroom at the front of the room. Students checked mailboxes on a daily basis to bring home materials to parents. There was no follow-up parent letter. Teachers collected the Parental Consent Letters as students returned them, marked students with parental consent on the attached class list, and inserted the Parental Consent Letters in a manila envelope provided by the researcher. After seven days, teachers placed the manila envelope with the Parental Consent Letters in the researcher’s mailbox. The researcher’s mailbox was located in the Teacher Work Room.

The researcher put the teacher script for the Student Assent Letters and student surveys into each participating teacher’s mailbox. Teachers had implemented classroom meetings for the entire school year. One week after distributing and collecting Parental Consent Letters, participating teachers read a script (see Appendix J: Teacher Script Student Assent) for the Student Assent Letters (see Appendix D: Student Assent) aloud to students and then asked them to give their consent. All teachers read all of the student-assent scripts on the same day. Because of the vulnerable participant population, students had special assent forms. Classroom teachers read the assent forms to students, ensuring informed and voluntary consent. Teachers notified all students that participation was
voluntary and that there would be no penalty for not participating. Only assenting students with parental permission participated in the study, and nonparticipating students read independently in the same room, rather than answer survey questions. Independent Reading was a common structure in all of the subject school’s classrooms, and Independent Reading was part of the school’s reading program. Independent Reading was required for a minimum of 30 minutes every day in each classroom. During Independent Reading, students had to be reading the entire time, and students were not allowed to talk to other students. Often, teacher-student reading conferences took place within the confines of Independent Reading, and students filled out teacher questions to prepare for the conference. Students were accustomed to reading independently while others might have been doing another activity. Therefore, students who were without parental permission or who did not give assent sat at their own desks engaged in reading, while the assenting students with parental permission completed the student surveys. Once teachers received the signed student-assent forms, teachers immediately distributed the student surveys (see Appendix F: Classroom Meeting Questionnaire) to students that had agreed to participate. Teachers then read the script for the student surveys (see Appendix K: Teacher Script Student Survey for Classroom Meeting Questionnaire). After that, teachers immediately distributed the second student survey (see Appendix M: School as a Caring Community Profile-II). Teachers then read the script for the second student survey (see Appendix M: Teacher Script for School as a Caring Community Profile-II). Teachers followed accommodations normally provided for students with an Individualized Education Program. To ensure that teachers did not read the completed
student surveys or corrupt the data, each student placed his or her survey inside the manila envelope provided by the researcher. The researcher walked door to door and personally collected all manila envelopes when students were finished. All surveys were collected on the same day they were administered.

Participants did not receive compensation in any form for their participation.

The researcher asked teacher participants to answer surveys during a 40-minute weekly staff meeting. During the staff meeting, the researcher read aloud the survey directions, distributed Student Assent Letters, and administered student surveys. The researcher also asked teachers to return Student Assent Letters and student surveys to the researcher. The researcher asked student participants to answer two surveys.

There were no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. SDM/SPS and classroom meetings were part of the established curriculum in the subject district. Students did not experience any change in their curriculum.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher kept all consent forms in a locked storage cabinet. The locked storage cabinet was located in the researcher’s home office. The researcher also kept confidential any information obtained for this study that could identify teachers or students. Student surveys had student names, but the researcher used coded names instead of using real names in all writings, publications, or presentations in this study. The only people who had access to raw data were the researcher, the researcher’s Committee Chair, and the two Committee Readers. The researcher masked
any data reported in presentations or publications. One year after the conclusion of the study, the researcher will destroy all data.

Participants did not directly benefit in any way from their participation. The researcher designed the study to examine the experiences and perceptions of teachers and students in the subject school. Participants were informed that if they agreed to participate, they would be adding to the body of knowledge, which included proven frameworks for classroom meetings and the activities used. Also included was the effect of classroom meetings on character development. Participants helped determine the best practices for teaching character education.

**Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher was to conduct quantitative research in an unbiased, objective fashion. Following data collection, the researcher analyzed data results for correlations and outcomes.

**Quantitative Research**

To answer the first research question, students responded to two surveys. In the first one, students responded to the survey used in the study, “The Learning Environment: Creating Communities of Learning Through Classroom Meetings,” by Hinman (1996); the researcher received permission to use this survey to measure students’ perceptions of classroom meetings and character education (see Appendix F: Classroom Meeting Questionnaire). The researcher administered this survey in May after teachers had completed 25 of the 29 lessons. From Hinman’s survey, the researcher examined students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher instructed
on SMD/SPS lessons. Hinman used this survey to measure students’ perceptions of classroom meetings and established internal reliability. The survey was both a written Likert quantitative questionnaire and an open-ended qualitative questionnaire that asked students about classroom meetings. The researcher used only the quantitative questions. The researcher coded the answers on the student survey as follows: No! = 1, Not Really = 2, I Don’t Know = 3, Kind Of = 4, and Yes! = 5. The researcher combined the questions from Hinman’s survey into one subscale score. Although Hinman’s survey was only four questions, combining the questions produced a more reliable measure of student perceptions as indicated by a Cronbach Alpha score of .80. The researcher combined these questions to get a better understanding Hinman’s study, to mitigate research bias, asked students whether they understood what an opinion is, and teachers explained to students that the survey was asking only for the students’ opinions. Teachers instructed students to be honest and reminded them that the survey was not a test. This researcher also had teachers explain and discuss with students what an opinion is, using the teacher script (see Appendix K: Teacher Script Student Survey for Classroom Meeting Questionnaire). Hinman ran a Wilcoxon test on the quantitative questions to determine whether differences existed between gifted-education students and regular-education students, between female and male students, and between classrooms that used open meetings and classrooms that did not use meetings. Then Hinman analyzed proportions of the responses by categories that emerged during data collection on the qualitative questions. Hinman concluded that classroom meetings were important to students even if there was not significant statistical evidence showing that classroom meetings had an
The researcher ran Cronbach’s alpha to determine the reliability of the constructs of subscales. The researcher did not run the same tests that Hinman ran; rather, the researcher ran the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient between Hinman’s survey and a survey originally developed by Lickona and Davidson (2003) called “School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II).” From Lickona and Davidson’s survey, the researcher examined students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers. Simply restated, the Spearman Ranking exposed any correlations between the students’ perceptions of classroom meetings and their perceptions of the character traits of their peers. Lickona and Davidson’s survey may be duplicated and used without the permission of Lickona and Davidson, but the researcher did not have permission to modify the survey (see Appendix N: Permission to Use School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II). Created by Dr. Thomas Lickona and Dr. Matthew Davidson, SCCP-II is used to evaluate different character education programs, and it has five subscales. Subscales are broken down into nine items measuring perceptions of student respect, nine items on perceptions of student friendship and belonging, seven items on perceptions of students’ shaping of their environment, ten items on perceptions of support and care by and for faculty/staff, and seven items on perceptions of support and care by and for parents. The original survey had a total of 42 items. On the original survey, students were to complete only the first 34 of the 42 items. For the purposes of this study, only the first 25 questions were relevant to the research questions; therefore, the researcher used only the first 25 items. In addition, only the first three subscales were used because those
subscales were relevant to the research questions from this study. The researcher ran the
subscales on the perceptions of student respect, perceptions of student friendship and
belonging, and perceptions of students’ shaping of their environment. Questions on the
survey were designed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 for Almost Never to 5 for
Almost Always. Lickona and Davidson developed the survey at the Center for the 4th
and 5th Rs. The Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to test the reliability of the SCCP-
II, Lickona and Davidson’s original study. The researcher also ran a Cronbach’s alpha to
determine the reliability of the constructs of subscales. The researcher determined
whether increased affinity for classroom meetings correlated to positive perceptions of
peers’ attitudes and behaviors. For example, do more positive perceptions of classroom
meetings positively correlate with character education of students as measured by student
perceptions of their peers? The researcher ran a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient
using the subscales between the Classroom Meeting Questionnaire by Hinman, taken by
students, and School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) by Lickona and
Davidson, also taken by students, to examine correlations between the two surveys.
Variables were converted to a rank.

To measure the second research question, the researcher used two quantitative
surveys. The researcher first used Olsen’s (1995) survey from the study, “Teacher
Perceptions of Student Behavior After Implementation of a Kindergarten Through Sixth-
Grade Character Education Program,” to examine the teachers’ perceptions of students’
behavior/character traits. To check for validity and reliability, Olsen asked a university
statistician and a major advisor to analyze the questionnaire. Olsen’s survey used a Likert
scale to identify teachers’ perceptions of student behavior. Likert questions were embedded with numerical value on the teacher survey. Likert-scale questions were used to identify a respondent’s attitudes and feelings on a subject. The questions on a Likert scale were closed-ended questions that matched the respondent’s feelings to a number on a rating scale. Olsen labeled the questions 1 for Almost Always to 5 for Almost Never. To keep the numbers in the same value order, this researcher coded the answers on the student survey as follows: No! = 1, Not Really = 2, I Don’t Know = 3, Kind Of = 4, and Yes! = 5. The researcher administered a survey to examine the teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits on the character development of students (see Appendix E: Scale of Character Traits). Olsen used a paired T-test to examine significance of the findings. The researcher had received permission to use this survey, originally employed in Olsen’s study, which analyzed teachers’ perceptions of the character education program Stop-Think-Act-Review (STAR). The survey asked each teacher to rate his or her class on students respecting authority, students respecting others, students showing courtesy, and student self-respect. The researcher first broke down the questions from Olsen’s survey into subscales and obtained subscale scores for respect for authority, respect for others, courtesy, and self-respect. The researcher also ran a Cronbach’s alpha on the survey to determine the reliability of the constructs of the subscales. Olsen’s study looked for a significant relationship between student behavior and the character education program. The researcher asked teachers to answer questions according to their perceptions of each student in their classroom regarding each student’s respect for authority, respect for others, courtesy, and self-respect since the
implementation of the SDM/SPS program during classroom meetings. To investigate associations of the Likert scale, the researcher of this study used the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, using the subscales between Olsen’s survey and Lickona and Davidson’s (2003) survey, “School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II).” Using Lickona and Davidson’s survey, the researcher examined students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits. The researcher wanted to explore how students’ perceptions of their peers’ character education (attitudes and behaviors) related to teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior; for example, to see whether classmates’ rating of student character education (behaviors and attitudes) correlated positively with teachers’ rating of student character education (attitudes and behavior). Therefore, the researcher ran a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient between School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) by Lickona and Davidson (taken by students) and Scale of Character Traits by Olsen (taken by teachers about individual students).

To measure the third question, the researcher used two quantitative surveys: one of the surveys used in question 1 and another survey used in question 2. The survey chosen from question 1 was originally used in the study, “The Learning Environment: Creating Communities of Learning Through Classroom Meetings,” by Hinman (1996). Using Hinman’s survey again, the researcher examined students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings. The survey chosen from question 2 was Olsen’s (1995) survey from the study, “Teacher Perceptions of Student Behavior After Implementation of a Kindergarten Through Sixth-Grade Character Education Program.”
The researcher used Olsen’s survey again to examine the teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits. The researcher first ran the subscales on both Olsen’s and Hinman’s surveys. Then the researcher ran a Cronbach’s alpha to determine the reliability of the constructs of the subscales on both surveys. The researcher also ran a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient between Hinman’s survey and Olson’s survey. The researcher wanted to determine whether increased affinity for classroom meetings correlated to positive perceptions of students’ attitudes and behaviors as measured by their teachers. For example, do more positive perceptions of classroom meetings correlate with character education of students as measured by teachers’ perceptions of their students? Therefore, the researcher ran a Spearman Correlation, using the subscales between the Classroom Meeting Questionnaire by Hinman taken by students and the Scale of Character Traits by Olsen taken by teachers about individual students.

The researcher modified the original survey instruments, using a clearer and larger font to improve readability on Hinman’s (1996) and Olsen’s (1995) surveys.

**Statistical Procedures**

The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software edition 19.0 (2010) to run all statistical analyses in this study. First, the researcher ran subscale scores on the Classroom Meeting Questionnaire (see Appendix F: Classroom Meeting Questionnaire); School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) (see Appendix L: School as a Caring Community Profile-II); and Scale of Character Traits (see Appendix E: Scale of Character Traits). Second, the researcher ran a Cronbach’s alpha to measure the reliability of the constructs of the subscales. This test was run to
make sure that subscales from the three surveys were reliable measures for each construct. The researcher ran a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient using the subscales to determine whether there was an association between two variables: first, on the Classroom Meeting Questionnaire (see Appendix F: Classroom Meeting Questionnaire) and School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) (see Appendix L: School as a Caring Community Profile-II); second, on the Scale of Character Traits (see Appendix E: Scale of Character Traits) and School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) (see Appendix L: School as a Caring Community Profile-II); and third, on the Classroom Meeting Questionnaire (see Appendix F: Classroom Meeting Questionnaire) and the Scale of Character Traits (see Appendix E: Scale of Character Traits). A Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient measures the strength of an association between two variables. This study’s quantitative surveys used Likert questions, with a rank given to each answer. Because the variables on the surveys were converted to ranks, a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient would show whether there were any correlations between the variables.

For the Spearman Correlation Coefficient Test, the researcher set $\alpha = .003$. In cases where $p < \alpha$, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis ($H_0$) and concluded that there was a statistically significant association between the two variables.

**Ethical Considerations**

To protect participant confidentiality, the researcher will hold consent forms in a confidential place until one year after she has completed the study and the dissertation defense. The researcher used coded names in place of participants’ real names.
The researcher did not exploit students in this study to her advantage. This study neither violated nor exploited students or teachers because of their status, race, gender, language, or sexual orientation. Parents of a participating student were required to give consent for their child’s participation. Besides the researcher, the only other people who had access to the data were the researcher’s Committee Chair and the two Committee Readers. The researcher used coded student names. The written report kept teacher names confidential, but all participants needed to fill out a consent form.

Agency funding was not required for this study; therefore, this study did not conform to any agency’s interests. This study followed the guidelines of Loyola University’s Internal Review Board.

**Validity Considerations**

This study used multiple quantitative surveys. This allowed the researcher to double-check new hypotheses and to run a cross-analysis of the data.

The surveys created by Hinman (1996), Olsen (1995), and Lickona and Davidson (2003) had already established validity and reliability and therefore were qualified for use in this research.

Teachers administering the surveys read the questions to the students—repeatedly, if necessary—to ensure correct interpretation. Teachers took special care to ensure that they captured accurate annotations, interpretations, and translations. Teachers did not invent the interpretations; rather, the interpretations were the product of strict cognizant analyses.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine students’ perceptions of classroom meetings by using the lessons in SDM/SPS as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005). The researcher quantitatively measured participants’ perceptions of daily meetings about the classroom environment and used quantitative surveys to answer the research questions. The participants were teachers and students from the third grade through the fifth grade in one school of the subject school district’s 12 elementary schools. The study included 161 total participants (8 teachers and 153 students). The district expected teachers to integrate SDM/SPS lessons into their classroom meetings throughout the school year. Teachers in third through fifth grades were expected teach the 29 lessons and deliver the program throughout the school year.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers?

2. What is the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’
behavior/character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?

3. What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?

**Subscales**

The researcher combined the questions from “The Learning Environment: Creating Communities of Learning Through Classroom Meetings” by Hinman (1996) into one subscale score.

The researcher combined questions from Lickona and Davidson’s (2003) survey, “School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II)” into five subscales. Only the first three subscales were used because those subscales answered the research questions from this study: perceptions of student respect, student friendship and belonging, and students’ shaping of their environment. The researcher ran the subscales on the perceptions of student respect, student friendship and belonging, and students’ shaping of their environment.

The researcher also combined questions from Olsen’s (1995) survey, “Scale of Character Traits,” into subscales and obtained subscale scores for respect for authority, respect for others, courtesy, and self-respect.
Reliability Test

Cronbach’s alpha test was run to measure the reliability of the constructs of subscales. Cronbach’s alpha measures the internal consistency of a group of items that are closely related. Inferences were based upon a multi-item scale versus a single-item question. The closer the coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the questions in the subscale. If the alpha coefficient is greater than .6, the data suggests that the items have a high internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2003). George and Mallery (2003) cited the following rules to determine internal consistency: “> .9 – Excellent, > .8 – Good, > .7 – Acceptable, > .6 – Questionable, > .5 – Poor, and < .5 – Unacceptable” (p. 231).

Table 2 shows the reliability coefficients for the Classroom Meetings subscale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha of Classroom Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability Statistics: Classroom Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.797</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
### Table 3

**Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Classroom Meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ClassMeetingq1</td>
<td>10.9470</td>
<td>12.691</td>
<td>.626</td>
<td>.749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ClassMeetingq2</td>
<td>11.2185</td>
<td>10.465</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ClassMeetingq3</td>
<td>11.9272</td>
<td>10.975</td>
<td>.536</td>
<td>.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ClassMeetingq4</td>
<td>11.5232</td>
<td>10.824</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>.738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the reliability coefficients for the Respect for Authority subscale.

### Table 4

**Cronbach’s Alpha of Respect for Authority**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.929</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
Table 5  

*Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Respect for Authority*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item-Total Statistics: Respect for Authority</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.4706</td>
<td>16.988</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.4118</td>
<td>17.849</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.4902</td>
<td>17.054</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.1895</td>
<td>20.641</td>
<td>.696</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.4837</td>
<td>18.515</td>
<td>.703</td>
<td>.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.2614</td>
<td>20.536</td>
<td>.682</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q7ChTraitsRespectAuthority</td>
<td>27.4183</td>
<td>18.061</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the reliability coefficients for the Respect for Others subscale.

Table 6  

*Cronbach’s Alpha of Respect for Others*

Reliability Statistics: Respect for Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.915</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
Table 7

_Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Respect for Others_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item-Total Statistics: Respect for Others</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1ChTraitsRespectOthers</td>
<td>18.0980</td>
<td>8.813</td>
<td>.770</td>
<td>.899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2ChTraitsRespectOthers</td>
<td>18.0654</td>
<td>8.351</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3ChTraitsRespectOthers</td>
<td>18.0065</td>
<td>9.296</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td>.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4ChTraitsRespectOthers</td>
<td>18.1046</td>
<td>8.897</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5ChTraitsRespectOthers</td>
<td>18.1569</td>
<td>8.383</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the reliability coefficients for the Courtesy subscale.

Table 8

_Cronbach’s Alpha of Courtesy_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics: Courtesy</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
Table 9

*Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Courtesy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item-Total Statistics: Courtesy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item Deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q1ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q7ChTraitsCourtsey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows the reliability coefficients for the Self-Respect subscale.

Table 10

*Cronbach’s Alpha of Self-Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics: Self-Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
Table 11

*Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Self-Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item-Total Statistics: Self-Respect</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1aChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>48.0196</td>
<td>85.769</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2aChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.4967</td>
<td>92.002</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3aChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.8039</td>
<td>88.277</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4aChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.8954</td>
<td>85.450</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5aChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.8281</td>
<td>86.515</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q1bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.7059</td>
<td>88.604</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.6471</td>
<td>88.138</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.6340</td>
<td>90.641</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.6471</td>
<td>87.414</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.8105</td>
<td>86.049</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.8105</td>
<td>85.839</td>
<td>.876</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q7bChTraitsSelf-Respect</td>
<td>47.8235</td>
<td>85.765</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows the reliability coefficients for the Student Respect subscale.

Table 12

*Cronbach’s Alpha of Perceptions of Student Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics: Student Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
Table 13

**Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Student Respect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item-Total Statistics: Perceptions of Student Respect</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>28.6846</td>
<td>27.447</td>
<td>.529</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>28.7450</td>
<td>26.475</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q7SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>29.0268</td>
<td>26.770</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td>.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q10SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>28.7517</td>
<td>27.810</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q13SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>28.6040</td>
<td>27.781</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q16SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>28.8054</td>
<td>27.563</td>
<td>.389</td>
<td>.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q18SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>29.2148</td>
<td>26.400</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q21SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>29.2215</td>
<td>26.255</td>
<td>.516</td>
<td>.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q24SCCPStudentRespect</td>
<td>28.9732</td>
<td>27.202</td>
<td>.413</td>
<td>.752</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows the reliability coefficients for the Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging subscale.

Table 14

**Cronbach’s Alpha of Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics: Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.697</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.
Table 15

*Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q2SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>28.5600</td>
<td>27.362</td>
<td>-.193</td>
<td>.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>26.8400</td>
<td>20.659</td>
<td>.437</td>
<td>.579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>27.3067</td>
<td>20.335</td>
<td>.439</td>
<td>.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q10SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>26.8667</td>
<td>22.586</td>
<td>.325</td>
<td>.608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q13SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>26.7067</td>
<td>20.947</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td>.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q16SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>26.9267</td>
<td>20.807</td>
<td>.439</td>
<td>.579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q18SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>27.3467</td>
<td>21.007</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td>.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q21SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>27.3200</td>
<td>21.159</td>
<td>.390</td>
<td>.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q24SCCPStudentFriendship andBelonging</td>
<td>27.0867</td>
<td>21.489</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 shows the reliability coefficients for the Perceptions of Students’ Shaping of Their Environment subscale.
Table 16

*Cronbach’s Alpha of Perceptions of Students’ Shaping of Their Environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.744</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 shows the mean of the summated scores, excluding one of the questions listed immediately after this series of tables.

To assess the reliability for each subscale, a Cronbach’s alpha was conducted using .60 as an acceptable minimum cutoff for exploratory research (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The Cronbach’s alpha for the Classroom Meetings subscale was .79, the Respect for Authority subscale was .93, Respect for Others was .92, Courtesy was .94, Self-Respect was .96, Perceptions of Student Respect was .77, Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging was .64, and Students’ Shaping of Their Environment was .75.

Based on the reliability cutoff number, all subscales scored above .60, determining that the subscales were reliable.
Table 17

Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted of Perceptions of Students’ Shaping of Their Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q6SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>19.9073</td>
<td>21.738</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td>.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q8SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>19.8013</td>
<td>21.720</td>
<td>.434</td>
<td>.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q11SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>19.8874</td>
<td>21.421</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q14SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>19.8543</td>
<td>22.459</td>
<td>.440</td>
<td>.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q19SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>20.0530</td>
<td>23.251</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q22SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>20.0000</td>
<td>21.187</td>
<td>.502</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q25SCCPStudents'ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>20.0464</td>
<td>20.845</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>.694</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question One: Null Hypotheses

1H₀ There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

2H₀ There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship
and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$3H_o$ There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

**Research Question Two: Null Hypotheses**

$4H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$5H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$6H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$7H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of respect for authority where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$8H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$9H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$10H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$11H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

$12H_o$ There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

There is no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

Research Question Three: Null Hypotheses

There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit respect for authority where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit respect for others where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit courtesy where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
There is no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit self-respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

The procedures used in examining the hypotheses will be discussed during a review of the data collected from the quantitative and qualitative surveys. Data have been examined to reject or fail to reject the null hypotheses.

**Results**

A correlation coefficient was the appropriate statistical analysis for this research because correlation coefficients are run to measure the relationship between two variables. This research examined the relationship between two variables. The correlation coefficient quantifies how closely the two variables were related.

The type of correlation coefficient the researcher ran was a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient to determine whether there was an association between two variables (Harmon, 2010). The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient is used when one or both of the variables consist of ranks. A Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient is a nonparametric measure of the variables’ statistical dependence on each other and measures the strength of an association between two variables. This study’s quantitative surveys used Likert questions, with a rank given to each answer. Because the variables on the surveys were converted to ranks, a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient showed whether or not there were any correlations between the variables.

The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient tells about the relationship or association between two variables. For the Spearman Correlation Coefficient Test, the
researcher set $\alpha = .05$. In cases where $p < \alpha$, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a statistically significant association between the two variables. However, because the research involved a number of hypothesis (19), the risk of a Type 1 Error increases. In order to adjust for the Type 1 Error, the experimental-wise alpha will be adjusted using Bonferroni's adjustment by dividing the experimental-wise alpha of .05 by 19 which results in a new experimental-wise alpha of .003. The researcher also examined the magnitude and direction of the relationships of the variables. The magnitude looked at the strength of the correlation; the closer the correlation was to –1 or +1, the stronger the correlation. The direction looked at how the variables were related, either positively or negatively. When the variables both increased, there was a positive relationship; however, if one variable increased and the other variable decreased, the direction was negative. The researcher used Harmon’s (2010) interpretation of r-values. Therefore, if the correlation coefficient of the correlation was 0 to .2, the researcher concluded that there was a very weak positive relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was .2 to .4, the researcher concluded that there was a weak positive relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was .4 to .7, the researcher concluded that there was a moderate positive relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was .7 to .9, the researcher concluded that there was a strong positive relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was .9 to 1, the researcher concluded that there was a very strong positive relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was 0 to –.2, the researcher concluded that there was a very weak negative relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was –.2 to –.4, the
researcher concluded that there was a weak negative relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was \(-.4\) to \(-.7\), the researcher concluded that there was a moderate negative relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was \(-.7\) to \(-.9\), the researcher concluded that there was a strong negative relationship. If the correlation coefficient of the correlation was \(-.9\) to \(-1\), the researcher concluded that there was a very strong negative relationship.

The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, edition 19.0 (2010), to run all statistical analyses in this study.

**Research Question One**

To reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis that there would be no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher taught SMD/SPS lessons, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers, objective answers have been analyzed. The null hypotheses were rejected if the p-value of a correlation was less than or equal to .003. The 2-tailed test looked for any change in the parameter, with either an increase or decrease.

Table 18 lists the Spearman’s rho between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 18

*Classroom Meetings and Student Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>ClassroomMeetings</th>
<th>StudentRespect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spearman's rho</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom Meetings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>StudentRespect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
<td><strong>.374</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.003 level (2-tailed).

The p-value of this correlation equaled .000, which was less than .003. Because $p < \alpha$, I rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a statistically significant association between students' attitudes toward classroom meetings and students' perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were positively, yet weakly, related to one another: $r_s(151) = .38$, $p < .003$.

Table 19 lists the Spearman's rho between students' attitudes toward classroom meetings and students' perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
The p-value of this correlation equaled .000, which was less than .003. Because $p < \alpha$, I rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a statistically significant association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were positively, yet weakly, related to one another: $r_s(151) = .38$, $p < .003$.

Table 20 lists the Spearman’s rho between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
The p-value of this correlation equaled .000, which was less than .003. Because $p < \alpha$, I rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a statistically significant association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were positively, yet weakly, related to one another: $r_s(151) = .35$, $p < .003$.

**Research Question Two**

To reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis that there would be no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits, objective answers have been analyzed. The null hypotheses were rejected if the p-value of a correlation was less than or equal to .003.
Table 21 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>RespectAuthority</th>
<th>StudentRespect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td>RespectAuthority Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentRespect</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.380</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .380, which was greater than .003. Because p > α, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = .07, p > .003 \).

Table 22 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 22  
*Respect for Authority and Student Friendship and Belonging*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>RespectAuthority</th>
<th>StudentFriendshipandBelonging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho RespectAuthority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentFriendshipandBelonging</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .777, which was greater than .003. Because p > α, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: r_s(151) = .02, p > .003.

Table 23 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 23

*Respect for Authority and Students’ Shaping of Their Environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th></th>
<th>Spearman’s RespectAuthority rho</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RespectAuthority</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .241, which was greater than .003. Because p > \( \alpha \), I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for authority and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = .10, p > .003 \).

Table 24 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 24

Respect for Others and Student Respect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>RespectOthers</th>
<th>StudentRespect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>( r = .04 )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td>.638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .638, which was greater than .003.

Because \( p > \alpha \), I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = .04, p > .003 \).

Table 25 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 25

**Respect for Others and Student Friendship and Belonging**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>RespectOthers</th>
<th>StudentFriendship andBelonging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>RespectOthers</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentFriendshipand Belonging</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>−.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .642, which was greater than .003. Because \( p > \alpha \), I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = −.04 \), \( p > .003 \).

Table 26 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 26

*Respect for Others and Students’ Shaping of Their Environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RespectOthers</th>
<th>StudentsShapingofTheirEnvironment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spearman's rho</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RespectOthers</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentsShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .801, which was greater than .003. Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of respect for others and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = .02$, $p > .003$.

Table 27 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 27

**Courtesy and Student Respect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Courtesy</th>
<th>Student Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentRespect</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .452, which was greater than .003.

Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = .06, p > .003$.

Table 28 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 28

*Courtesy and Student Friendship and Belonging*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Courtesy</th>
<th>StudentFriendship andBelonging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
<td>.878</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .878, which was greater than .003.

Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = .01, p > .003$.

Table 29 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 29

_Courtesy and Students’ Shaping of Their Environment_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Courtesy</th>
<th>Students’ Shaping of Their Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spearman’s rho</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Shaping of Their Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .658, which was greater than .003. Because \( p > \alpha \), I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of being courteous and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = .04, p > .003 \).

Table 30 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 30

*Self-Respect and Student Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Self-Respect</th>
<th>Student Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td>Self-Respect</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Respect</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .469, which was greater than .003. Because p > α, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = -.06, p > .003 \).

Table 31 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 31

*Self-Respect and Student Friendship and Belonging*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Self-Respect</th>
<th>StudentFriendship andBelonging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's Self-Respect rho Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>−.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentFriendshipandBelonging Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>−.155</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .056, which was greater than .003. Because \( p > \alpha \), I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of student friendship and belonging where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: \( r_s(151) = -.16, p > .003 \).

Table 32 lists the Spearman’s rho between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 32

**Self-Respect and Students’ Shaping of Their Environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>StudentsShapingofTheirEnvironment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spearman's rho</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Respect</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>−.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StudentsShapingofTheirEnvironment</td>
<td>−.079</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .331, which was greater than .003.

Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character trait of self-respect and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior trait of students’ shaping of their environment where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = −.08$, $p > .003$.

**Research Question Three**

To reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis that there would be no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits, objective answers have been analyzed. The null hypotheses were rejected if the p-value of a correlation was less than or equal to .003.
Table 33 lists the Spearman’s rho between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit respect for authority where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.

Table 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ClassroomMeetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RespectAuthority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .401, which was greater than .003. Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit respect for authority where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = .07$, $p > .003$.

Table 34 lists the Spearman’s rho between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit respect for others where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 34

*Classroom Meetings and Respect for Others*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>ClassroomMeetings</th>
<th>RespectOthers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ClassroomMeetings</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RespectOthers</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.376</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .376, which was greater than .003. Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit respect for others where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = .07, p > .003$.

Table 35 lists the Spearman’s rho between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit courtesy where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
The p-value of this correlation equaled .571, which was greater than .003. Because p > α, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit courtesy where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: rs(151) = .05, p > .003.

Table 36 lists the Spearman’s rho between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit self-respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings.
Table 36

*Classroom Meetings and Self-Respect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ClassroomMeetings</th>
<th>Self-Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.398</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The p-value of this correlation equaled .398, which was greater than .003.

Because $p > \alpha$, I failed to reject the null hypothesis and concluded that there was no association between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers who report that students exhibit self-respect where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings. The results indicated that these two variables were not related to one another: $r_s(151) = -.07$, $p > .003$.

In this chapter, teachers and students answered quantitative surveys. Major findings from this research as they related to the research questions are discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine students’ perceptions of classroom meetings where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005), within the context of classroom meetings. In simple terms, the objective was to determine if classroom meetings not only successfully teach character education based on student and teacher perceptions, but create an environment more conducive to learning. The researcher quantitatively measured participants’ perceptions of daily meetings about the classroom environment. The researcher used quantitative surveys to answer the research questions. The data guided the researcher in forming conclusions based on student and teacher surveys. The participants were teachers and students from the third grade through the fifth grade in one school of the subject school district’s 12 elementary schools. The study included 161 total participants (8 teachers and 153 students).

Classroom meetings are a tool the researcher used and refined out of necessity for many years because of the diverse needs in her classroom. Character education is a way of life for educators under NCLB. So, it was natural to study the classroom meetings in a research setting. The district expected teachers to integrate SDM/SPS lessons into their classroom meetings throughout the school year. Teachers in third through fifth grades
were expected to teach the 29 lessons and deliver the program throughout the school year.

The quantitative surveys in this study used Likert questions, with a rank given to each answer. Because the variables on the surveys were converted to ranks, a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was run to show whether or not there were any correlations between the variables after the Cronbach’s alpha were run on the subscales. Then the researcher reviewed and organized the data into a system.

In addition, this chapter presents key findings, addresses limitations, and discusses recommendations for future research.

**Findings of Quantitative Research**

The researcher’s hope for the findings of this study was two-fold. First, to give teachers, schools, and districts a tool to augment and reinforce the character education required by NCLB. Classroom meetings build upon existing character education programs and provide the context of everyday life and the practice of everyday repetition. And second, to give an option to educators to help establish a positive learning environment. When educators feel that they can’t get control of their class and there seems to be no help, using SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, is a simple, yet proven solution to win their classroom back.

**Research Question One**

The findings of question 1 show the positive relationship of teaching character education (SDM/SPS in this case) in the context of classroom meetings. SDM/SPS created the right environment and provided a vehicle to practically teach, demonstrate,
and practice character skills. There were three null hypotheses established for the first research question: “What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, and students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers?” Of the three null hypotheses, three correlations were statistically significant. All three correlations had positive and weak relationships.

Although all of the correlations’ relationships were weakly related, the statistical references cited in Chapter IV led to the conclusion that SDM/SPS is an effective character education strategy to teach during classroom meetings. The relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings, where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, positively relates to students’ perceptions of the character/behavior traits of their peers.

**Research Question Two**

Question 2 failed to prove a correlation between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the character traits of the class. This was understandable based on the different perspectives that trained educators and young students have on something subjective as character traits. There were 11 null hypotheses established for the second research question: “What is the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?” Of the 11 null hypotheses, no correlations were statistically significant.
After examining teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits, findings showed that classroom meetings do not relate to teachers’ perceptions of students and students’ perceptions of their peers.

**Research Question Three**

This question did not find a relationship between the attitudes students have toward classroom meetings and their teacher’s perspective of the student’s character traits. It was understandable that students may have different views on classroom meetings. For example, a classroom meeting may be very unpleasant for an introverted child, and still be effective in giving that student the basic tools and education to build solid character. There were four null hypotheses established for the first research question: “What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits where their classroom teacher teaches SMD/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings?” Of the four null hypotheses, no correlations were statistically significant.

Therefore, there is no relationship between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits.

**Conclusions and Discussion**

While this study gave evidence of a fundamental relationship of the benefit of character education in the context of classroom meetings, there is more to be explored. This study provided evidence that tools, often invented out of the necessity of teachers’ challenging situations, can be refined, researched, and shared to benefit educators and
students. Just think of how “hands-on learning” was viewed 50 years ago in the age of “sit and get” education. Based on today’s “perfect storm” of increased federal and state requirements, which include but are not limited to larger classroom sizes with smaller budgets and less resources, educators will need to show innovation to bring practical, low cost solutions to fruition in order to achieve the high education goals for the nation. This study demonstrated that classroom meetings are an effective tool to teach character education where the classroom teacher teaches SDM/SPS lessons within the context of classroom meetings, as measured by student perceptions of their peers’ character traits and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits. However, there was no correlation between teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior/character traits and students’ perceptions of their peers’ behavior/character traits. In addition, there was no correlation between students’ attitudes toward classroom meetings and teachers’ perceptions of students’ behavior and character traits. The high Cronbach’s Alpha suggests that the teachers were consistent in their view of character traits of specific students. However, the fact that teachers’ ratings do not correlate with students’ ratings of their peers suggests that students and teachers have different opinions on the character traits of individual students. In other words, students know each other in a way that is different from how the teachers know and view the students.

This research provided multiple correlations between SDM/SPS and classroom meetings as a process or system for enhancing classroom environment and the learning experience. The author does not interpret the correlations as an endorsement for the
SDM/SPS program; rather, the correlations demonstrate that classroom meetings enhance the social and learning environment as perceived by students and teachers.

The researcher plans to share these findings with schools and districts who might benefit from them, but hopes that others might build upon this work to gain deeper understanding of the benefits of classroom meetings on both character education and the overall learning environment in the classroom.

**Limitations of the Study**

The findings of this research study were limited. The first limitation on this study arose from the lack of any way to generalize the findings because of the small sample size. The number of participants is too limited for broad generalizations. A larger sample would have allowed the data to be generalized for a specific population. By using a larger sample size, the study could have potentially covered different socio-economic groups. A larger sample size could also have included a larger age range as this study only included third, fourth, and fifth grade students. The second limitation was that the study examined only one school. (A study using many more classrooms would have improved the validity of the results.) This limitation was based on the researcher’s access to the students. The third limitation was that the study focused on only one school district; however, this study might have generated new avenues to explore regarding the value of SDM/SPS, classroom meetings, character education, and the classroom environment. The fourth limitation was that there might have been discrepancies between which lessons teachers said that they taught from SDM/SPS and those that teachers actually taught. Even though participants were informed that all information was confidential, some participants still
might not feel comfortable answering the questions with 100% honesty. The fifth limitation was that the researcher worked as a teacher in the building. Participants might have felt that the researcher expected certain answers, therefore manipulating their responses. The sixth limitation was the lack of staff development in character education. Teachers only received a single day of training on SDM/SPS. Further staff development could both create better mastery of the program as well as commitment to execute the character education program based on its benefits.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The first recommendation for future research calls for the removal of the limitations of this study; such as using a larger sample size, using more schools, and/or using more than one school district. This study should be replicated in different contexts and surroundings.

The strongest recommendation for future research involves repeating the study using a control group. The control group would not receive SDM/SPS lessons to determine the effectiveness that SDM/SPS actually has on character education.

A similar study that offers a pretest/posttest using SDM/SPS might offer insight to the effectiveness of that particular character education program. Pre- and posttests demonstrate the success of a specific program. Using the pre- and posttest would allow educators to decide whether or not to continue using SDM/SPS.

Qualitative research would provide deeper understanding and insight and nuances that should be used to different ages, or backgrounds.
An increase in the sample size coupled with a longitudinal study could be particularly enlightening. Repeating the observations of students over a long period of time could draw stronger conclusions about the SDM/SPS program.
APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT LETTER
Dear Administrator,

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Brannon Aiello (researcher) for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Brigid Schultz in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. As a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at Loyola University, I have developed a study on classroom meetings. I am examining student and teacher perceptions of the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) program, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005).

You are being asked for permission because I will be surveying the 3rd through 5th grade teachers and students in your building.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the effects of SDM/SPS, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005). I will be surveying teachers and students one time for no more than 30 minutes.

If you agree to participate in the study, teachers and students will be given qualitative and quantitative surveys regarding their perception of the effects of SDM/SPS. I will hand out teacher surveys at a staff meeting and collect the completed teacher surveys as soon as they are completed. At that meeting, I will also hand out student surveys for the teachers to give to their students. Teachers will be instructed to administer the surveys to students on the same day that week. I will come around to collect the student surveys from the participating teachers the same day they are administered.

To ensure confidentiality, all consent forms will be kept in a separate locked storage cabinet, to which only I have access. Any information obtained for this study that can identify teachers or students will be kept confidential. Participant names and identities will not be used in the work; coded names will be used in all writings, publications, or presentations to further protect your confidentiality.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Participation is completely voluntary, and participants may refuse to answer any questions at any time or withdraw from participation completely without penalty. If participants do not want to be in this study, they do not have to participate.
A participant’s decision to participate will not affect his or her current relationship with any teacher or administrator. Furthermore, participants may interrupt to ask questions concerning the research or research procedures at any time.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating. The study is designed to learn about the experiences and views of teachers and students in general and not to benefit anyone personally. If you agree to participate, you will be adding to the body of knowledge about the experiences and needs of professional teachers and students.

If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me at brannonolson@yahoo.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Brigid Schultz of Loyola University, at (312) 915-7089. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Loyola University’s Research Compliance Manager at (773) 508-2689. Your signature below indicates your consent to participate in this research project.

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you read and understood the information provided above, had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Sincerely,

Brannon Aiello
Researcher, Doctoral Student
Loyola University

__________________________________________________________________________  __________
Participant’s Signature                                      Date

__________________________________________________________________________  __________
Researcher’s Signature                                     Date
APPENDIX B

TEACHER CONSENT LETTER
Project Title: A Meeting of Character: An Examination of Teaching Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) Character Education Using Classroom Meetings

Researcher: Brannon Aiello
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Brigid Schultz

Dear Teacher,

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Brannon Aiello (researcher) for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Brigid Schultz in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. As a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at Loyola University, I have developed a study on classroom meetings. I am examining student and teacher perceptions of the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) program, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005).

You are being asked for permission because I will be surveying the third through fifth grade teachers and students in your building.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the effects of SDM/SPS, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005). The researcher will be surveying teachers and students one time for no more than 30 minutes. She will hand out teacher surveys at a staff meeting and collect the completed teacher surveys as soon as they are completed. At that meeting, she will also hand out Parental Consent Letters, Student Assent Letters, and student surveys for the teachers to give to their students. Teachers will be instructed to send home and collect the Parental Consent Letters, read and collect the Student Assent Letters, and then administer surveys to students that week. The researcher will come around to collect the student surveys from the participating teachers the same day they are administered.

If you agree to participate in the study, teachers and students will be given qualitative and quantitative surveys regarding their perception of effects of SDM/SPS.

To ensure confidentiality, all consent forms will be kept in a separate locked storage cabinet, to which only I have access. Any information obtained for this study that can identify teachers or students will be kept confidential. Participant names and identities will not be used in the work; coded names will be used in all writings, publications, or presentations to further protect your confidentiality.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Participation is completely voluntary, and participants may refuse to answer any questions at any time or withdraw from participation completely without penalty. If participants do not want to be in this study, they do not have to participate.
A participant’s decision to participate will not affect his or her current relationship with any teacher or administrator. Furthermore, participants may interrupt to ask questions concerning the research or research procedures at any time.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating. The study is designed to learn about the experiences and views of teachers and students in general and not to benefit anyone personally. If you agree to participate, you will be adding to the body of knowledge about the experiences and needs of professional teachers and students. You will be asked to fill out surveys and to administer a survey to your students.

If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me at brannonolson@yahoo.com or my faculty advisor, Dr. Brigid Schultz of Loyola University, at (312) 915-7089. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Loyola University’s Research Compliance Manager at (773) 508-2689. Your signature below indicates your consent to participate in this research project.

**Statement of Consent:**
Your signature below indicates that you read and understood the information provided above, had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Sincerely,

Brannon Aiello
Researcher, Doctoral Student
Loyola University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher’s Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

PARENTAL CONSENT LETTER
**Project Title:** A Meeting of Character: An Examination of Teaching Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) Character Education Using Classroom Meetings  
**Researcher:** Brannon Aiello  
**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Brigid Schultz

Dear Parents,

You are being asked to give permission for your child to take part in a research study being conducted by Brannon Aiello (researcher) for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Brigid Schultz in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. As a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at Loyola University, I have developed a study on classroom meetings. I am examining student and teacher perceptions of the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) program, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005).

SDM/SPS uses 29 topics at each grade level that teach questioning exercises and decision-making skills. Each topic has a set of objectives, materials, various assessments, modeling activities, assignments for skill practice, and follow-through activities. The program teaches students how to handle frustration and challenges and how to resolve conflicts. Students learn how to practice self-control, care for others, and talk about emotions. The SDM/SPS approach gives students practical experience, understanding, and exercises so they can apply these lessons in real life.

Your child is being asked to participate because he or she is a member of Anderson School, wherein all students participate in SDM/SPS, as prescribed by Elias and Butler (2005). Students from third through fifth grades are asked to fill out two surveys. One survey will ask students about classroom meetings. The second survey will ask students about their perception of SDM/SPS.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to allow your child to participate in the study.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about student perceptions of the effects of SDM/SPS. The researcher will be surveying students one time for no more than 30 minutes.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study, he or she will be asked to fill out questions on a survey. Your child already participates in classroom meetings, and your child’s teacher already uses SDM/SPS. I will give your child’s teacher the surveys and collect the surveys when they are finished.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
To ensure your child’s confidentiality, the classroom reports will not identify your child and will use pseudonyms to protect child anonymity. Any information obtained for this study that can identify your child will be kept confidential. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do not want your child to be in this study, he or she does not have to participate. A participant’s decision to participate will not affect his or her current relationship with any teacher or administrator. Even if you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she is free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

If you have questions about your child’s rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola’s Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689. Please feel free to contact me at bolson@d303.org or my faculty advisor, Dr. Brigid Schultz of Loyola University, at (312) 915-7089. Your signature below indicates your consent to participate in this research project.

Your signature below indicates that you read and understood the information provided above, had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Sincerely,

Brannon Aiello
Researcher, Doctoral Student
Loyola University

Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature __________________ Date __________

Student’s Name __________________ Date __________

Researcher’s Signature __________________ Date __________
APPENDIX D

STUDENT ASSENT
Dear Student,

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Mrs. Aiello for a paper called a “dissertation.” I am in college at Loyola University of Chicago.

I am studying your thoughts about the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) lessons you use during classroom meetings.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about what you think of the SDM/SPS program and classroom meetings. You will be surveyed one time for no more than 30 minutes.

You are being asked to participate because your teacher uses the SDM/SPS program during classroom meetings.

To make sure that your name will be kept private, I will use code names. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether or not to participate in the study.

You already participate in classroom meetings, and your teacher already uses SDM/SPS. I will give your teacher the surveys and then collect the surveys after you complete them. The surveys should not take you more than 30 minutes to complete.

There are no risks for you to fill out the survey.

Participation in this study is voluntary, which means that you do not have to participate. If you do not want to participate, that is okay, and it will not affect your relationship with any teacher, administrator, or me. Even if you decide to participate, you do not have to answer every question, and you may stop answering questions at any time without getting in trouble.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Aiello
Your signature below indicates that you read and understood the information provided above, had a chance to ask questions, and agreed to participate in this research study.

I __________________________ agree that I will participate in Mrs. Aiello’s research project.

Print your name

Student’s Signature

Date
APPENDIX E

SCALE OF CHARACTER TRAITS
Name: _____________________

Scale of Character Traits

(Originally developed by Olsen [1995]) Students in _______ grade
Answer questions according to your perceptions of each student in your classroom since the implementation of the SDM/SPS program during your classroom meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respect for Authority</th>
<th>1 No!</th>
<th>2 Not Really</th>
<th>3 I Don’t Know</th>
<th>4 Kind Of</th>
<th>5 Yes!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Exhibit a positive attitude toward school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Strive for good relationships with teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Show pride in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Respect school property</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Have a sense of belonging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Follow and accept legitimate rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Show appreciation for education</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respect for Others</th>
<th>1 No!</th>
<th>2 Not Really</th>
<th>3 I Don’t Know</th>
<th>4 Kind Of</th>
<th>5 Yes!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are concerned about and care for others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cooperate in group activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Exhibit democratic ideals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Show tolerance for others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Are accepted by peer group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courtesy</th>
<th>1 No!</th>
<th>2 Not Really</th>
<th>3 I Don’t Know</th>
<th>4 Kind Of</th>
<th>5 Yes!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are kind to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Exhibit common courteous behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Practice justice and fair play</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Demonstrate soundness of character</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Exhibit honesty on tests and assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Practice good teamwork</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7. Accept differences in others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Respect</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are self-confident</td>
<td>No!</td>
<td>Not Really</td>
<td>I Don’t Know</td>
<td>Kind Of</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Feel good about doing good</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Exhibit a sense of autonomy (sense of identity &amp; ability to act independently)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Recognize worth and dignity of self</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Understand strengths</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Respect</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Use problem-solving techniques</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Strive for self-improvement</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

CLASSROOM MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE
Classroom Meeting Questionnaire
(Originally developed by Hinman [1996])

1. Did you like classroom meetings?

   NO!  NOT REALLY I DON’T KNOW   KIND OF   YES!

   Why? ____________________________________________

2. What did you like about class meetings?

   ________________________________
   ________________________________

3. What, if anything, didn’t you like about class meetings?

   ________________________________
   ________________________________

4. Do you want to continue to hold class meetings?

   NO!  NOT REALLY I DON’T KNOW   KIND OF   YES!

   Why? ____________________________________________

5. Did class meetings help you in any way?

   NO!  NOT REALLY I DON’T KNOW   KIND OF   YES!

   Why? ____________________________________________

6. How did class meetings help you?

   ________________________________
   ________________________________

7. Do you think it is important to hold class meetings?

   NO!  NOT REALLY I DON’T KNOW   KIND OF   YES!

   Why? ____________________________________________
APPENDIX G

PERMISSION LETTER FROM DR. JEAN BATES OLSEN
Dr. Jean Bates Olsen  
37 Cargill Dr.  
Bella Vista, AR 72715

Dr. Olsen,

I am writing to you to ask your permission to use the Scale of Character Traits you developed for your dissertation.

I am a doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago and a 4th grade teacher in St. Charles, IL.

I plan to use the questionnaire in my dissertation. My dissertation is about teacher and student perceptions of classroom meetings wherein the program Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) lessons have been implemented.

For approval, I just need for you to respond in the affirmative. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you very much,

Brannon Aiello  
brannonolson@yahoo.com
APPENDIX H

PERMISSION LETTER FROM DR. GEORGIA HINMAN
Hi Brannon, yes, please feel free to use it. Please tell me what your research is about. Georgia

Georgia L. Hinman, Ph.D.
Director, Medical Education Assessment
UW School of Medicine and Public Health
4261 Health Sciences Learning Center
750 Highland Avenue, Madison, WI 53705
608.265.5388

----- Original Message ----- 
From: Oscar Brannon <brannonolson@yahoo.com>
Date: Saturday, January 31, 2009 3:52 pm
Subject: Asking permission
To: ghinman@wisc.edu

> Dr. Hinman,
> 
> I am writing to you to ask permission to use your Classroom Meeting
> Questionnaire and your Teacher Questionnaire you developed for your
> dissertation.
> 
> I am a doctoral student at Loyola University of Chicago and a 4th
> grade teacher in St. Charles, IL.
> 
> I plan on using the questionnaires in my dissertation. My dissertation
> is on teacher and student perceptions of classroom meetings wherein
> the program Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving lessons have
> been implemented.
> 
> For approval, I just need for you to respond in the affirmative.
> Please let me know if you have any questions.
> 
> Thank you very much,
> 
> Brannon Aiello
APPENDIX I

PERMISSION LETTER FROM DISTRICT
February 25, 2010

Chair, IRB, c/o Research Services
Loyola University of Chicago
6439 N. Sheridan Rd.
Granada Center, Suite 400
Chicago, IL 60626

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been asked by Brannon Aiello to write a letter of understanding regarding her conduct of dissertation research in our school district. I have reviewed Brannon’s dissertation proposal and have held a meeting with Brannon, Dr. Brian Harris, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Dr. Cheryl LaFave, Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching, and Stacy Anderson, Assistant Director for Prevention. Ms. Anderson oversees the Social Decision-Making/Problem-Solving program within our district. It is this program within which Brannon wishes to conduct her research.

Brannon’s research project is entitled: Teacher and Student Perceptions of the Character Education Program Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving used within Classroom Meetings. I and the group above understand the nature of Brannon’s proposed research within our district. We understand that Brannon will recruit teachers and students for the research who will participate voluntarily. We also understand that she will inform parents of the students who will have right of refusal regarding the participation of their children. Finally, we understand that Brannon will survey teachers and students to collect data that will be compiled at the conclusion of her research, and that she will share these findings with our district at the appropriate juncture so that we may gain from her insights.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions. My direct number is 630/513-2292.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Knewitz
Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
CUSD #303
St. Charles, IL
Teacher Script for Student Assent Letter

Directions: Teachers read this script to students.
Ask the students, “What is an opinion?”
Probable responses: “An opinion is what I believe. An opinion is what I think about something. I can have a different opinion than someone else.”
Tell the students, “An opinion is something you think or believe. People have different opinions, and that is okay. Your opinion might be different from my opinion and different from the opinion of the person sitting next to you. Mrs. Aiello wants to know your opinion about classroom meetings and the SDM/SPS program we are using in our classroom.”
Ask the students, “Does anyone have any questions?”
Pass out the Student Assent Letters (see Appendix D: Student Assent).
Read this letter:

Dear Student,

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Mrs. Aiello for a paper called a “dissertation.” She is in graduate school at Loyola University of Chicago.

She is studying your thoughts about the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) lessons you use during our classroom meetings.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about what you think of the SDM/SPS program and classroom meetings. You will be surveyed one time for no more than 30 minutes.

You are being asked to participate because your teacher uses the SDM/SPS program during classroom meetings.

To make sure that your names will be kept private or confidential, Mrs. Aiello will use “fake names” (also called “pseudonyms”). Please read this form carefully, and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether or not to participate in the study.

You already participate in classroom meetings, and your teacher already uses SDM/SPS. Mrs. Aiello will give your teacher the surveys and then collect the surveys when after complete them. The survey should not take you more than 30 minutes to complete.

There are no risks for you to fill out the survey.

Participation in this study is voluntary, which means that you do not have to participate. If you do not want to participate, that is okay, and it will not affect your relationship with Mrs. Aiello, any teacher, or any administrator.
Even if you decide to participate, you do not have to answer every question, and you may stop answering questions at any time without getting in trouble.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Aiello

Ask students, “Are there any questions?”
Tell students, “If you are willing to give Mrs. Aiello your opinion, sign your name to give your assent for taking the survey. If you are not willing to participate, please take out a book to read.”
Collect the signed Student Assent Letters, and place them in the manila envelope provided by the researcher.
APPENDIX K

TEACHER SCRIPT STUDENT SURVEY FOR CLASSROOM MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE
Teacher Script for Student Survey

Directions: Teachers read this script to students.

Tell students, “Some of you agreed to participate in Mrs. Aiello’s research study. Those of you that agreed to participate will now fill out the survey. Those of you that did not agree to participate in Mrs. Aiello’s study will take out a book and read silently.”

Tell the students, “We discussed what the word opinion means. An opinion is something you think or believe. People have different opinions, and that is okay. Your opinion might be different from my opinion and different from the opinion of the person sitting next to you. Mrs. Aiello wants to know your opinion about classroom meetings and the SDM/SPS program we are using in our classroom.”

Pass out the Classroom Meeting Questionnaire only to the students that gave their assent (see Appendix F: Classroom Meeting Questionnaire).

Tell students, “Take out a pencil to answer the questions. Be honest. This is a survey, not a test. Answer questions the best you can.”

Read each question to the students. Wait until each student has answered the question before reading the subsequent question. Repeat until the last question has been asked.

Read, “1. Did you like classroom meetings? No, not really, I don’t know, kind of, or yes. Circle the answer you think is best.” Then, write why you did or did not like the classroom meetings.

Read, “2. What did you like about classroom meetings? Please write in your answer.”

Read, “3. What, if anything, didn’t you like about classroom meetings? Please write in your answer.”

Read, “4. Do you want to continue to hold classroom meetings? No, not really, I don’t know, kind of, or yes. Circle the answer you think is best.” Then, write why you did or did not want to continue to hold classroom meetings.

Read, “5. Did classroom meetings help you in any way? No, not really, I don’t know, kind of, or yes. Circle the answer you think is best.” Then, write why you did or did not feel classroom meetings help you.

Read, “7. Do you think that it is important to hold classroom meetings? No, not really, I don’t know, kind of, or yes. Circle the answer you think is best.” Then, write why you did or did not feel it is important to hold classroom meetings. Tell students, “When you have finished answering the last question, please put your survey in the manila envelope.”

Once all students have completed the survey, please place the manila envelope containing the surveys outside your classroom. The researcher will personally and immediately collect all surveys in the manila envelope.
APPENDIX L

SCHOOL AS A CARING COMMUNITY PROFILE-II (SCCP-II)
### SCHOOL AS A CARING COMMUNITY PROFILE-II
#### A Survey of Students, Staff, and Parents

Circle one:  
- (1) Student – Please write the number of the grade you are in: _____
- (2) Administrator
- (3) Teacher
- (4) Professional Support Staff
- (5) Other Staff
- (6) Parent
- (7) Other ____________

Please circle the appropriate number that describes how frequently you observe the following behaviors in your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students treat classmates with respect.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students exclude those who are different (e.g., belong to a different race, religion, or culture).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students respect the personal property of others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it (for example, they apologize or they do something nice).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Students show respect for school property (such as desks, walls, bathrooms, bushes, buildings, and grounds).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Students try to get other students to follow school rules.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, aides, and bus drivers).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students work well together.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students help to improve the school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students are disrespectful toward their teachers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Students help new students feel accepted.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Students pick on other students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Students are willing to forgive each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Students show poor sportsmanship.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Students are patient with each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Students resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Students listen to each other in class discussions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Students refrain from put-downs (negative, hurtful comments).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Students share what they have with others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Students are involved in helping to solve school problems.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Students can talk to their teachers about problems that are bothering them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Parents show that they care about their child’s education and school behavior.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Students are disrespectful toward their parents in the school environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Teachers go out of their way to help students who need extra help.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Teachers treat parents with respect.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. In this school you can count on adults to try to make sure that students are safe.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Teachers are unfair in their treatment of students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. In this school parents treat other parents with respect.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Parents show respect for teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. In their interactions with students, teachers act in ways that demonstrate the character qualities the school is trying to teach.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. In their interactions with students, all school staff (the principal, other administrators, counselors, coaches, aides, custodians, and others) act in ways that demonstrate the character qualities the school is trying to teach.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37. In their interactions with children, parents display the character qualities the school is trying to teach.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>38. Faculty and staff treat each other with respect (are caring, supportive, etc.).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. Faculty and staff are involved in helping to make school decisions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. This school shows appreciation for the efforts of faculty and staff.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. This school treats parents with respect.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Parents are actively involved in this school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX M

TEACHER SCRIPT STUDENT SURVEY FOR SCHOOL AS A CARING

COMMUNITY PROFILE-II (SCCP-II)
Teacher Script for Student Survey for SCCP-II

Directions: Teachers read this script to students.
Tell students, “Some of you agreed to participate in Mrs. Aiello’s research study. Those of you that agreed to participate will now fill out the survey. Those of you that did not agree to participate in Mrs. Aiello’s study will take out a book and read silently.”

Tell the students, “We discussed what the word opinion means. An opinion is something you think or believe. People have different opinions, and that is okay. Your opinion might be different from my opinion and different from the opinion of the person sitting next to you. Mrs. Aiello wants to know your opinion about classroom meetings and the SDM/SPS program we are using in our classroom.”

Pass out the School as a Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II) only to the students that gave their assent (see Appendix M: Caring Community Profile-II (SCCP-II).

Tell students, “Take out a pencil to answer the questions. Be honest. This is a survey, not a test. Answer questions the best you can.”

Read each statement to the students. Wait until every student has answered before reading the subsequent statement. Repeat until the last statement has been read.

Read, “1. Students treat their classmates with respect. If your answer is almost never, circle 1. If you feel the answer is sometimes, circle 2. If you feel the answer is as often as not, circle 3. If you feel the answer is frequently, circle 4. If you feel the answer is almost always, circle 5. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “2. Students exclude those who are different. (e.g., belong to a different race, religion, or culture). Please write in your answer.”

Read, “3. Students try to comfort peers who have experienced sadness. Please write in your answer.”

Read, “4. Students respect the personal property of others. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “5. Students help each other, even if they are not friends. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “6. When students do something hurtful, they try to make up for it. (For example, they apologize or they do something nice). Please write in your answer.”
Read, “7. Students show respect for school property (such as desks, walls, bathrooms, busses, buildings, and grounds). Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “8. Students try to get other students to follow school rules. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “9. Students behave respectfully toward all school staff (including secretaries, custodians, aides, and bus drivers). Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “10. Students work well together. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “11. Students help to improve the school. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “12. Students are disrespectful toward their teachers. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “13. Students help new students feel accepted. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “14. Students try to have a positive influence on the behavior of other students. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “15. Students pick on other students. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “16. Students are willing to forgive each other. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “17. Students show poor sportsmanship. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “18. Students are patient with each other. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “19. Students resolve conflicts without fights, insults, or threats. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “20. Students are disrespectful toward their schoolmates. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “21. Students listen to each other in class discussions. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “22. When students see another student being picked on, they try to stop it. Circle the answer you think is best.”
Read, “23. Students refrain from put-downs (negative, hurtful comments). Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “24. Students share what they have with others. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “25. Students are involved in helping to solve school problems. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “26. Students can talk to their teachers about problems that are bothering them. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “27. Parents show that they care about their child’s education and school behavior. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “28. Students are disrespectful toward their parents in the school environment. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “29. Teachers go out of their way to help students who need extra help. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “30. Teachers treat parents with respect. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “31. In this school you can count on adults to try to make sure that students are safe. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “32. Teachers are unfair in their treatment of students. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “33. In this school parents treat other parents with respect. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Read, “34. Parents show respect for teachers. Circle the answer you think is best.”

Tell students, “Please do not answer anymore questions. Questions 35 through 42 should be left blank. When you have finished answering question 34 please put your survey in the manila envelope.”

Once all students have completed the survey, please place the manila envelope containing the surveys outside your classroom. The researcher will personally and immediately collect all surveys in the manila envelope.
APPENDIX N

PERMISSION TO USE SCHOOL AS A CARING COMMUNITY

PROFILE-II (SCCP-II) CREATED BY DR. THOMAS LICKONA AND

DR. MATTHEW DAVIDSON
----- Forwarded Message -----  
From: Center for the 4th and 5th Rs <character@cornell.edu> 
To: "brannon.aiello@yahoo.com" <brannon.aiello@yahoo.com> 
Sent: Tue, April 6, 2010 2:35:31 PM  
Subject: permission to use SCCP-II

Brandy,

This is to give you permission from the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs to use the SCCP-II, "The School as a Caring Community Survey-II," created by Dr. Thomas Lickona and Dr. Matthew Davidson.

Sincerely,

Marthe Seales  
Office Manager  
Center for the 4th and 5th Rs  
SUNY Cortland  
P.O. Box 2000  
Cortland, NY 13045  
Ph. (607) 753-2455  
Fax (607) 753-5980  
www.cornell.edu/character

"You must be the change you want to see in the world." —Mahatma Gandhi
APPENDIX O

SOCIAL DECISION MAKING/SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING SAMPLE LESSON
**TOPIC**

10 Keep Calm

**OBJECTIVES**
- To point out problematic situations where students can use self-control to calm down before reacting
- To teach students to regulate their emotions and maintain control in problematic situations
- To practice the *Keep Calm* exercise

**MATERIALS**
Whole-class display of the steps in Keep Calm (Worksheet 4.10.1)
Copies of the "Keep Calm Reminder Cards" (Worksheet 4.10.2) [optional]

**INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

1. **Review Topic 9.**

   Go over the vocabulary from the last lesson, with a focus on Trigger Situations and Feelings Fingerprints. Encourage students to share their observations and experiences.

2. **Conduct a Sharing Circle.**

   Ask students to share a time when they find it helpful to calm themselves down.

   Make the point that it is possible to handle almost every type of problem or difficulty better if you are able to stay calm. Say something along these lines:

   *To help us learn to be better at keeping calm, we are also going to learn a specific four-step strategy called Keep Calm. This strategy can help you think through a problem before you try to do something about it.*

3. **Introduce the Keep Calm exercise.**

   Say:

   *The key to keeping calm is to slow down your breathing. Athletes, performers, and people in the martial arts have used...*
methods of controlling their breathing to achieve a high level of concentration and calmness that can help them perform their best.

Provide examples of sports figures or fictional characters your students will relate to, then continue:

Learning to regulate the way that you breathe increases your ability to think clearly and to do things with more skill and control.

Ask if anyone has ever heard of Keep Calm. If so, have them help you explain the four steps in using this skill:

1. Tell yourself to STOP.
2. Tell yourself to KEEP CALM.
3. Slow down your breathing with two long, deep breaths.
4. Praise yourself for a job well done.

4. Demonstrate the steps to the class.

Direct students’ attention to the whole-class display of the skill steps. Follow this procedure: Present a situation in which you could be irritated or nervous. Describe the situation, then model the following:

First, I would tell myself to STOP.

Then I would tell myself to Keep Calm.

Then I would take two long, deep breaths. First, I would let out all the air in my lungs through my mouth. Then I would take a slow and smooth breath of air in through my nose to the count of five. I would hold that breath for the count of two and then slowly let the air out through my mouth to the count of five, while I say to myself (inside my head), “Keep Calm.” I would do the breathing again.

Then I would say to myself, “Good job.” Using self-control can be hard work, and you need to praise yourself.

Demonstrate the procedure, counting with your fingers to five while taking a breath in, and to two while holding your breath, and again to five while breathing out. Bring your hands down to your sides while you are releasing the breath through your mouth—indicating that you are saying, “Keep Calm.” Smile after completing the breathing to indicate you are telling yourself you’ve done a good job.

5. Conduct a practice exercise.

Have the class practice Keep Calm in the same way.
Look for students who are doing the procedure correctly. Be specific in praising—you can say things like "Nice, smooth breathing." If children need correction, describe what to do in positive terms. For example, say, "Slow down your breathing" rather than "Don't go so fast."

6. **Discuss use of the exercise.**

Have the class generate situations when Keep Calm may come in handy. Most situations fall into three main categories:

- When you are nervous. (Examples include things like being about to take a test, going up to bat, or giving a speech or other type of performance.)
- When you really need to concentrate. (Examples include things like working on a test, getting back in the mood to work after recess, or feeling distracted by noise in the room.)
- When you are angry or frustrated and about to lose your cool. (Examples include things like beginning to yell during an argument.)

7. **Conduct additional practice.**

Present students with situations to role-play, either acting out a situation yourself or showing a video or pictures and then having students add examples of their own to those presented. Have students practice using Keep Calm to help them in these situations:

- Feeling fidgety and talking in class
- Feeling nervous about a test or a report
- Being lost in a shopping center
- Going to a new school
- Competing in a sports event

8. **Introduce a Reflective Summary.**

As outlined in the Introduction, ask students to reflect on the question "What did you learn from today's lesson?" Reinforce key themes, then go over any follow-up work.

9. **Follow up.**

The following steps will help make sure that the students have a chance to continue working with the new concepts.
Assignment

Encourage students to find a time when they can use Keep Calm and try it. Let them know that you will expect an example of how they used Keep Calm at the next lesson.

Take-Home

If you wish, send Keep Calm cards home with students. Parents and guardians can find many situations in which the skills will be useful.

Plans to Promote Transfer and Generalization of Skill

Social Studies and Current Events

Instruct students to seek examples of people taking deep breaths before performing certain tasks. Encourage students to observe athletes, politicians, surgeons, or others in real life or on TV. Have students keep track of observations of deep breathing used for calming.

Language Arts

Instruct students to identify points in stories during which a character could use Keep Calm. Have students predict what might have happened if the character had used Keep Calm and how that might differ from what did occur in the story.

Art Project

Have students submit posters illustrating the steps of Keep Calm.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

1. Some children may need a real-life example of what it’s like to be nervous or antsy or to lose their temper. This can be illustrated in several ways. Use a mirror to show differences in physical appearances before and after using Keep Calm. Jogging in place to increase breathing can be used to show the contrast before and after Keep Calm.

2. During problem situations that come up during the week, encourage children to use the Keep Calm technique before discussing the situation with their teacher or classmates. If you wish, you may distribute Keep Calm Reminder Cards (Worksheet 4.10.2).

3. It may be a good idea to remind children about Keep Calm before potentially stressful situations, such as joining a new class or attending special classes like art, music, and physical education. The technique is especially useful for students with special education needs who are joining a regular classroom.
4. Some students will learn to use their Feelings Fingerprints as a sign to use Keep Calm. Others will be prompted by Trigger Situations or other sets of cues. Regardless, the skill will be learned to the extent that children are prompted and reminded to use it in salient everyday situations, such as when moving from class to class, before a test, before an important meeting, or when they are upset at home.

5. Here are some sample prompts to use when a child is upset or is beginning to lose control:
   - Use your Keep Calm steps.
   - Stop and think about what’s happening.
   - Let’s Keep Calm and get focused.
   - Let’s take a look at what’s going on. Tell me what you see. (Or “what you saw, what happened, how you are feeling.”)
   - Take a deep breath and Keep Calm—then we can talk about it.

6. Testimonials about the use of Keep Calm (or times when Keep Calm could have been used) are highly valuable for students to share. These should be solicited regularly to promote future use of self-control. Students should be helped to use Keep Calm to prepare themselves for actual or possible Trigger Situations.
Keep Calm

1. Tell yourself to STOP.
2. Tell yourself to KEEP CALM.
3. Slow down your breathing with two long, deep breaths.
4. Praise yourself for a job well done.
### KEEP CALM

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VITA

Brannon Aiello is the daughter of George and Judy Olson. She was born in Glen Ellyn, IL, on June 3, 1977. She currently resides in a suburb of Chicago with her husband and children.

Brannon attended St. Petronille Catholic Grade School in Glen Ellyn, IL, until the eighth grade and then attended St. Francis High School in Wheaton, IL. She graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and an endorsement in Psychology. In 2004, Brannon earned a Master of Arts degree in Reading and a Type 03 Reading Specialist Certificate from Concordia University. In 2011, she completed a doctorate in a Curriculum and Instruction Program at Loyola University Chicago.

Brannon has worked in the field of education since 2000. She began teaching as a fifth grade teacher, but has worked as a fourth grade teacher for the majority of her career.

Brannon enjoys working out, competing in triathlons, cooking, dancing, and spending time with her family.
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