

A Measure of Character

Partnership in Character Education Program
CHARACTER COUNTS! Study 2006-2011





A Measure of Character

Four-year research study utilizing CHARACTER COUNTS! successfully concludes National study shows benefits of character education

The Tulare County Office of Education, in conjunction with CHARACTER COUNTS! (CC!) and the U.S. Department of Education's Character Education Program (PCEP), recently completed a groundbreaking, four-year study which involved 21 Tulare County schools and over 9,000 students. The goal of the program was to measure the effectiveness of character education on students in elementary, middle and high schools. The study was funded by a \$1.9 million PCEP grant awarded in October 2006, one of the largest grants given that year.

For over 15 years, the Tulare County Office of Education has made a steadfast commitment to promoting CC! and assisting schools in utilizing the program. The four-year, experimental research study tested the impact a fully-implemented character education program can have in enhancing a school's instructional environment. To monitor the study, the CC! program partnered with Pacific Research & Evaluation of Portland, Oregon. After four years of testing, researchers concluded that the study met the federal research measure, known as GPRA, with statistically significant positive results on seven of the nine subscales assessed. "We have long known that CHARACTER COUNTS! works in creating healthier school cultures where teachers can focus on instruction and student achievement," says Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools. "We are delighted to have this study to support schools in their efforts to make Character Education a priority."

A major requirement of the study was to design and conduct a valid, rigorous evaluation that included a group of program and comparison schools. Twelve project schools were charged with developing a CC! implementation and evaluation plan that would positively impact student achievement and behavior. Project school implementation plans were designed around six focus areas: student behavior, curriculum, parent awareness, school environment, staff training and sportsmanship. During the first year of the study (2007), school staff, parents, coaches, student leadership and curriculum administrators received CC! training. The nine comparison schools were matched to the project schools based on enrollment, achievement test scores, socioeconomic status, and behavioral data such as truancy, suspensions, and expulsions. For the purposes of the study, the comparison schools did not produce full-scale implementation plans; rather they continued without any significant increases or decreases in character education.

Each year of the study, program and comparison schools were evaluated using the "Student Report Card Survey." This survey was administered to all students in grades 6-12 at both program and comparison schools. The survey contained questions which addressed students' ethical attitudes, values, and behaviors, and included nine subscales which measured anti-social attitudes and behaviors, access to drugs and alcohol, ethical attitudes, pro-social values, religious values, injustices, and superficial values. It was from these subscales that researchers saw statistically significant positive growth from students in the project schools. The results of this study indicate the Tulare County CC! implementation model can be successfully utilized by school districts throughout the nation.

"I greatly appreciate the teachers, administrators and site coordinators who have been with us for the past four years," says CC! Coordinator Kelley Petty. "I also appreciate the support of grant coordinators Kathleen Green and Gina Wise, the staff at the office of education and the national CHARACTER COUNTS! office in Los Angeles. We are all anxious to share the exciting findings from the study and the ways schools were able to implement CHARACTER COUNTS! on their campuses." To contact Kelley Petty and discuss CC! implementation at your school, call (559) 740-4303, or e-mail kelleyp@tcoe.org.



A Measure of Character PCEP CHARACTER COUNTS! Study

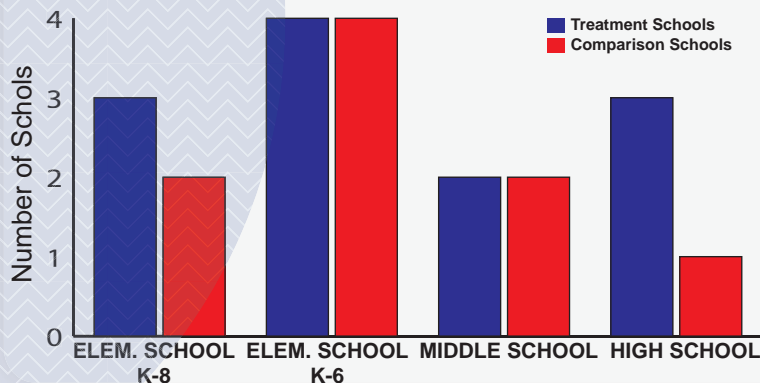
The Tulare County Office of Education, in conjunction with CHARACTER COUNTS! (CC!) and the U.S. Department of Education's Character Education Program (PCEP), recently completed a groundbreaking, four-year study which involved 21 Tulare County schools and over 9,000 students. The goal of the program was to measure the effectiveness of character education on students in elementary, middle and high schools. The study was funded by a \$1.9 million PCEP grant awarded in October 2006, one of the largest grants given that year.

The four-year, experimental research study tested the impact a fully-implemented character education program can have in enhancing a school's instructional environment. After four years of testing, researchers concluded that the study met the federal research measure, known as GPRA, with *statistically significant positive results on seven of the nine subscales assessed*.

Subscales Assessed

Subscale	GPRA Met
Access to Alcohol & Drugs	Yes
Anti-Social Attitudes	Yes
Ethical Attitudes	No
Hurtful Behavior	Yes
Non-Confrontational Behavior	Yes
Pro-Social Values	Yes
Religious Values	Yes
Suffered Injustice	No
Superficial Behaviors	Yes

Number of PCEP CC! Grant Schools
Total Surveyed Population: 9,215



"We have long known that CHARACTER COUNTS! works in creating healthier school cultures where teachers can focus on instruction and student achievement. We are delighted to have this study to support schools in their efforts to make Character Education a priority."
Jim Vidak, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools.

A major requirement of the study was to design and conduct a valid, rigorous evaluation that included a group of treatment and comparison schools. Twelve treatment schools were charged with developing a CC! implementation and evaluation plan that would positively impact student achievement and behavior. Treatment School implementation plans were designed around six focus areas: **student behavior, curriculum, parent awareness, school environment, staff training and sportsmanship**. For the purposes of the study, the comparison schools did not produce full-scale implementation plans; rather they continued without any significant increases or decreases in character education during the first four years.

Each year of the study, treatment and comparison schools were evaluated using the "Student Report Card Survey." This survey was administered to all students in grades 6-12 at both program and comparison schools. It was from these subscales that researchers saw statistically significant positive growth from students in the treatment schools. The results of this study indicate the Tulare County CC! implementation model can be successfully utilized by school districts throughout the nation.

A Measure of Character PCEP CHARACTER COUNTS! Study Highlights

The case studies below highlight some of positive changes in school culture observed during the PCEP CC! Study.

Monte Vista Elementary, Porterville Unified School District Porterville CA Bullying

Over the course of the PCEP CC! Study, Monte Vista Elementary in Porterville, CA reported a positive change in bullying behaviors from the Student Report Card Survey data collected. This data indicates that bullying behaviors decreased over the span of the study providing a correlation to the school's campus-wide character education efforts.

A Bullying Report for Monte Vista Elementary School

The following occurred at least once in the past year:	2007-08	2009-10	2010-11	*Behavior % Change 2007-08 to 2010-11
Hit a person because I was angry.	54%	38%	22%	- 59%
Bullied, teased, or taunted someone.	44%	30%	34%	- 23%
Mistreated someone because he or she belonged to a different group.	15%	5%	7%	- 53%
Used racial slurs or insults.	28%	20%	10%	- 64%

*The table above shows an increase or decrease in percentage points, which requires a mathematical formula to get actual percentage change of behavior.

"Donating money to an organization such as the American Cancer Society builds personal character because it feels like we can have an impact on someone else's life in our world."
Eric M., 8th Grade
Springville Union School

"We use CC! school-wide to assist with campus culture, sports, and after school programs."
Tulare Western High School
Principal, Lucy Van Scyoc

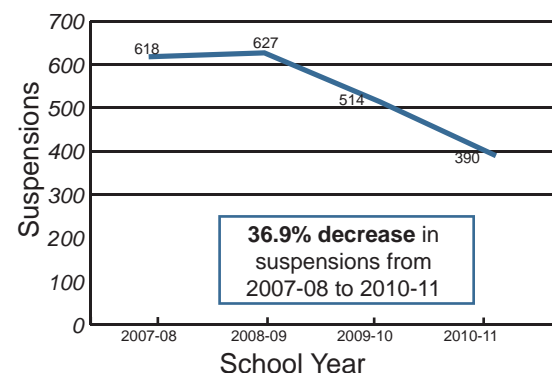
Divisadero Middle School, Visalia Unified School District Visalia CA Discipline

Divisadero Middle School in Visalia, CA collected discipline data to illustrate the behavior spikes or decreases over a nine-year period. The highlighted data indicates the school's CC! implementation phase. Data shows a continual decrease in behavior problems which can be correlated to the school's CC! campus-wide implementation plan. During the PCEP CC! Study, Divisadero had a 36.9% decrease in suspensions.

A Suspension Report for Divisadero Middle School

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Month Totals
August	6	14	21	12	27	7	13	1	106
September	56	31	67	50	110	60	57	36	508
October	90	88	82	109	95	74	74	41	686
November	69	55	61	90	80	57	51	39	552
December	26	54	40	47	42	36	23	35	336
January	52	20	30	93	31	31	52	15	360
February	71	39	65	124	82	48	51	46	574
March	108	54	143	99	34	122	72	77	709
April	47	81	53	71	55	69	53	42	471
May	93	74	108	89	59	122	67	53	665
June	0	0	0	12	3	1	1	5	22
Totals	618	510	670	796	618	627	514	390	

Divisadero Middle School





**Tulare County Office of Education
U.S. Department of Education's
Partnership in Character Education Program
Study Report
March 2012**

**Tulare County
Office of Education**

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Introduction

In 2006, the Tulare County Office of Education was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a study to measure the effectiveness of character education in schools. Tulare County's CHARACTER COUNTS! PCEP Study has met the GPRA Federal Research Requirement:

¹GPRA Measure – *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993*

- ✓ Researched based – quasi-experimental study with treatment and control groups
- ✓ Pre/post assessments that are proven to be scientifically valid and reliable (this step involved conducting a psychometric analysis to categorize question items into subscales)
- ✓ Evaluation will utilize formative and summative data from subscales
- ✓ This GPRA Measure will provide statistically significant reporting for research level purposes

Program and comparison schools were matched according to enrollment, achievement test scores, socioeconomic status, and behavioral data (e.g., truancy, suspensions, expulsions).

Evaluation data were collected from several sources, including student surveys, teacher/staff surveys, site visits, and district data such as attendance, disciplinary infractions, and achievement test scores.²

This brief report describes the results of data collected through the student survey, as well as highlights from a site visit to one of the program elementary schools.

Methods

The Student Report Card Survey has been administered to all students in grades 6-12 at both program and comparison schools for the past four years. The survey contains questions which address student attitudes, values, and behaviors, and includes the following nine subscales, each of which is comprised of between two and 12 survey items:

- ✓ Ethical Attitudes (e.g., “it’s not worth it to lie or cheat”, “people should play by the rules”)
- ✓ Anti-Social Attitudes (e.g., “sometimes a person has to lie or cheat to succeed”)
- ✓ Access to Drugs and Alcohol (e.g., “if I wanted to, I could get drugs”)
- ✓ Pro-social Values (e.g., being charitable, respectful)
- ✓ Superficial Values (e.g., being wealthy, famous)
- ✓ Religious Values (e.g., “living up to the standards of my religion is important”)
- ✓ Non-confrontational Anti-Social Behaviors (e.g., lying, cheating)
- ✓ Hurtful Anti-Social Behaviors (e.g., stealing, bullying)
- ✓ Suffered Injustice (e.g., been bullied by others)

¹ First study of this federal reporting requirement level for CC!

² This data set tracks the same students over a three-year period.

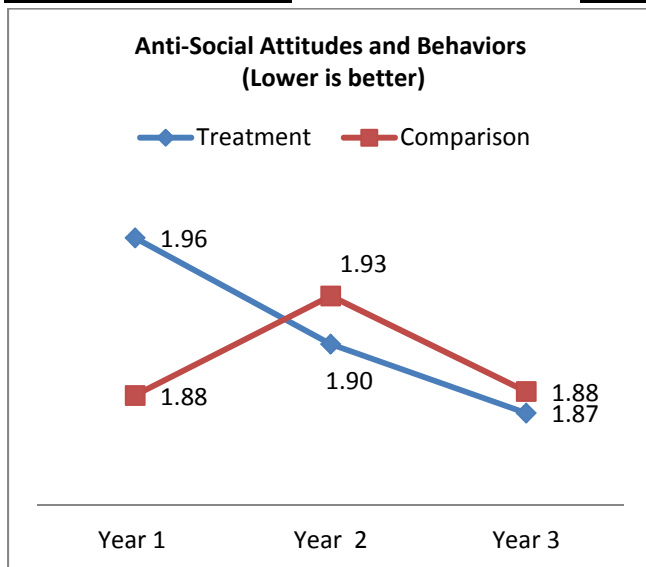
Grant implementation of CHARACTER COUNTS! began during the 2007-08 school year. The Student Report Card Survey was administered prior to program implementation that year, providing a baseline measure of student attitudes, values, and self-reported behavior. The survey was administered in each successive year as well. In this report, we compare data from baseline (2007-08), Year 2 (2008-09) and Year 3 (2009-10) for program and comparison schools.³

Subscale Results

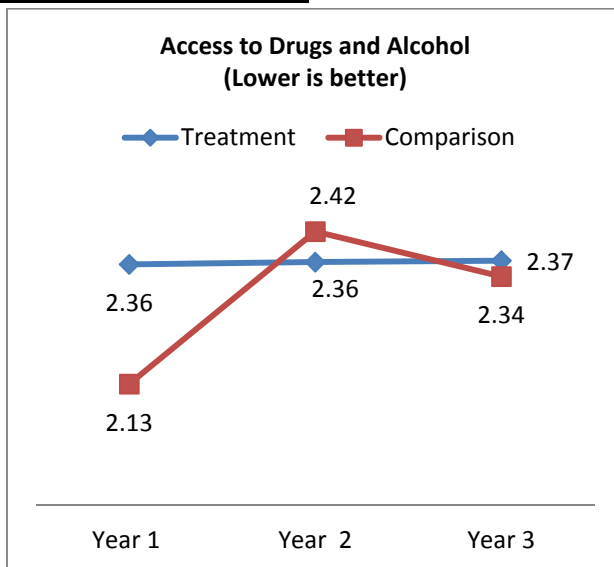
In order to assess change in student attitudes, values, and behaviors over time, a factorial ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in program and comparison schools over time for each of the nine subscales listed above. Statistically significant positive differences were detected on seven of the nine subscales.⁴ The subscales that did not yield statistically significant differences between groups were “Ethical Attitudes and Behaviors” and “Suffered Injustice”.

The graphs below illustrate change over time for program and comparison schools on the seven statistically significant subscales:

Anti-Social Attitudes



Access to Drugs and Alcohol



Discussion for Anti-Social Attitudes/ Access to Drugs and Alcohol:

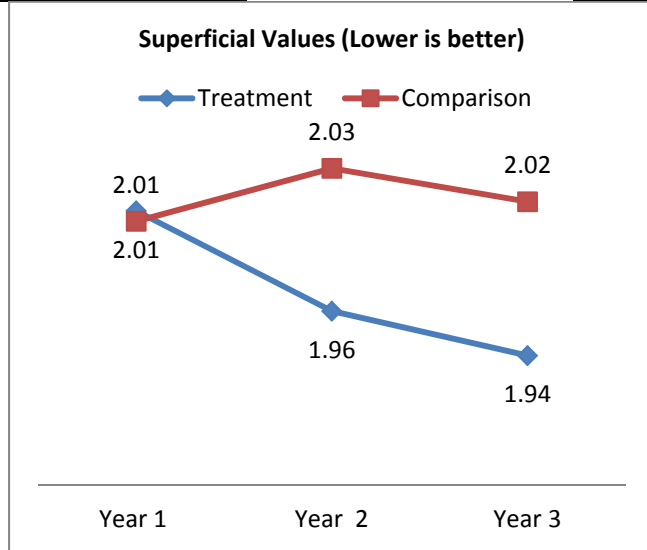
As illustrated above, the program schools showed decreased agreement with antisocial attitudes over time as compared to minimal change in the comparison group from year one to year three. When asked about access to

³ It should be noted that three program schools and three comparison schools were eliminated from the analysis due to staff reporting fairly high levels of Character Counts! implementation (not using grant funds) prior to baseline collection.

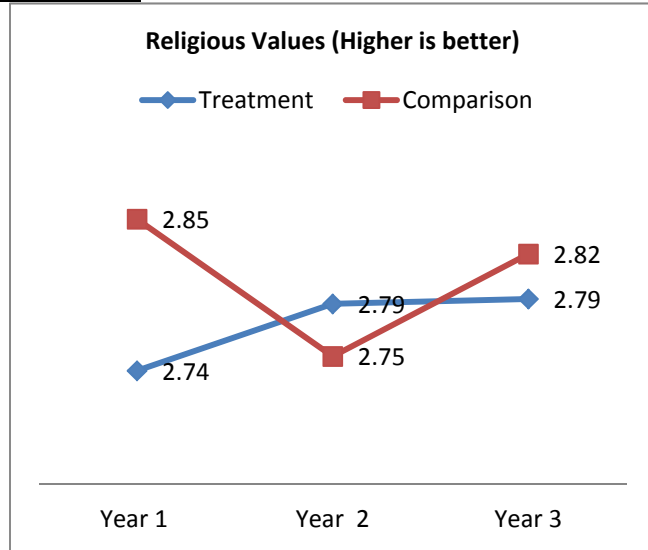
⁴ Statistically significant can be explained by saying: this outcome did not occur by chance; there was a reason (treatment) for the change.

drugs and alcohol, students in the treatment group remained stable and comparison schools increased access over time.

Superficial Values



Religious Values

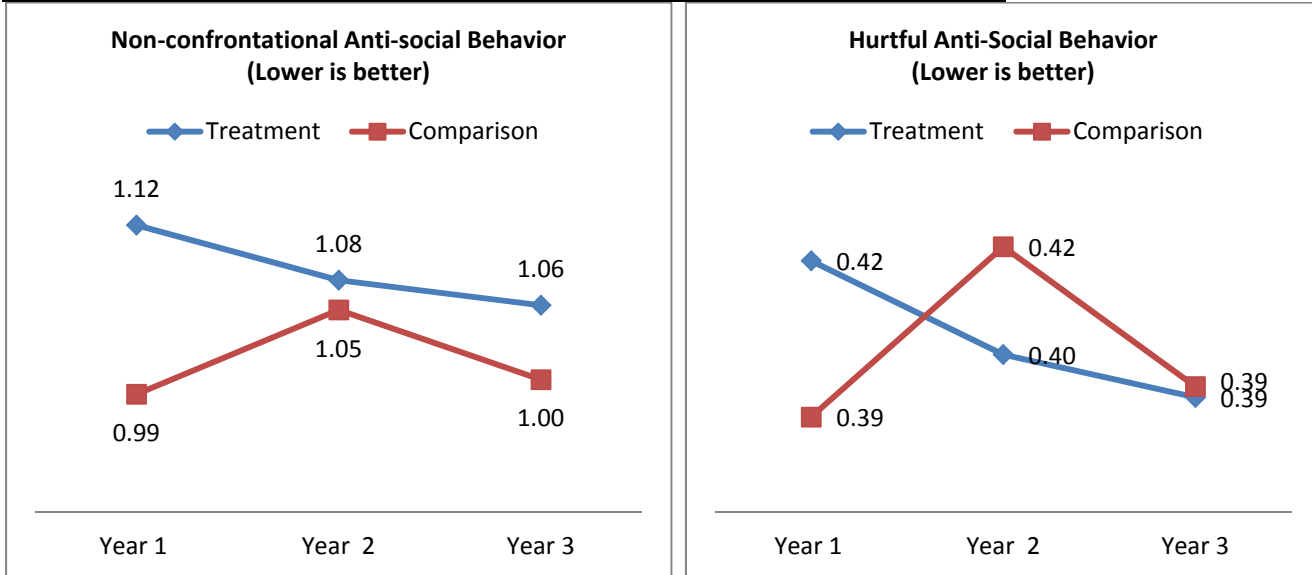


Discussion for Superficial / Religious Values:

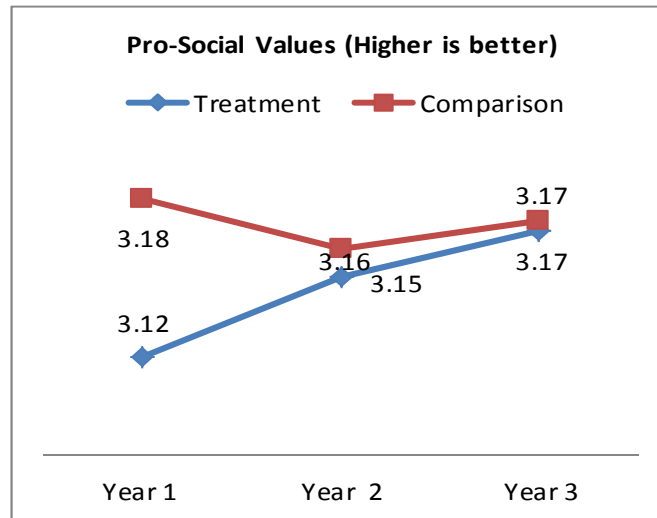
Students in the program schools showed a decrease in superficial values, whereas comparison schools reported increased superficial values over the course of the grant. For religious values, program schools remained relatively stable and comparison schools dipped in year two.⁵

⁵ CC! remains politically and religiously neutral.

Non-confrontational Anti-Social Behaviors Hurtful Anti-Social Behaviors



Pro-social Values



Discussion: Students in program schools reported decreased non-confrontational and hurtful anti-social behaviors over the course of the grant. Comparison schools showed increases from year one to year two on these subscales. Finally, program schools showed increases in pro-social behaviors.

Individual Results with Percentage Change Highlights

While statistical significance is one important piece of establishing differences between groups, it can also be worthwhile to examine descriptive data for individual survey items. The table below shows the results from a *sampling* of items from the Student Report Card Survey.

Anti-social Attitudes and Behaviors Scale Items (lower is better)	Program Schools		Comparison Schools		Program Schools	Comparison Schools
	% Agreement at Baseline (n = 2821)	% Agreement Year 3 (n = 2955)	% Agreement at Baseline (n = 1277)	% Agreement Year 3 (n = 1516)	% Change from Baseline to Year 3	% Change from Baseline to Year 3
In the real world, successful people do what they have to do to win, even if other people consider it cheating	56.7%	46.8%	50.3%	44.5%	17.5%	11.5%
A person has to lie or cheat sometimes in order in order to succeed.	37.4%	29.9%	31.4%	28.2%	20%	10%
It's sometimes OK to hit or threaten a person who makes me very angry.	26.6%	22.9%	22.9%	22.9%	13.9%	0%
People who are willing to lie, cheat, or break the rules are more likely to succeed than people who are not.	17.1%	15.5%	16.9%	17.0%	9.4%	-0.6%
In sports, if you're not cheating, you're not trying hard enough.	12.3%	10.1%	12.3%	14.1%	17.9%	-14.6%

Superficial Behaviors Scale Items (lower is better)	Program Schools		Comparison Schools		Program Schools	Comparison Schools
	% Essential or Very Important Baseline (n =3982)	% Essential or Very Important Year 3 (n =4227)	% Change from Baseline to Year 3	% Change from Baseline to Year 3	% Change from Baseline to Year 3	% Change from Baseline to Year 3
Being physically attractive	41.7%	35.9%	42.7%	42.7%	13.9%	0%
Being popular	16.9%	14.1%	17.6%	17.7%	16.6%	-0.6%
Being famous	18.1%	16.8%	19.3%	20.3%	7.2%	-5.2%

Hurtful Anti-social Behavior Scale Items (lower is better) <u>In the past year</u>	Program Schools		Comparison Schools		Program Schools	Comparison Schools
	% One or More Times at Baseline (n =4481)	% One or More Times Year 3 (n =5033)	% One or More Times at Baseline (n =2100)	% One or More Times Year 3 (n = 2621)	% Change from Baseline to Year 3	% Change from Baseline to Year 3
Stole something from a friend	17.8%	16.2%	15.9%	16.9%	8.9%	-6.3%
Stole something from a store	28.0%	26.4%	25.4%	26.1%	5.7%	-2.8%

Pro-Social Values Scale Items (higher is better)	Program Schools		Comparison Schools		Program Schools	Comparison Schools
	% Essential or Very Important Baseline (n =3756)	% Essential or Very Important Year 3 (n =4024)	% Essential or Very Important Baseline (n=1713)	% Essential or Very Important Year 3 (n =2058)	% Change from Baseline to Year 3	% Change from Baseline to Year 3
Being charitable	56.5%	60.2%	59.1%	59.4%	6.5%	0.5%
Helping others	74.0%	77.1%	77.8%	77.7%	4.2%	-0.13%
Having good moral character	81.9%	83.5%	84.1%	84.0%	1.9%	-0.12%
Treating others with respect	86.3%	87.7%	88.1%	87.8%	1.6%	-0.34%
Having trusting personal relationships	86.5%	87.7%	89.8%	87.5%	1.4%	-2.6%



Tulare County Office of Education

Partnership in Character Education Program Study

Sample School Highlights

School Highlight

In March, 2010, Pacific Research & Evaluation staff conducted site visits at Four CC! program schools. These schools were two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Highlights from the visit to one of the elementary schools are provided next. Statistically significant improvements over the course of the grant were detected on eight of the nine Student Report Card subscales (all but Religious Values) for this school.

The site visit consisted of a half day of focus groups and interviews conducted with staff, parents, and students at each school, including a:

- 45 minute focus group with three teachers
- 30 minute focus group with two classified staff members
- 15 minute focus group with two parents
- 30 minute focus group with five students, and
- 15 minute interview with the school principal.

Focus group and survey questions revolved around the extent to which CC! has been implemented at the school and the impact that implementation has had on the school community. The site visit quickly revealed that the school was a high implementing school where the entire school community had bought into the importance of CC! The school principal declared that the program “is a must in all schools,” and attributed much of the success of their program to the buy-in and “passion” of the school’s site coordinator and staff. Staff report that CC! implementation has coincided with the number of student behavioral referrals decreasing. Parent focus group participants described CC! as the most visible initiative at the school. Students provided enthusiastic feedback about CC! activities.

Before the grant, focus group participants reported that everyone in the school was familiar with the four pillars of CC! but that the program was not infused into the school culture in the same way that it is now. As a result of grant funding, members of the school community including teachers, coaches, and parents have been able to attend CC trainings. In addition, the school has been supplied with materials such as banners and books to increase the visibility of the CC! program and teachers have been given additional time to plan how to integrate CC content into their classroom curricula.

Examples of Character Counts Implementation at the school include:

- Displays about CC are present in every classroom (e.g., pictures, quotes, posters) as well as in the school cafeteria.
- On the morning announcements the principal will read a short saying about character and relate it to one of the pillars.
- Teachers nominate students who display character and later recognizing them at an award ceremony luncheon attended by the entire school and parents of the honored students.
- The 6 pillars are used on office discipline referrals. Office staff have discussion with students about why they were disciplined and how their behavior relates to CC!
- Teachers include comments about character on report cards (e.g., “This student is respectful.”).
- Even on morning announcements, principal will read a short saying about character.

At the classroom level, teachers have taken ownership of CC! implementation (e.g., choosing how to decorate their classroom to address the CC! pillars, and creatively integrating the CC! message into their curriculum). Focus group members explained how, as a result of grant funding, a teacher planning committee has been put together to support staff in developing ways to integrate CC! into their existing curriculum.

Focus group participants described how this high degree of consistent implementation across grades K-8 has led to an increased student awareness of CC! One thread that ran through the focus groups was that the CC! grant has led the school community to adopt a common vocabulary and to employ the CC! language when evaluating and describing behavior both within and outside of the classroom. Students report that they “hear something about character every day” in school. Examples of how discourse surrounding character is imbedded within the school culture include:

- A teacher talking to a little boy who became upset with himself about his behavior towards a fellow classmate. The boy stated, “I wasn’t respectful and I didn’t show that I cared.”
- Classified staff report hearing conversations in the staff room where teachers discuss examples of what constitutes “responsible” behavior.
- The school identified words that do not display character and labeled them as “red words.” One teacher explained how she had overheard students talking with each other on the basketball court over the weekend. One said to the other, “you don’t need to use that ‘red word’ out here,” then proceeded to tell them what they could have said instead.
- Teachers described how students are taking ownership for their behavior. For example, one teacher described how her 7th grade students made a game out of displaying good character; if someone says the word “stupid” or “dumb” other students yell, “red flag!”

Student focus group participants reported that having good character is seen as “cool” by the students at their school. Student athletes in the student focus group explained how they were proud of the recognition that they had received from the coach of a rival school who told the school’s coach that their school’s team had “great character.” A parent from the opposing team echoed this sentiment, saying that school’s players were “the nicest.” The students explained that when you hear something like that it “makes you want to keep it going.” All student focus group participants reported that they were very proud to attend their school.

In addition to sending select parents to a character counts training, the school has actively sought to include parents in implementing the CC program in a variety of ways. For example, parents who volunteer in classrooms give out character awards to students along with teachers. Parents are then invited to the luncheon where students are recognized as displaying one of the six pillars of character. Students described how the PTA is actively involved in their school, explaining how “they do everything for us,” and noting how they appreciated having a visible parent presence in the school. One such example is that one of the most popular character counts initiatives at the school is run by a dads group at school. In this program, teachers nominate students who have displayed character to be “captured” at recess by a parent volunteer dressed up as a count (the “Character Count”). The student and the count later have their picture taken together, and then the picture is laminated and sent home to parents to see as evidence of their child displaying good character.

The school visit revealed that key components in this success included: engaging parents in the initiative, creating CC activities that complement the existing school culture, and allow staff with freedom to integrate CC in their classroom support them in work but don’t mandate methods.



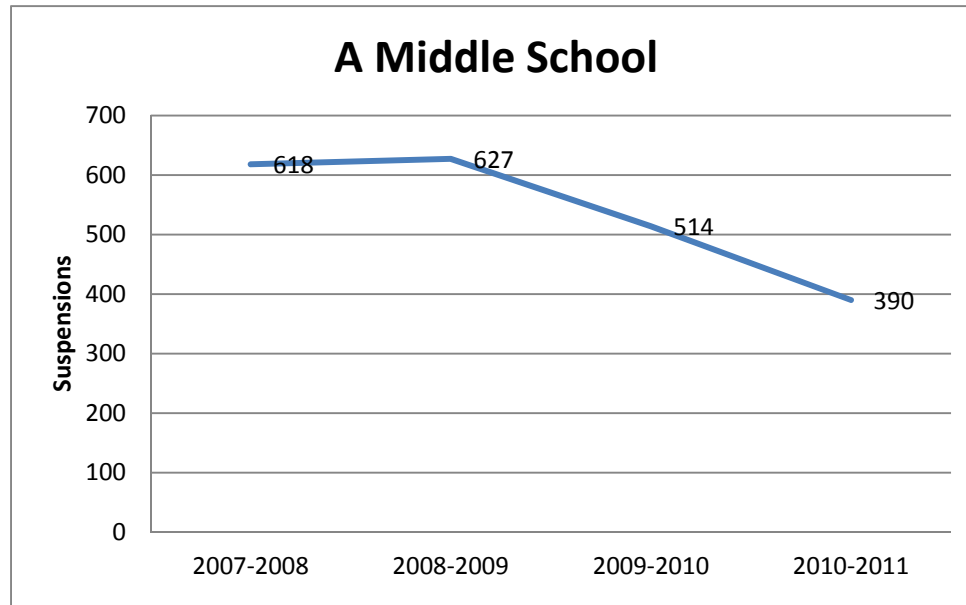
Three Year Data for High School Behavior

School Year	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	% Change from Baseline to Year 2
Total # Students	1831	1813	1792	39 fewer students than baseline year
Total # of Suspension Infractions	2587	2243	1828	29%
Total # of Recommended Expulsions	35	29	8	77%

A Suspension Report for a Middle School

	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	Month Totals
August	6	14	21	12	27	7	13	1	5	106
September	56	31	67	50	110	60	57	36	41	508
October	90	88	82	109	95	74	74	41	33	686
November	69	55	61	90	80	57	51	39	50	552
December	26	54	40	47	42	36	23	35	33	336
January	52	20	30	93	31	31	52	15	36	360
February	71	39	65	124	82	48	51	46	48	574
March	108	54	143	99	34	122	72	77		709
April	47	81	53	71	55	69	53	42		471
May	93	74	108	89	59	122	67	53		665
June	0	0	0	12	3	1	1	5		22
Totals	618	510	670	796	618	627	514	390	246	

2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
618	627	514	390



36.9% decrease in suspensions
from 07-08 to 10-11



Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools