CHARACTER EDUCATION IN GEORGIA'S PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS:

THE PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVE

by

H. WAYNE BROADHEAD

(Under the Direction of C. KENNETH TANNER)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the perceptions of Georgia's public high school principals in regard to character education and the mandated character education initiative. This study was based upon survey responses by 51% of Georgia's public high school principals.

This study revealed that the responding principals were supportive of the concepts of character education, but were not very well trained in them. Character education was also viewed, by the principals, as a legitimate function of the public high school. The respondents also deemed character education to be an effective deterrent to school violence and discipline problems.

Character education enjoyed support across all personal and professional characteristics. Only years of experience in education indicated different levels of support, with respondents with 18 to 22 years experience showing slightly higher support for character education and those with 13 to 17 years experience showing slightly lower support.

The study concluded that Georgia's public high school principals are ready and willing to embrace character education, but they seemed to lack direction as well as specific strategies. The "lack of training" issue must be addressed if character education is to be successful.

INDEX WORDS: Character Education, Character, Values, Public High Schools, Principals

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DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this work to my parents, Joe and Betty Broadhead. They instilled in me, at an early age, a love of learning and a desire to gain knowledge.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Background for this Study

Noah Webster, an early advocate of free public schools, wrote:

> The only practicable methods to reform mankind, is to begin with children to banish, if possible, from their company, every low bred, drunken, immoral character. Virtue and vice will not grow together in a great degree, but they will grow where they are planted, and when one has taken root, it is not easily supplanted by the other. The great art of correcting mankind consists in prepossessing the mind with good principles.
>
> For this reason society requires that the education of youth should be watched with the most scrupulous attention. Education, in great measure, forms the moral characters of men, and morals are the basis of government. Education should therefore be the first care of a legislature; not merely the institution of schools, but the furnishing of them with the best men for teachers ("On the Education of Youth", 1787).

The major goal of schools has always been to affect the social behavior and values of students. Early American educators believed that schools could form the characters of students (Brooks & Goble, 1997). The impetus behind this effort was that positive effects on character would ensure that the republic would survive the many stresses and strains placed upon it (Akin, 1995). Thomas Jefferson understood that if democracy were to survive in the fledging republic, its citizens had to possess both intelligence and high moral principles. Citizens must have feelings of patriotism, respect for the law, respect for the rights of others, and concern for the "common good" (Hofstadter, 1974).

Horace Mann, and other proponents of the American Common School, felt that character and citizenship were among the most important objectives of the public school (Leming, 1993). In this context, character meant "proper" behavior. With such concerted effort, it looked as if character education was going to always be a part of public education. This was not to be the case. Throughout the decades, American educators attempted to enumerate what values should guide the public schools in their effort to shape children's character, but had difficulty doing so. For example, William Hutchins published the "Children's Morality Code" in 1917. This early code outlined "ten laws of right living", and was sponsored by the Character Education Association (McClennan, 1992, p. 57).

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, an ongoing debate raged between those who wanted schools to focus primarily on academics and those who wanted to create well-rounded individuals with strong moral characters (Lickona, 1991). John Dewey's writings on character education helped form what became known as the Character Education Movement of the 1920's and 1930's. This movement was an attempt to create good citizens who would respect life, liberty, and property (DeRoche & Williams, 1998). The religious community was certainly supportive of the Character Education Movement. The Religious Education Association (REA) realized that its prior attempts to base American schooling on Christian teachings and principles were doomed as "separation of church and state" was pushed by various groups in American society (Leming, 1993). Members of REA saw character as a secular alternative to Christian morality. Schools could, however, emphasize such virtues as justice, reverence, thrift,

temperance, courage, honesty, self-control, and altruism, thus enhancing a stable and moral society despite the loss of Christian foundations in public schools (Kilpatrick, 1992).

Character Education led to many schools developing strong extracurricular programs in student governance, community service, and athletics (McClellan, 1992). The movement reached a crisis point with the publication in 1928-1930 of the results of the "Character Education Inquiry". This was a massive empirical study backed by the Rockefeller family and conducted under the direction of Professor Edward J. Thorndike of Columbia University. The Inquiry showed that many of the school-based programs for the development of good character had limited effects upon the actual behavior of children. It concluded that peer standards and family culture had more to do with character than explicit education (McClellan, 1992).

With the Depression's grip on the nation, followed by World War II, character education became de-emphasized. The U.S. Office of Education established a "Life Adjustment" program in many of the nation's schools after the war. This program was directed toward affective educational goals. It emphasized the formation of well-rounded individuals with various life-skills rather than focusing on the importance of the virtues (Akin, 1995).

The education agenda for the country changed dramatically in the 1950's. The success of the Soviet Sputnik satellite and the searing criticism of writers, such as Arthur Bestor (*Educational Wastelands*), led to a renewed emphasis on academics in American schools (Kilpatrick, 1992). This emphasis has continued to the present, with some minor excursions into the education of character.

The American perception of public school and the teaching of character is in a state of change. The 1993 Phi Delta Kappan Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools rated the lack of proper financial support as the biggest problem facing public schools. One year later, the poll revealed that respondents, for the first time, rated "lack of discipline" along with "fighting/violence/gangs" as the biggest problem facing public schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup. 1994, p. 43). A small plurality of the respondents was supportive of the teaching of character as a means for making schools safer. Of those polled, 49% indicated that they favored character education in the public schools, while 39% were opposed. However, an overwhelming majority of the respondents viewed certain specific character traits as being acceptable for public schools to teach, with the category "respect for others" receiving a 94% approval rating. Other character traits that received approval ratings over 90% were: "hard work", "fairness in dealing with others", "compassion for others", as well as "civility and politeness" (Elam, et al, 1994, p. 50).

There is a renewed interest in character education as the perception grows that many of our youth are getting out of control. Drugs, gangs, teenage pregnancy, suicide, and the breakdown of school discipline have led educators and political leaders to once again look to the schools to educate not only the minds, but the conscience as well. William Kilpatrick states this accurately in Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong, when he states that "the core problem facing our schools is a moral one and all other problems derive from it" (1992).

Introduction to the Study

A significant step toward values education occurred in Georgia in 1991. The State Board of Education adopted the "Values Education Rule" that outlined 37 core values under the broad categories of "Respect for Self, Respect for Others, and Citizenship". The Values Rule urged K-12 instruction in the values concepts, and opportunities for students to practice the values. This rule urged local school systems to develop a plan for implementing values education, including materials and strategies to be used. It provided an impetus for many schools to adopt approaches to teaching values and social skills to address various aspects of "respect for self", "respect for others", and "citizenship". Some of the programs, like drug awareness, health classes, citizenship, and civics, already existed; others were added as the need arose.

In 1995, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education and the Georgia Humanities Council felt the time was right for a statewide conference on character education. The conference was held in early 1996, and attracted over 300 educators from around the state. Featured speakers and practitioners provided a very broad look at approaches to character education. In June of 1996, the Georgia Humanities Council announced an initiative inviting grant applications for community-based pilot programs in character education, granting approximately $170,000 for 12 projects the first year.

The next major development to further enhance the statewide climate for character education in Georgia took place through state legislation. The General Assembly formally adopted the terminology of "character education" and trimmed the list of 37 values to 27 character traits (See appendix A). In August of 1997, the Georgia Department of Education issued the *Values and Character Education Implementation*

Guide, which significantly updated the previous *Values Guide* of 1991. The new *Guide* defined key concepts in character education and clarified definitions of the character traits outlined. Implementation of a character education program was still optional for local boards, but this was about to change.

In conjunction with senate legislation addressing bullying, the *Improved Student Learning and Discipline Act of 1999*, brought significant changes. While the character traits did not change, character education was no longer a local option and school boards were mandated to implement a program by the 2000-2001 school year.

Character Education is linked to discipline through the title of the act, acknowledging the relationship of character, discipline and conduct, to the learning environment. One might or could conclude that if the Georgia legislature hopes for character education to become a viable and worthy endeavor, it may be beneficial to determine where Georgia public school principals stand on the issue. The successful implementation of any innovation in a school is directly dependent upon how committed, receptive, and enthusiastic the school's principal is about the change (Bookbinder, 1992). The principals can become the catalyst and facilitators of change, provided they are convinced of the need (Chamley, Caprio, & Young, 1994).

The demoralization of society has often caused great concern. Of particular concern is the widespread lack of positive values in our youth, and the increase of discipline problems in our schools. The Legislature in Georgia has called upon the public schools to correct this ill through the implementation of a statewide character education program. Character Education is now becoming a national obsession, yet again. Presidential candidates have pledged their support for it. The Governor of Georgia has signed

legislation that mandates schools teach it. A majority of other states have already enacted some form of character education legislation. The Georgia Character Education Partnership has now been created. This national obsession is a result of concern by citizens who are worried about their communities. People are concerned about the influence of media which glorifies violence, hatred, and greed. As Theodore Roosevelt so accurately stated: "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a mena ce to society" (Lickona, 1990, p. 3).

The time has come to return to the fundamental values upon which this great nation was founded. The lawmakers of Georgia have taken a giant step. This study is needed to see if this step makes a statistically significant positive or negative difference in the behavior of the students in Georgia's public high schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions that Georgia public high school principals had about the mandated character education program and its efficacy in addressing school discipline problems. This determination was obtained by considering five research questions:

1. Do Georgia public high school principals view character education as a legitimate function of the school?
2. Do Georgia public high school principals view character education as an effective deterrent to high school discipline problems and school violence?
3. Does a relationship exist between certain personal and professional characteristics of Georgia public high school principals and the amount of effort and support they are willing to give to the character education program?

4. What is the level of acceptance that Georgia public high school principals have for the principles of the mandated character education program?
5. What level of training do Georgia public high school principals have in character education?

Significance of the Study

The public high school principal has to be its educational leader. He/she is the critical change agent within the school, and a major factor in the establishment of a climate of innovation. The principal, by positional power, has the ability and responsibility for implementing change within the constraints of law and school board policy. Positional power assures that the principal's proposals will be heard and discussed (Lipham, 1981).

The Values Education Commission in the state of Maryland discovered that a school's administrators were the single most important factor in achieving a successful character education program (Irwin, 1988). If principals are committed, then teachers tend to be more inclined to infuse character education into the curriculum. The degree of success which character education will attain depends primarily on the principal's level of commitment to character education.

The successful implementation of character education also depends upon the principal's ability to build consensus among the school's and communit y's various interest groups. Education, civic, business, and religious leaders have to come together and support character education if it is to be successful (Harris & Hoyle, 1990). Educational programs have a much higher probability of success if those affected by the change have an interest in it. If Georgia is serious about character education making a

positive difference, then it is crucial to examine the existence of a commitment to character education by the principals and their motivation to implement the will of the citizens and legislature of Georgia. This study was an effort to determine, in qualitative and quantitive terms, the commitment to this critically needed and state mandated character education initiative.

Constraints on the Study

1. This study is limited to Georgia public high schools principals.
    a. Private or parochial school principals were not included in this study.
    b. Charter school principals were not included in this study.
    c. Alternative school principals were not included in this study.
    d. Middle and elementary school principals were not included in this study.
    e. Vocational and non-traditional high school principals were not included in this study.
2. This study was limited to responses and individual perceptions of those Georgia high school principals responding to the survey. The resulting conclusions can be generalized only to Georgia public high schools, although the pattern may be generalizable to other states.
3. Time was a factor of limitation in the study because of turnover in principal positions.

Definition of terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

- Character Education is the teaching of predetermined pro-social traits to a society's young.
- Values are those beliefs that a homogenous group of people hold in high regard or esteem.
- Morals are standards of human behavior that a society deems to be appropriate.
- Moral agent is the entity that serves to transmit community held values from one generation to the next.
- High school principal is the chief administrative officer of a school encompassing grades nine through twelve or ten through twelve.
- Georgia public high school is defined to be a school consisting of grade levels nine through twelve or ten through twelve. The school is supported by public funds and offers a comprehensive program that includes a full range of curricular and extracurricular activities such as band, athletics, etc. The second part of the definition is designed to limit the study to traditional high schools. It is this researcher's belief that including non-traditional high schools, such as alternative schools, vocational schools, night schools, magnet schools, etc., would not represent the targeted population as well as a study of only traditional high schools.

Organization of the Report

This report consists of five chapters followed by a list of references. Chapter one is an overview of the study. A review of related literature makes up chapter two. Chapter three describes the setting design, and conduct of the study. A presentation of the findings is in chapter four. Chapter five is conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further research, followed by a few final words from the researcher.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

It is essential that the researcher survey the literature for other research studies and authoritative writings related to the problem under investigation (Turney & Robb, 1971). A review of pertinent literature must be included in order for the study to be of value to future researchers, and this chapter includes a comprehensive examination of the literature relevant to character education. The chapter is divided by the following seven topics:

- the concept of character education
- the history of character education in America
- the character education controversy
- basic premises and principles of character education
- support for character education
- approaches to character education
- the role of the school principal in character education

Concept of Character Education

Teaching is a moral act (Greer & Ryan, 1989). Teaching is a part of the moral message transmitted by a teacher to a child, and the school is the social agency that organizes such transmission. The moral message contained in the act of teaching is only a part of the values that teachers and schools convey to the students. The teaching of values cannot be avoided, and as schools encompass a large part of most children's lives, the values transmitted by schools are a large part of the cultural heritage that is passed down from one generation to the next (Huffman, 1994).

Character education is a broad term used to describe society's attempt to transmit and instill values from one generation to the next. The church, the family, and the schools have all been utilized as agents for this important, but often tumultuous, venture. Traditional values are similar from one culture to the next. The values of respect for others, keeping promises, honesty, and putting forth one's best efforts are common among cultures on every continent, and there is an attempt by the adult generation to impose these values on the young (Lewis, 1998). Every society has members whose actions do not uphold these traditional values. However, if society consisted mostly of members who were dishonest, did not keep promises, did not help others in need, and ignored the other traditional values, the society would not function well (Lockwood, 1997).

There have been numerous attempts to identify the personality traits that constitute good character. One such effort was the "Children's Morality Code" published in 1917 by William Hutchins. The "Children's Morality Code" sought to address not only matters of moral development but matters of physical and mental well being. These 'ten laws of

right living" included "self control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self -reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork" (McClellan, 1992, p. 52). Christenson made a similar effort to outline those traits and values which he felt would win acceptance among a majority of concerned persons, irregardless of their religious, political, or socio-economic position. This list of "values we can all accept" includes "self -discipline, being trustworthy, telling the truth, being honest, doing work well, personal courage, using honorable means, good sportsmanship, respect for the law, and respect for democratic values (Christenson, 1977, p. 738). Individual and state educational entities have also endeavored to enumerate the common core values which would be appropriate for inclusion into the classroom experience.

Why doesn't the "school society" induce these values by the very demands it makes on its members? The society of the school is a dependent one (Kirschenbaum, 1995). A child does not live with the other children in school, but spends only part of each day there. Therefore, it is easy for children to escape helping others in need, easy to escape the consequences of dishonesty and of breaking promises (Kilpatrick, 1992). As a result, their values can become biased in the direction found in all dependent societies: collusion in cheating, norms against working hard, and lack of responsibilities for their actions (Coleman, 1991). Since the school society has mostly individualistic goals of individual achievement and few common goals, the values of helping one another, of contributing to a joint effort, and of respect for others have little means for encouragement.

Our schools are experiencing a moral crisis: students today are having a hard time telling the difference between right and wrong. Some prominent examples of the ethical erosion are: the high prevalence of cheating in schools (7 out of 10 students admit to

cheating on exams), the increasing number of children arrested for murder, the high number of teens who contract sexually transmitted diseases, and the abundance of teen pregnancies (Gardner, 1985).

There are many probable reasons and excuses for this erosion. Some cite parents who are too lenient or not around to discipline their children. (McClellan, 1992). Others blame bad examples set by teachers (Lockwood, 1997). Society as a whole can be at fault. The real question, however, is what can be done about it? A return to teaching traditional values in our schools is a part of the solution (Lickona, 1991). Character education is concerned with the everlasting impression made on students and affects the manner in which they respond to moral issues and dilemmas. We need a concerted effort for character education across all facets of society. Only then will it be possible for wisdom and virtue to be passed from one generation to the next.

Brief History of Character Education in America

Since ancient times, wise men have known the crucial importance of ethics and ethical instruction for individuals and society (Nucci, 1989). Aristotle taught that the fate of empires depends upon the education of youth (Delattre & Russell, 1993). Down through history, education has had two main goals: to help people become knowledgeable and to help them become good (Lickona, 1993).

From the colonial period through the first part of the 20th century, developing good character in young people was an essential part of the educational mission in America (Leming, 1993). The effort to make students virtuous was carried out in a deliberate and straightforward manner. Colonial schools were established to teach children to read so that they could read the Bible and learn religious principles and values. Character

development of young people was closely tied to the moral teachings of the dominant religious group in the community (McClellan, 1992). Values were transmitted by schools as well as by families, communities, and religious institutions. This same tradition continued during the 19th century when McGuffey's Readers became the most widely used schoolbooks throughout the United States. The Readers were full of Biblical stories and others moral lessons. Moral instruction had been placed in schools to assist the church in insuring the salvation of youth (Likona, 1990).

With the continuous influx of immigrants, and the westward expansion, the need for schools to insure social control arose (Antell, et al, 1992). The family, as an economic unit, began to gradually erode and parents began to worry about sending children outside the family as they approached adulthood. The wilderness and the frontier proved to be inadequate to provide the constraints that had previously held society together. Education was called upon to unify an increasingly ethnically and socially diverse population (McClellan, 1992). The schools became a place where immigrants were to be socialized into a common national culture (Antell, et al, 1992). This point of view was manifest in the work of Horace Mann and the rise of the common school (Leming, 1993). Along with the culture normalization of immigrants, the common schools were also given the responsibility of teaching morals. The American people believed that developing internalized moral restraints was essential if youth were to develop into diligent workers, responsible citizens, and virtuous men and women (Hofstadter, 1974).

The first three decades of the twentieth century were a time of fast paced technological change, increasing immigration and urbanization, punctuated by disturbing social and moral changes as typified by the "Roaring Twenties." The American people

once again turned to the schools to focus on the character education of youth. The schools utilized elaborate codes of conduct and group activities in clubs as the primary means to teach character (McClellan, 1992). A widely used code of conduct was the "Children's Morality Code" that emphasized "ten laws of right living": self control, good health, kindness, sportsmanship, self-reliance, duty, reliability, truth, good workmanship, and teamwork (McClellan, 1992, p. 57). Schools attempted to integrate such codes into all aspects of school life. Clubs were created to provide the students with the opportunity to practice the virtues in the codes. In contrast, a European philosophy known as logical positivism was beginning to get a foothold at many American universities. Logical positivists believed that a fundamental difference existed between fact and value. A person's values were a statement of opinion rather than that of fact. Consequently, values were more of an individual concern and less of a societal concern (Lickona, 1990).

The mid-1930's and 1940's were a time of intense effort with regard to character education. A number of books to assist teachers in the education of character were published throughout the 1930's. McClellan suggests that character education was transformed by the times: "Both the Second World War and the early stages of the cold war seemed to emphasize the importance of character, and schools offered a rich variety of activities to promote moral and civic growth" (McClellan, 1992, p.79). This era had some lasting influence. Character education innovations, such as homerooms, student clubs, and conduct/citizenship grades on report cards have persisted through the years.

The decade of the fifties is often labeled as a time of tranquility and prosperity with an abnormal fear of communism. The life adjustment education movement overshadowed character education (McClellan, 1992). Teachers, however, were expected to teach

traditional American values directly. Inculcation was an acceptable word and method, and moral education was part of the curriculum (DeRoche & Williams, 1998). The daily life of the school included patriotic assemblies, morning prayers, citizenship recognition ceremonies, and atomic bomb protection drills (Leming, 1993). The majority of students displayed respect toward authority (McClellan, 1992). Under the surface, changes were taking place. There was a growing tendency for Americans to draw distinctions between matters of the private realm and matters of the public realm. An increasing number of Americans were beginning to think of morals, values, ethics, and the building of a child's character as personal and private matters. They viewed character education as a responsibility of the home and church rather than the school (McClellan, 1992). There was a sense that everything was relative, situational, and personal. The teachers and schools were gradually moving away from their traditional role as moral educators of the young. The Supreme Court ruled on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock Central High School. Then there was Sputnik, which led to national concern about the preparation of students in science and mathematics. This concern triggered the first major effort to provide federal aid to K-12 schools through the 1958 National Defense Education Act. "Content" was becoming the emphasis of the schools, rather than character (Leming, 1993).

The 1960's have been referred to as "days of rage". The country reacted to the Beatles, the Berlin Wall, and the Bay of Pigs along with the emotional stress created from the Cuban Missile Crisis, civil rights marches, the counterculture mentality, the assassination of three of the decade's leaders, and the Vietnam War. As numerous court cases emphasized the rights of the individual, the public school's role as moral agent was

further undermined. The retreat from character education was rapid. In *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), the United States Supreme Court ruled that a New York program that allowed teachers to begin classes with a nondenominational prayer was unconstitutional (Alexander, 1980). In the 1963 *Schempp* case, the Court ruled against devotional Bible reading in public schools. Subsequent federal cases served to reaffirm the strict Constitutional barriers between church and state (Alexander, 1980).

Another factor that negatively impacted the public schools' direct teaching of pro-social character traits and values was "personalism". "Personalism" contended that the autonomy of the individuals that made up society is more important than the society as a whole. As a result, a greater degree of emphasis on the interests of the individual emerged. "Look out for number one" and "if it feels good, do it" became the catch phrases of the era. While "personalism" did much to counter bias, bigotry, and inequity in society, it also "delegitimized moral authority, eroded belief in objective norms, turned people inward toward self-fulfillment, weakened social commitments, and fueled the socially destabilizing sexual revolution" (Lickona, 1993, p. 6).

Teachers and principals were introduced to programmed learning, ungraded schools, open education, and a revival of Piaget's theories (Lickona, 1993). There was a rise in negative student behavior and teacher absenteeism. Little consensus existed regarding a common core of values that should be taught in the public schools. Kohlberg began publishing his work on cognitive moral reasoning, while Rath's (1966) Values and Teaching promoted the idea of the teacher as a value-neutral facilitator, helping students clarify their own values. Attempting to be particularly attentive to the sensibilities of the day toward approaches that upheld indoctrination, inculcation, and moralizing, these

models avoided the traditional virtue centered approach. Instead, a greater emphasis was placed on the cognitive process used in moral decision making that stressed the freedom and autonomy of the individual.

The 1970's can be labeled as a decade of continuing distrust of governmental authority and anyone over 30. The nation was faced with Watergate, *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Beatles breakup, and Elvis Presley's death, along with the POW/MIA issue, Kent State, U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, in addition to Three Mile Island and the hostages in Iran. Educators dealt with desegregation and busing issues as they were criticized by writers such as Ivan Illich (Deschooling Society), Charles Silverman (Crisis in the Classroom), Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner (Teaching as a Subversive Activity), and William Glasser (Schools Without Failure) (McClellan, 1992). The "back to the basics" movement began, and teachers became dispensers of information, focused less on moral matters. However, the Values Clarification movement did finally emerge as Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum's (1972) book Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students sold an unprecedented 600,000 copies (Kirschenbaum, 1992).

During the 1980's, the public learned about a new virus, AIDS, the "greenhouse effect", and personal computers. The Moral Majority defined itself, and single-parent families made up more than 27% of households with children (McClellan, 1992). The Supreme Court declared the censorship of student newspapers by school officials to be legal. Teachers were introduced to cooperative learning, and administrators were faced with restructuring. School-business partnerships began to take hold. National reports pointed to a crisis in the schools and the nation's inability to compete in world markets

(Leming, 1993). The public continued to express its interest in moral education. Politicians reintroduced the word "character" to the public, affirming that character formation, socialization, and the teaching of traditional American values was a proper role for schools (Lickona, 1993). Character education was reintroduced using less intrusive means. Values clarification and value analysis approaches were utilized. These, too, came under attack as the conservative religious groups felt that such teachings constituted the tenets of a religion known as Secular Humanism and objected to their children being exposed to it (Goldberg, 1987).

In 1986, U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett, made a concerted effort to put character education back into the public schools. In a speech addressing the Manhattan Institute, Bennett declared:

> We can agree on the basic traits of character we want our children to have and our schools to develop. If we want our children to possess the traits of character that we most admire, we need to teach them what those traits are (Benninga, 1991, p. 131).

Thus, the federal initiative of character education began. National and state political and educational leaders see this as a time when public schools must get back to the business of educating character. Much of the American public is appalled by the growing amorality present in public schools. They blame the schools for the growing incivility among youth. They point to alarming rates in teen suicide, crime, drug use, and indiscriminate violence. They charge that the public schools are doing little to address students' individual ethical responsibilities. They call for a renewed commitment to character education, reasoning that if the public schools do not provide the guidance necessary for children to learn ethical conduct, then the students may look elsewhere for their values. The absence of such instruction may ultimately mean that young people will

acquire their values by way of television, advertising, gangs, the drug culture, or other questionable means (Hess & Shablak, 1990)

The 90's was a decade ready and willing to embrace character education. The public had come to appreciate the importance of youth learning about human achievements, ethical principles, and the moral values that underpin democratic, civilized life (DeRoche & Williams, 1998). President Bill Clinton and Secretary of Education Richard Riley both supported and believed that character education should be actively taught in our schools. In a 1994 speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, President Clinton stated that,

> Every one of us, every parent, every teacher, every person, has to find a way to reach these kids before it's too late. We must help to insure, for the next generation of children, the values that were given to us (Portner, 1994, p. 16).

Character education has staying power in K-12 education as America enters into the 21st century. The best opportunity for children to learn pro-social and civic values is before high school graduation. Character education has swelling support from the American public. It continues to be endorsed by major educational associations, by some nonprofit organizations, by ecclesiastical bodies, and by political leaders.

The Character Education Controversy

In recent years, character education has had a resurgence. Character education has come to be seen as a means of addressing the problems of school violence and wanton violence in general. Character education, however, is still a subject of much debate and controversy. Rokeach (1973) inferred that the word "character" is difficult to define in an educational setting because of its close association to words such as values, ethics and morals. Irwin (1988) restated the same sentiments by claiming that any attempt to study

character education leads to the subject of values, and to address the subject of values leads to the entanglement with such terms as values, ethics and morals. Irwin (1988) attempted to provide definitions of the above stated terms by inferring that values are what is prized or held in high esteem, morals are implied standards of behavior and ethics are compatible with principles that are good for the person and for society. Irwin continued her extrapolation by linking values to attitudes (feelings or emotions toward a fact), interests (desired participation) and personality (the totality of an individual's behavioral and emotional tendencies).

Greer and Ryan (1989) agreed that for many years the term "character" was out of style in education but it is making a resounding comeback. They defined moral education as those things which schools do that affect the way students think, feel, or behave in regard to issues of right and wrong. Students who possessed character were those who had a strong ethical foundation from which to act when confronted by both minor and serious issues and dilemmas (Greer & Ryan, 1989). By virtue of America being a religious nation, most Americans derive their idea of right and wrong from religious teachings (Greer & Ryan, 1989). There exists a substantial overlap between the values of our nation's various religious denominations and the civic values necessary to maintain a democratic republic.

> The values, attitudes, and behaviors needed to form a good citizen and to sustain a democracy are usually the same ones strongly endorsed by our religions: honesty in our dealings one with the other; kindness and consideration of others; not using force to get your way. In practice, the dictates of one's religious conscience and t he precepts of democracy tend to reinforce each other (Greer & Ryan, 1989, p. 28).

Conversely, Dewey (1917) contended that matters of a spiritual nature did not have a place in school. He did assert, however, that the shaping and molding of the character of students is an important responsibility. "It is a common place of educational theory that the establishment of character is a comprehensive aim of school instruction and discipline" (Dewey, 1917, p. 402). McClusky (1958) contended that only in a utopian society can there be a truly successful approach to the moral side of the educational process. However, he did concede that the citizens of a society, in spite of their different cultural and religious beliefs, do hold some similar values and ideals.

Many educators contend that the cognitive processes practiced in moral reasoning are the same that are used in developing students' ability to adapt to new and different social circumstances. Dewey (1917) maintained that this continuous readjustment is an essential component of human growth. Mason (1950) echoed many of those same sentiments, and continued by stating American educators had to remain true to the real purpose of education which was to provide their young charges with the skills and competencies necessary for coping with and solving the problems of the present as well as the future. Students usually do not benefit from the inner conflicts they experience because they are unable to interpret moral dilemmas intellectually (Beck, 1971). Developing the capacity to reason morally is an important and necessary condition of human development.

Character education is not what it once was, or what it could be (Lickona, 1993). The exclusion of character education from the curriculum is a fundamental factor in the increased incidents of wanton violence, indifference to academics, self-destructive and sexually deviant behaviors among the nation's youth (Gardner, 1985). Some view this erosion of character education as a pandemic situation that will culminate in catastrophe

if left unchecked (Kilpatrick, 1992). To counteract the rise of wanton youth violence and indifference, education reformers have maintained that American schools must once again adopt character education strategies. London (1987) speculated that the psychosocial problems of children might be social indicators that society has largely abandoned the norms that prevailed until the end of World War II.

Gow (1989) maintained that the true aim of education is wisdom and virtue. These qualities are not just of importance to personal and social development, but they are inexplicably connected to our economic and professional development as well. The true purpose of liberal education is to cultivate minds and character, communicate and affirm ethical behavior, and to help "young people to develop the moral and intellectual discernment needed to distinguish between true and false, right and wrong, noble and base" (Gow, 1989, p. 546).

The disappearance of character education in American public schools has happened quietly but steadily since the late 1960's. The end result has been that American school children lacked the character traits and moral values necessary to be good citizens, unless they acquired them incidentally. The widespread self-destructive and antisocial behavior, in and outside of the schools, is evidence that young people are suffering from weak character training and a lack of values.

> To have good schools, it is necessary to have students with character and good values. Without a strong moral ethos, schools become unpleasant places where students are coerced through self-interest or fear of punishment. And unless they develop values such as responsibility and persistence, few children will ever become good citizens. (Greer & Ryan, 1989, p. 26).

Local school boards have a responsibility to support the teaching of democracy sustaining values. The public schools must transmit more than just cognitive knowledge. Schools must perpetuate those values that will serve to sustain a democratic society (Calabrese, 1990).

Those who supported the removal of religion and character training from the public school contended that a values neutral environment would result. In reality, however, the pro-social values that were present when religion was an integral part of the school were replaced with unsanctioned antisocial values and behaviors (Gardner, 1985). Cavazos (1990) asserted that America's moral heritage of faith in the individual and belief in a sense of justice, equality, civic virtue, and toleration will be lost unless the teaching of ethics is "reinvigorated" in American public schools. The nation's moral heritage has been undermined by the value-neutral approaches that were designed to avoid teaching white, middle class values to students who are neither white nor middle class (East, 1996). This line of thought erroneously assumed that there are no values that all Americans, regardless of race, ethical heritage, and socioeconomic status, can hold in common. In order for democracy to exist, its people must bear in mind, not just their own interest, but also the interest and well-being of others. Consequently, it seems apparent that public schools must work cooperatively with families, churches, and other social agencies to enhance the transfer of democracy sustaining values and traditions from this generation to the next.

Basic Premises and Principles of Character Education

Character education is viewed by many as an important part of a child's education. On the other hand, some claim that it is not the school's responsibility. The Character Education Partnership (1996) has made an effective case for K-12 character education based on six premises:

1. In a free and democratic society every citizen has personal and civic responsibilities as well as inalienable rights.
2. Only a virtuous people is capable of sustaining a free and democratic form of government.
3. Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning, and practice.
4. Developing good character in children is primarily the responsibility of families. It is also the shared responsibility of communities, schools, religious institutions, and youth service groups.
5. Creating civil and caring school communities is indispensable to developing good character in students and to good academic teaching and learning.
6. Effective K-12 character education:
    a. helps make schools more civil and caring communities,
    b. reduces negative student behavior such as violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, and disrespect for teacher, parents, and peers,
    c. improves academic performance, and
    d. prepares young people to be responsible citizens and productive members of society.

The need for character education is accepted by most writers in the field. However, there is no agreement on the method for providing effective character education. A wide variety of materials, techniques, and strategies are currently in use. There are a number of principles that can be used in planning character education efforts and in evaluating programs and materials. In 1995, Thomas Lickona, Eric Schaps, and Catherine Lewis met together and created a list which they entitled Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education:

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. "Character" must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school must be a caring community.
5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.
6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.
8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
9. Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.
10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.

11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students' manifest good character.

Support for Character Education

The strength of the character education movement is reflected in the increasing activities among state and federal government officials in support of character education. At a time when there is very little that the major political parties can agree on, character education has strong bipartisan support.

In 1994, both the House of Representatives and the Senate unanimously adopted a joint resolution supporting character education and designating October 16-22, 1994 as National Character Counts Week. Congress also enacted the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It contained two new sources of funds for character education. One included character education among programs authorized to receive funding for Safe and Drug Free Schools. The other authorized the Department of Education to make grants for pilot character education programs that met their specified criteria.

At the October 20, 1994 ceremony to sign the Improving America's School s Act, President Clinton called attention to the new provisions on character education and said;

> We disagree about a lot of things, but we ought to be able to agree that our schools should say people should tell the truth. They should respect themselves and each other. They ought to be good citizens, which means that we should assume responsibility . . . We ought to practice fairness and tolerance and trustworthiness. These things should be taught in our schools, and we shouldn't gag our teachers when they try to do it. We ought to applaud them instead, and I hope we will be doing more and more of that . . .

The White House also sponsored conferences in July 1994 and in May 1995 on Character-Building for a Civil and Democratic Society. The conferences brought together educators, community leaders, and representatives of national organizations to exchange ideas on how character education can most effectively be provided and how it can be spread to more school districts. President Clinton proposed, in May 1995, that an annual, nonpartisan White House conference on character development be institutionalized.

Following the President's lead, Secretary of Education Riley has spoken out frequently in favor of character education. The U.S. Department of Education administers the character education funding provisions of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. The first year it received grant proposals from 17 states. In August 1995, the Department of Education sent written guidelines to all superintendents in the United States to clarify what is permitted and what is prohibited by the Constitution with respect to religious activities in public schools. The guidelines included the following statement on character education:

> Teaching values: Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are also held by religion does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.

Character education is also being increasingly encouraged and supported by state governments through legislation, resolutions, proclamations, conferences, and the activities of state departments of education.

Approaches to Character Education

In regard to the method by which character traits and values are transmitted to students, two distinct approaches have emerged: the direct approach and the indirect approach. (Benninga, 1988). The teaching of values directly entails the presentation of a

"common core of moral imperatives" (Irwin, 1988, p. 8). The indirect approach, on the other hand, does not attempt to delineate any specific values of character traits as being more desirable than any other traits. The rational for using the direct method of character education is that students are best served by curricular environments carefully planned in advance by concerned adults (Benninga, 1991). Proponents of the indirect approach contend that young people already posses the values, though dormant, necessary for participation in society (Benninga, 1991). The direct approach of character education raises the question of what, or rather, whose values should be taught; as a result, indoctrination, which is undesirable, might result. Indirect methods of character education do not operate from a preconceived list of moral absolutes. They are value free because the adult facilitator does not attempt to be judgmental of students' values or try to impose their own.

The indirect approach of "values clarification" was intended to be a clear, concise, and easy to use model that would appeal to Americans of diverse value systems (Rath, 1966). Values clarification utilized a process by which students would examine and discuss contrived situations in an effort to bring their own values to a greater level of consciousness (Simon, et al, 1972). Value clarificationists contend that students do not benefit from having a specific set of values because not all situations require a prescribed set of values be employed. They assert that students would benefit more if they learned the process of valuing. In an era of constant change, it is important that young people develop a "positive, purposeful, enthusiastic, proud relation ship with the society in which they live" (Rath, 1966, p. 5).

Kirschenbaum (1977) argued that values clarification was an appropriate approach to be utilized by the public schools. He stated that the schools could compliment the teachings of home and church.

> The schools can play an important part too - not by teaching any particular set of values, but by teaching the valuing and decision-making skills students are going to need throughout their lives. These skills include thinking for themselves, making responsible decisions, communicating their ideas and feelings and acting upon their beliefs. The schools' job is to help educate responsible citizens of a democracy, and these valuing skills are crucial toward that end (p. 52).

Values clarification was designed to help students become more purposeful and productive by sharpening their critical thinking skills (Irwin, 1988). The teacher's role was to act as facilitator and to provide opportunities to help students apply the valuing process to already formed beliefs and behavior patterns (Simon, et al, 1972). The teacher was to stimulate thought and to help the students discover and refine their values.

Many saw a dilemma in the values clarification approach. Some kind of value system has to be in place during the development of a child's own personal and unique set of values.

> To assume that early teen-agers, especially those who come from homes almost devoid of moral training, have the judgment, experience, and perspective necessary to create the independent formation of sound value judgments is wildly optimistic. To pretend, moreover, that adolescents can theorize on moral matters from their exceedingly limited and unique experiences and that they can formulate and apply moral principles as if there were little or nothing to be learned from previous generations, is an astonishing premise (Christenson, 1977, p. 738).

Greer and Ryan (1989) contended that it was impossible for teachers to be neutral on the issue of values. Schools are value laden and character developing by their very nature. Through daily student-teacher interaction, ideas are developed, issues of right and wrong are mediated, and rules and consequences are established. As a result, teachers and

schools influence the character and values of their students whether they intend to or not (Greer & Ryan, 1989). Lickona (1991) concluded that values clarification attempted to deal with children as if they were adults and already had a sound system of values in place. There was no distinction between what one wanted to do and what one ought to do in a situation.

A second indirect method of character education is the cognitive-development approach based on Lawrence Kohlberg's model of moral development. According to Kohlberg (1966), all individuals pass sequentially through three levels of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Each of these three levels is subdivided into two stages. The pre-conventional level is characterized by the child seeking more pleasure than pain. Stage one is the obedience and punishment stage where the child conforms to avoid punishment. The personal reward stage comes next where the child enters into reciprocal arrangements with others. At the conventional level, the child strives for good relations with others by conforming to expectations. Stage three is the good boy-nice girl stage, with stage four being the law and order stage which dictates that rules and regulations take precedence over personal values. At the post-conventional level the person realizes that certain moral percepts take precedence over manmade laws and principles. The social contract stage bases what is moral upon the rights of individuals as agreed upon by society. Stage six is the universal ethical principle stage, where decisions are made based upon conscience with regard to self-selected ideas of right and wrong.

The cognitive-development approach did make a major contribution to the field of character education as it sought to understand children's moral behavior. Lickona (1991)

stated that as children progress to successively higher stages of moral development they are, "better able to stand in the shoes of others, integrate conflicting perspectives on a moral problem, appreciate the consequences of this or that course of action and make a decision that respects the rights of all parties" (p. 24). Since it incorporated both content and process, the cognitive-development approach to character education had a greater appeal to teachers and parents than the values clarification approach.

Character education is the name given to the direct approach of teaching character. There are a number of different models and they vary widely in their goals as well as their processes. These models can be grouped into two major categories: hard-line and soft-line. Hard-line models place emphasis on absolute, immutable principles of right and wrong (Irwin, 1988). Time honored attributes such as truth, honesty, obedience, good citizenship, courage, honor, and integrity are stressed in the interest of shaping student conduct. Advocates of the hard-line approach are convinced that schools need to return to a character education approach which is virtue-centered and that a consensus on the traditional virtues is attainable. Soft-line approaches of character education place emphasis upon the affective domain and seek to stress self-esteem, altruistic attitudes, cooperation, generosity, respect for the environment, systematic decision making, and creativity (Irwin, 1988). Proponents of the soft-line approach reject the notion that children are clay that needs to be molded. Rather, they view the formation of a child's character to be interactive and largely a function of the child's own thinking and interpretation of experiences. Adult teaching should guide them toward pro-social values along with opportunities to discuss, reflect, and apply those values (Nucci, 1989).

No matter what the approach, character education must be a top priority on the education agenda. All other aspects of educational reform are destined for failure unless schools provide the young with activities that develop good character (Kilpatrick, 1993). If schools make the formation of good character a priority, many other things will fall into place.

The development of good character traits is hard work. Teachers must take their jobs and the school's academic program seriously, while offering challenging activities and providing a disciplined environment for students (Walberg & Wynne, 1989). The task of developing character and pursuing academic achievement exist concurrently and are complementary of each other (Wynne & Ryan, 1993). Effective character education requires a commitment from all teachers in a school. Teachers must become moral agents and assist in the process of teaching values to students (Ryan, 1990).

Role of the Principal in Character Education

Any program designed to be implemented in a school must have the support of the principal if it is to be successful. Character education researchers have ascertained that characteristics such as diligence, cooperativeness, politeness, tactfulness, responsiveness, good humor, and being well informed are the traits needed by the principal for the implementation of a successful character education program (Wynne, 1988).

Irwin (1988) reported that the Values Education Commission in Maryland found that the school's administrative team was central in the success of character education programs. She stated that,

> The Commission found that the principal and other building administrators were the most important factors in successful values education programs. When administrators exhibited the moral courage to demonstrate that values goals were important, teachers were motivated to build such goals into the curriculum. In

> essence the principal through dedication, knowledge, and role-modeling was pivotal in school-wide commitment to character and values education, and in the promotion of a climate amenable to instilling ethical values in youth without indoctrination of the invasion of student privacy (p.9).

Wynne and Ryan (1997) reiterated Irwin's position when they assert, "If one person in a school must be identified as critical to school efficacy, that person must be the principal" (p.184). To accomplish this end, the principal must articulate a vision for the school with regard to values, establish a "moral ethos", provide students with opportunities to practice constructive and responsible roles, and encourage community support for the school's efforts (Lickona, 1988). Consequently, it is imperative that the school's principal establish, model, and consistently enforce "high standards of respect and responsibility", otherwise the "moral ethos" of the school will be undermined and teacher effectiveness compromised (Lickona, 1993, p. 11). The key to the effectiveness of character education rests in the hands of the school principal. His or her inclination toward the potential of character education as a viable component in the curriculum will go a long way in determining whether or not schools return to their traditional role of being agents for the transfer of societal values.

Summary

Character education is the attempt to transmit and instill values from one generation to the next. Some values such as trustworthiness and honesty can be accepted by all. Every facet of society must be involved to reinforce these values. Only then will it be possible for wisdom and virtue to be passed to the next generation. Early educators in America were a crucial part of this process. For various reasons, the schools shied away from character education, but it appears we are returning to our humble beginnings.

Character education is seen as a means for improving society. Most will agree the need is there, however, there is little agreement on the methods for providing effective character education. Character education is receiving widespread support and it is making a resurgence in the schools. The principal must push this initiative for the schools to succeed in instilling values in the students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

Descriptive studies attempt to provide an account of what currently exists and can be designed to clarify the current status in regard to a particular issue. This issue can be surveyed and reported on in terms of the returned data. The researcher is then charged with the task of interpreting the data, drawing conclusions and making generalizations with recommendations (Turney & Robb, 1971). This type of study is a viable approach to examine data on Georgia public high school principals' perceptions of character education and its viability in addressing discipline problems.

Sample selection and setting

Based on data published by the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia High School Athletic Association, 252 schools were identified as traditional public high schools. The principals of those 252 schools represented the population of the study. All 252 principals comprised the sample used in the study and were sent a survey (see appendix C). 129 principals responded to the survey, making a 51% response rate.

Variables

The study of Georgia public high school principals' perceptions of character education programs included five sets of variables. They were defined as follows:

Effective – Georgia public high school principals' perception of character education as an effective means of addressing the issues of school violence and discipline.

Legitimate – Georgia public high school principals' perception of the teaching of character as a legitimate function of the public high school.

Acceptance – Georgia public high school principals' level of acceptance of the principles of character education.

Role and training – Georgia public high school principals' level of training in the principles of character education and their perceived role.

Professional – The personal and professional characteristics of Georgia public high school principals.

The "effective" variable strived to determine if Georgia public high school principals looked upon character education as being an appropriate disciplinary remediation when working with high school students.

The "legitimate" variable included what personal or professional bias was present that would preclude a principal from endorsing the teaching of pro-social character traits. The variable also included a perceived reluctance of the community and faculty to accept the teaching of pro-social character traits to public high school students.

The "acceptance" variable sought to determine how receptive the principals were to Georgia's mandated character education initiative. This variable also sought to determine if principals viewed character education as a worthwhile endeavor that would be a high priority in their school.

The "role and training" variable included the preparation principals had received in character education and the role they chose to assume in this area.

The "professional" variable included the principal's gender, age, ethnicity, educational level, undergraduate major, number of years of experience as a principal, and number of years experience as a professional educator. School demographic data was also included in this variable.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study was a modification of the survey used by R. Keith East (1996) for a similar study in South Carolina. The survey instrument incorporated three techniques. Multiple choice questions and fill in items were used to obtain personal and professional data from the principals. A Likert type scale was utilized as respondents were asked to rate statements in terms of agreement or disagreement, with each statement being followed by a section in which the responding principal could enter specific comments. The last six questions of the instrument were open ended in nature to allow the respondents the opportunity to express their views on the issues.

The survey questionnaire was validated utilizing the modified Delphi Technique (East, 1996), where the survey was sent to a panel of experts. Each panel member was polled concerning the survey instrument's clarity, conciseness, and efficiency i n obtaining the intended data. Suggestions for improvement were incorporated into the survey questionnaire. The results culminated in a survey that minimized subjective judgment and opinions, making it objective in nature.

To determine the degree of reliability of the survey instrument, the principals' responses to survey items 1 – 12 in section 2 were analyzed. A correlation analysis for the standardized variable produced a coefficient alpha of .71, a rating slightly higher than the generally accepted alpha of .70 for establishing the reliability of a survey instrument.

To facilitate the processing of the data, the items on the questionnaire were grouped according to their relevancy to the identified research questions. All items in Section 1 of the questionnaire corresponded to the personal and professional characteristics of Georgia high school principals and their schools. In Section 2, items 1 through 5 corresponded to principals' level of acceptance of the principles of character education . Items 6 through 8 in Section 2, along with items, 14, 15 and 16 in Section 3, corresponded to the variable principals' perception of the teaching of character as a legitimate function of the public school in Georgia. Items 9 through 12 in Section 2 corresponded to the principals' perception of character education as an effective means of addressing the issues of secondary school discipline. In Section 3, items 13 and 17 corresponded to principals' level of training and experience in the principles of character education as well as their perception of the principal's role in the character education initiative. Item 18 indicated the year that a character education program was implemented in their school. Item 19 provided the principals with the opportunity to make any additional comments that they deemed necessary to the survey.

Conduct of the Study

Surveys were sent to all public high school principals in Georgia and data from the returned surveys were placed on a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was entered into a data analysis system called StatGraphics. The program provided descriptive and analytical statistics.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine Georgia public high school principals' perceptions of character education. Descriptive characteristics and an analysis of the data are presented in this chapter. Specifically, data collected from the survey instrument are considered in terms of the five research questions of the study:

1. Do Georgia public high school principals view character education as a legitimate function of the school?
2. Do Georgia public high school principals view character education as an effective deterrent to high school discipline problems and school violence?
3. Does a relationship exist between certain personal and professional characteristics of Georgia public high school principals and the amount of effort and support they are willing to give the character education program?
4. What is the level of support that Georgia public high school principals have for the principles of the mandated character education program?
5. What level of training do Georgia public high school principals have in character education?

Character Education as a Legitimate

Function of the Public Schools

Georgia public high school principals' responses to survey items 6, 7, and 8 in Section 2 and items 14, 15, and 16 in Section 3 are presented in tables 1 through 6 and figures 1 through 6. The principals were asked to indicate their level of agreement to various statements related to character education. The data are followed by illustrative comments on each of the six survey items.

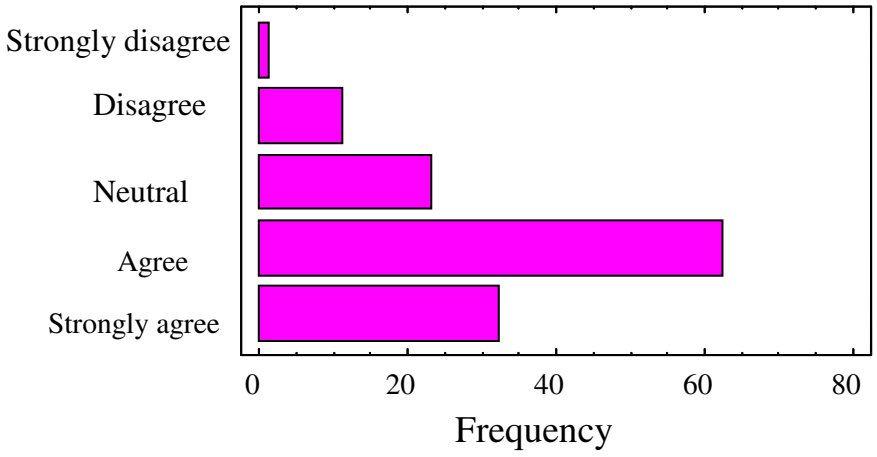

Figure 1. Question 6: There are identifiable character traits that families and communities want public high schools to teach directly to students.

Table 1: Frequencies for Question 6

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	1	0.0078	1	0.0078
Disagree	11	0.0853	12	0.0930
Neutral	23	0.1783	35	0.2713
Agree	62	0.4806	97	0.7519
Strongly agree	32	0.2481	129	1.0000

Out of 129 principals responding to the survey, 94 (72.87%) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that there are identifiable character traits which families and communities want taught in public high schools. Twenty-three (17.83%) principals were neutral on this issue, and 12 (9.30%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the comment section of this question, one of the principals stated, "They say this, but when you begin, because of various views, you have problems." Other principals commented that they received opposition from families and the community - one principal stated that, "it was difficult" because of the cultural differences in his community. Another principal implied that these principles "must be ing rained before high school".

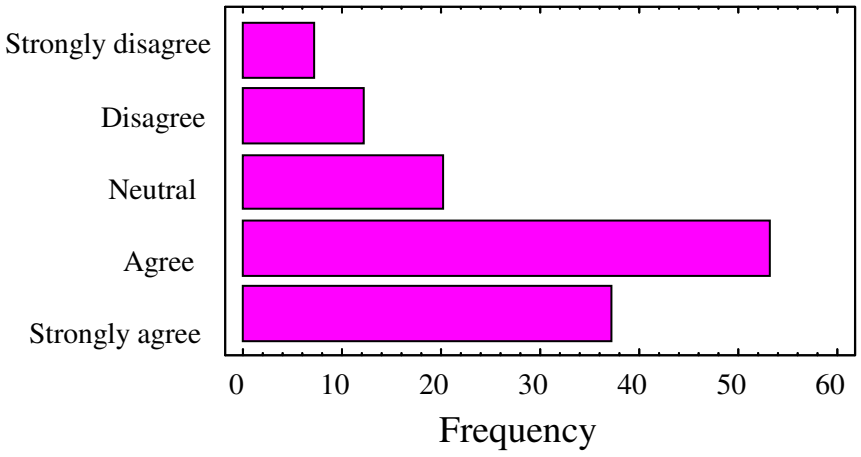

Figure 2. Question 7: I believe that the direct teaching of character traits is a legitimate function of the public schools.

Table 2: Frequencies for Question 7

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	7	0.0543	7	0.0543
Disagree	12	0.0930	19	0.1473
Neutral	20	0.1550	39	0.3023
Agree	53	0.4109	92	0.7132
Strongly agree	37	0.2868	129	1.0000

Out of the 129 principals responding to the survey, 90 (70.77%) agreed or strongly agreed that the teaching of positive character traits is a legitimate function of the public schools. On this issue, 20 (15.50%) principals were neutral and 19 (14.73%) indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the comment section of this question, one principal wrote: "You cannot teach content and skills without character being part of the process". Two other principals echoed his response by indicating character should be incorporated into the curriculum and not be a separate program. Other principals wrote that character education should be the role of the home, which the school should foster and support, but not directly teach character.

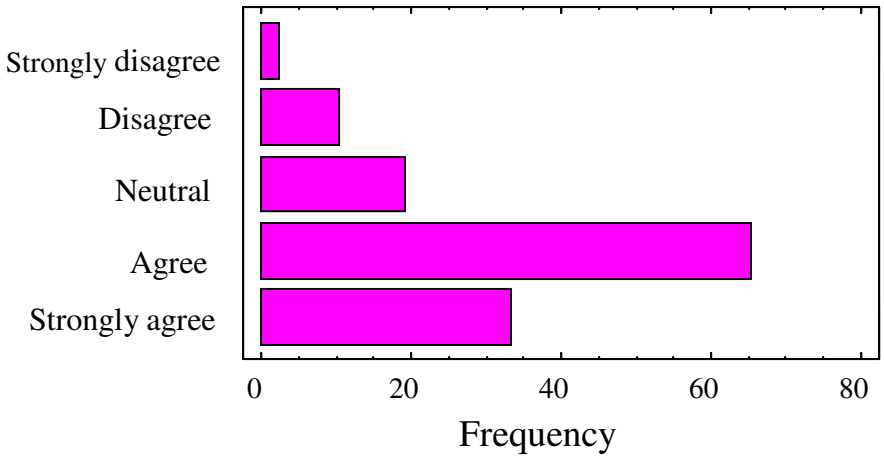

Figure 3. Question 8: The faculty and parents of the students at my public high school would support the direct teaching of positive character traits.

Table 3: Frequencies for Question 8

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	2	0.0155	2	0.0155
Disagree	10	0.0775	12	0.0930
Neutral	19	0.1473	31	0.2403
Agree	65	0.5039	96	0.7442
Strongly disagree	33	0.2558	129	1.0000

Of the 129 responding principals, 98 (75.97%) agreed or strongly agreed that a majority of their faculty and parents would support the teaching of positive character traits. On this issue, 19 (14.73%) were neutral and 12 (9.30%) indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the comment section of this question, most principals expressed positive support. Some comments were "most here are open to it", "only experienced positive feedback regarding this", and "very supportive". One principal commented: "The faculty does to some extent. I don't know about the parents". One principal indicted that he faces mixed reactions on this issue.

Table 4: Frequencies for Question 14: List those "Character traits" which you feel public high schools should actively teach to students.

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
accepting others	2	0.0041	2	0.0041
all the mandated traits	15	0.0310	17	0.0351
ambition	1	0.0021	18	0.0372
appropriateness	1	0.0021	19	0.0393
attitude	1	0.0021	20	0.0413
blank	11	0.0227	31	0.0640
caring	2	0.0041	33	0.0682
charity	1	0.0021	34	0.0702
cheerfulness	1	0.0021	35	0.0723
citizenship	30	0.0620	65	0.1343
civic virtue	4	0.0083	69	0.1426
cleanliness	1	0.0021	70	0.1446
commitment	3	0.0062	73	0.1508
compassion	27	0.0558	100	0.2066
conservation	1	0.0021	101	0.2087
cooperation	6	0.0124	107	0.2211
courage	4	0.0083	111	0.2293
courtesy	9	0.0186	120	0.2479
creativity	1	0.0021	121	0.2500
dedication	2	0.0041	123	0 .2541
diligence	1	0.0021	124	0.2562
dependability	3	0.0062	127	0.2624
determination	1	0.0021	128	0.2645
diligence	2	0.0041	130	0.2686
equality	1	0.0021	131	0.2707

(Continued)

Table 4: Frequencies for Question 14 (continued)

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
excellence	1	0.0021	132	0.2727
fairness	16	0.0331	148	0.3058
faithfulness	1	0.0021	149	0.3079
family values	4	0.0083	153	0.3161
forgiveness	1	0.0021	154	0.318
generosity	1	0.0021	155	0.3202
gratitude	3	0.0062	158	0.3264
hard work	2	0.0041	160	0.3306
honesty	79	0.1632	239	0.4938
honor	1	0.0021	240	0.4959
humility	2	0.0041	242	0.5000
integrity	17	0.0351	259	0.5351
justice	1	0.0021	260	0.5372
kindness	8	0.0165	268	0.5537
leadership	1	0.0021	269	0.5558
love	2	0.0041	271	0.5599
loyalty	8	0.0165	279	0.5764
morals	1	0.0021	280	0.5785
none	1	0.0021	281	0.5806
optimistic	1	0.0021	282	0.5826
overall character	1	0.0021	283	0.5847
patience	5	0.0103	288	0.5950
perseverance	4	0.0083	292	0.6033
persistence	1	0.0021	293	0.6054
politeness	1	0.0021	294	0.6074
promptness	1	0.0021	295	0.6095
pride	6	0.0124	301	0.6219
punctuality	5	0.0103	306	0.6322
reliability	1	0.0021	307	0.6343
respect	75	0.1550	382	0.7893

(Continued)

Table 4: Frequencies for Question 14 (continued)

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
responsibility	40	0.0826	422	0.8719
school pride	1	0.0021	423	0.8740
self discipline	5	0.0103	428	0.8843
self respect	1	0.0021	429	0.8864
self-control	6	0.0124	435	0.8988
self-esteem	1	0.0021	436	0.9008
self-worth	1	0.0021	437	0.9029
selflessness	1	0.0021	438	0.9050
service	1	0.0021	439	0.9070
sportsmanship	1	0.0021	440	0.9091
thoughtfulness	1	0.0021	441	0.9112
tolerance	13	0.0269	454	0.9380
trustworthiness	22	0.0455	476	0.9835
truthfulness	2	0.0041	478	0.9876
virtue	1	0.0021	479	0.9897
work ethics	5	0.0103	484	1.0000

On the 129 surveys returned, 484 traits were listed which the principals felt the high schools should actively teach students. There were 72 unique responses, of which "honesty" was mentioned most often with 79 responses. "Respect" was a close second with 75 responses. Other popular responses were: "responsibility" with 40, "citizenship" with 30, "compassion" with 27, and trustworthiness" with 22. Other traits that received more than 20 responses included: "integrity", "fairness", and "tolerance". Eleven principals chose to leave this question blank and 15 principals stated that they wanted to include all the character traits listed by the Georgia Department of Education.

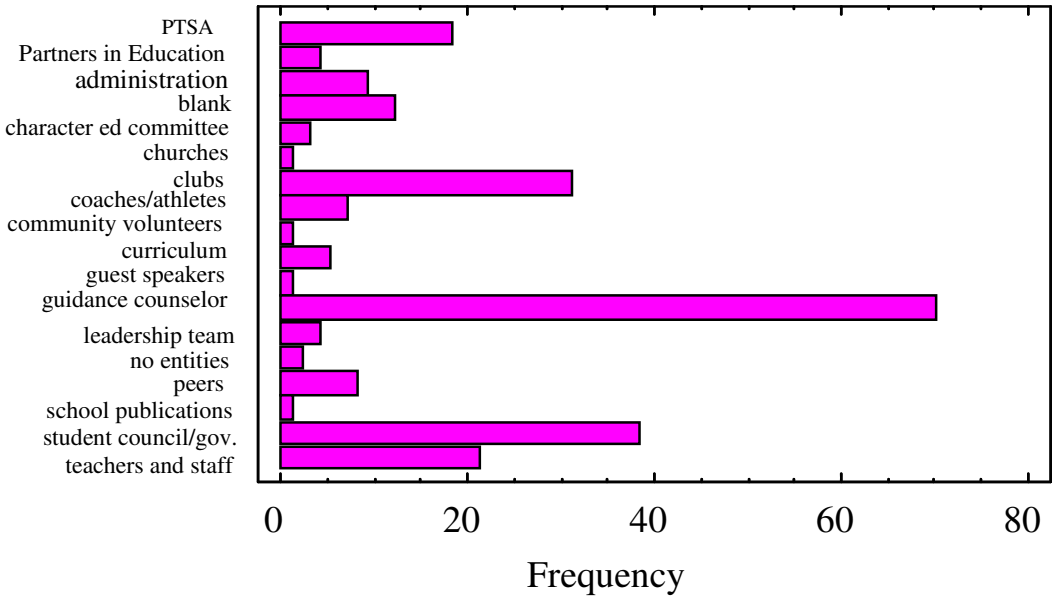

Figure 4. Question 15: List one or two of the entities (i.e. PTSA, guidance dept., student organizations) within your school community that are most likely to assist in the effective implementation of a program of character education.

Table 5: Frequencies for Question 15

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
PTSA	18	0.0763	18	0.0763
Partners in Education	4	0.0169	22	0.0932
administration	9	0.0381	31	0.1314
blank	12	0.0508	43	0.1822
character ed committee	3	0.0127	46	0.1949
churches	1	0.0042	47	0.1992
clubs	31	0.1314	78	0.3305
coaches/athletes	7	0.0297	85	0.3602
community volunteers	1	0.0042	86	0.3644
curriculum	5	0.0212	91	0.3856
guest speakers	1	0.0042	92	0.3898
guidance counselor	70	0.2966	162	0.6864
leadership team	4	0.0169	166	0.7034
no entities	2	0.0085	168	0.7119
peers	8	0.0339	176	0.7458
school publications	1	0.0042	177	0.7500
student council/gov.	38	0.1610	215	0.9110
teachers and staff	21	0.0890	236	1.0000

From 129 respondents, the most mentioned entity likely to assist in the implementation of a character education program was "guidance department" which was mentioned 70 times. "Student council/government" was the second most mentioned with 38 responses and "clubs" was a close third at 31. Oth er entities with more than 10 responses were "teachers and staff" with 21 and "PTSA" with 18. Twelve principals left this item blank, and two wrote "none". Some of the other responses were "administration" with nine, "peers" with eight, and "coaches/athlet es" with seven.

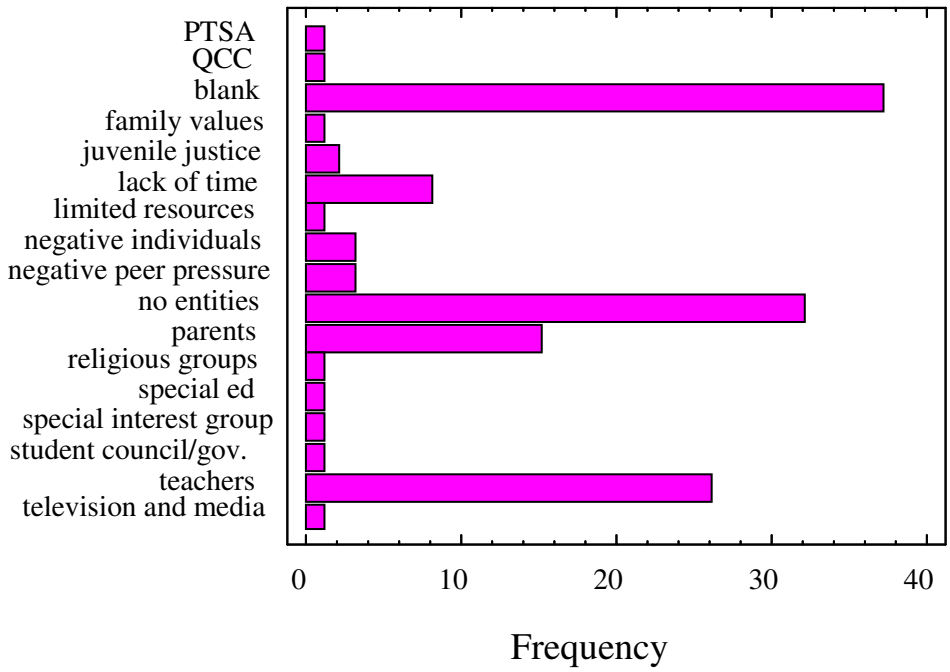

Figure 5. Question 16: List one or two of the entities within your school community that are most likely to hinder the effective implementation of a program of character education.

Table 6: Frequencies for Question 16

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
PTSA	1	0.0074	1	0.0074
QCC	1	0.0074	2	0.0148
blank	37	0.2741	39	0.2889
family values	1	0.0074	40	0.2963
juvenile justice	2	0.0148	42	0.3111
lack of time	8	0.0593	50	0.3704
limited resources	1	0.0074	51	0.3778
negative individuals	3	0.0222	54	0.4000
negative peer pressure	3	0.0222	57	0.4222
no entities	32	0.2370	89	0.6593
parents	15	0.1111	104	0.7704
religious groups	1	0.0074	105	0.7778
special ed	1	0.0074	106	0.7852
special interest group	1	0.0074	107	0.7926
student council/gov.	1	0.0074	108	0.8000
teachers	26	0.1926	134	0.9926
television and media	1	0.0074	135	1.0000

Of the 129 respondents, 32 indicated that there were no entities in their school community which would hinder the implementation of a character education program, and 37 principals left this item blank. The most mentioned entity perceived to hinder implementation of character education was "teachers" with 26 responses. "Parents" was the second most mentioned hindrance category at 15, and "lack of time" received 8 responses.

Character Education as an Effective Deterrent to

High School Discipline Problems and School Violence

Georgia public high school principals' responses to survey items 9, 10, 11 and 12 in Section 2 are presented. The data are presented in tables 7 through 10 and is followed by illustrative comments on each of the four survey items.

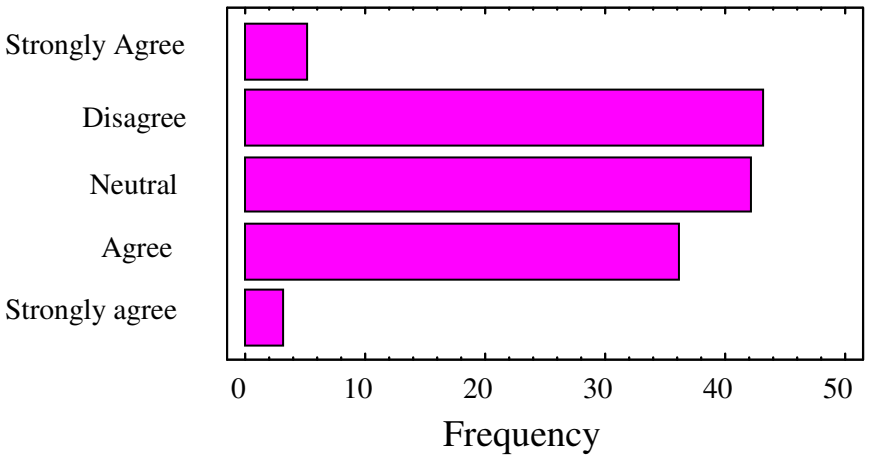

Figure 6. Question 9: Imposing a character education program in Georgia public high schools has been effective in addressing high school students' lack of discipline, civility, and respect.

Table 7: Frequencies for Question 9

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	5	0.0388	5	0.0388
Disagree	43	0.3333	48	0.3721
Neutral	42	0.3256	90	0.6977
Agree	36	0.2791	126	0.9767
Strongly agree	3	0.0233	129	1.0000

Of the 129 respondents, 39 (30.24%) principals agreed or strongly agreed that character education has been effective in addressing high school students' lack of discipline, civility, and respect. Forty-two (32.56%) were neutral on this issue, and 48 (47.21%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the comment section of this question, some principals noted that character education was "not effective" and that "it may work" in some schools, but have not seen any changes in their own school. One principal wrote, "I see it as reinforcing those who are decent, and a waste of time for those who already have intrinsic non-values". Another respondent indicated that it has helped, stating "it is all about expectations at home and at school".

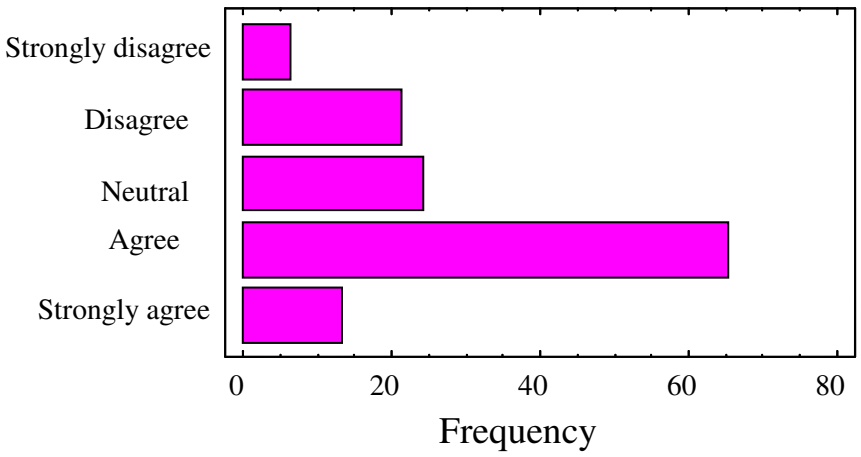

Figure 7. Question 10: Schools can make an important contribution to the development of positive character traits regardless of whether those traits are being reinforced at home.

Table 8: Frequencies for Question 10

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	6	0.0465	6	0.0465
Disagree	21	0.1628	27	0.2093
Neutral	24	0.1860	51	0.3953
Agree	65	0.5039	116	0.8992
Strongly agree	13	0.1008	129	1.0000

Of the 129 respondents, 78 (60.47%) agree or strongly agree that schools can make an important contribution to the development of positive character traits regardless of whether those traits are being reinforced at home. Neutral responses were indicated by 24 (18.60%) principals and 27 (20.93%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue.

Two principals emphatically noted that "we make a difference". Three other respondents replied that the home and school must work together to be effective. One principal felt that the schools were making a "mi nor but important difference".

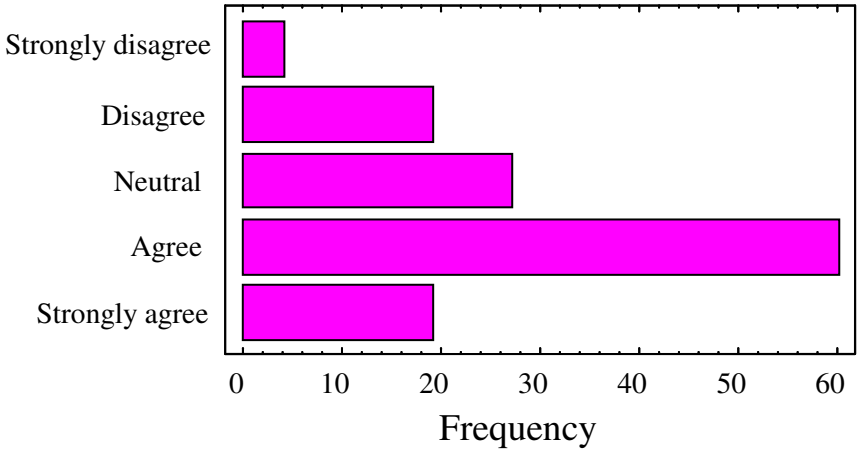

Figure 8. Question 11: I believe that the direct teaching of positive character traits is an effective means of addressing the problems public high schools are experiencing with violence, vandalism, and other discipline matters.

Table 9: Frequencies for Question 11

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	4	0.0310	4	0.0310
Disagree	19	0.1473	23	0.1783
Neutral	27	0.2093	50	0.3876
Agree	60	0.4651	110	0.8527
Strongly agree	19	0.1473	129	1.0000

Of the 129 responding principals, 79 (61.24%) agreed or strongly agreed that the direct teaching of positive character traits is an effective means of addressing violence, vandalism, and other discipline matters. Twenty-seven (20.93%) were neutral, and 23 (17.83%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Of the respondents that commented on this question, most agreed that it does make a difference, but that more must be done. One principal disagreed on the basis that, ‘it is not effective in and of itself’.

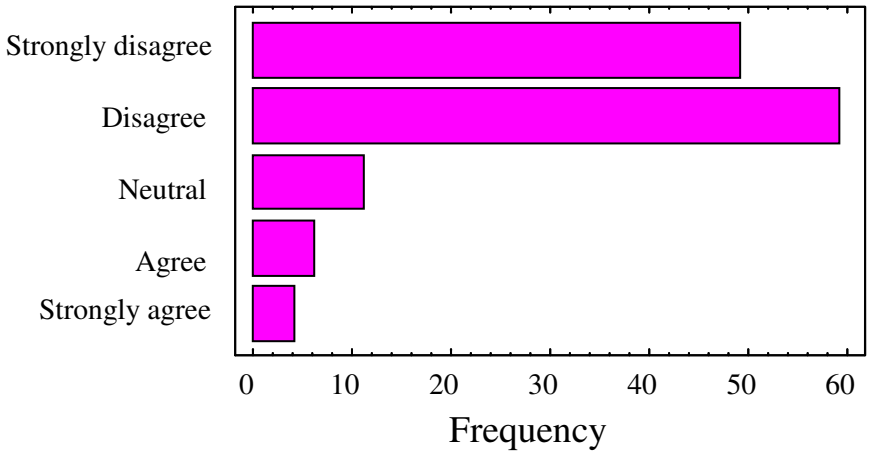

Figure 9. Question 12: A character education program is not needed in the public high school because the students are relatively respectful and disciplined.

Table 10: Frequencies for Question 12

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	49	0.3798	49	0.3798
Disagree	59	0.4574	108	0.8372
Neutral	11	0.0853	119	0.9225
Agree	6	0.0465	125	0.9690
Strongly agree	4	0.0310	129	1.0000

Only 10 (7.75%) of the 129 respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that character education is not needed in the public schools because students are relatively respectful and disciplined. Eleven (8.53%) were neutral, and an overwhelming 108 (83.72%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that character education is not needed.

Of the responding principals, only two choose to comment on this question. One said, "There is no evidence that a character ed. program improves discipline", and the other wanted to know where he could find respectful and disciplined students.

Relationships Between Support for Character Education and Certain Personal and Professional Characteristics

In this section, the Georgia public high school principals' support of character education was examined. The level of support was determined by an analysis of the sum of survey items 1 through 8. The point values could range from 8 (indicating very low support) to 40 (indicating very high support). The scores for survey item 4 were reversed to maintain the association between high point values and high levels of support. This level of support score was correlated to personal information, as well as the school demographic information provided by the principals in section 1 of the survey. The one-way ANOVA was utilized in the analysis to compare the means of the different levels; the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the medians of the different levels. The results are presented in the following tables with illustrative comments.

The one-way analysis of variance was primarily intended to compare the means of the different levels of support, listed under the "average" column. The ANOVA tables delineated the variance of acceptance into two components: a between-groups component and a within-groups component. The F-ratio was determined by the ratio of the between-group estimate to the within-group estimate. The standard skewness and standard kurtosis were outside the accepted range of -2 to 2 for most of the variables, which indicated some significant non-normality in the data. This violated one of the basic assumptions of the

one-way ANOVA that the data came from a normal distribution. To compensate for this issue, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the medians instead of the means.

The Kruskal-Wallis test examined the null hypothesis that the medians of support within each of the levels were the same. The data from all the levels were combined and ranked from smallest to largest. The average rank was then computed for the data at each level. In both cases, one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis, the p-value was tested at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 11: Frequencies for Support Value of Character Education

Value	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
9	1	0.0078	1	0.0078
10	1	0.0078	2	0.0156
15	1	0.0078	3	0.0234
16	1	0.0078	4	0.0313
17	1	0.0078	5	0.0391
19	1	0.0078	6	0.0469
25	2	0.0156	8	0.0625
26	3	0.0234	11	0.0859
27	3	0.0234	14	0.1094
28	7	0.0547	21	0.1641
29	9	0.0703	30	0.2344
30	7	0.0547	37	0.2891
31	6	0.0469	43	0.3359
32	13	0.1016	56	0.4375
33	8	0.0625	64	0.5000

(Continued)

Table 11: Frequencies for Support Value of Character Education (continued)

Value	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
34	15	0.1172	79	0.6172
35	11	0.0859	90	0.7031
36	10	0.0781	100	0.7813
37	8	0.0625	108	0.8438
38	8	0.0625	116	0.9063
39	6	0.0469	122	0.9531
40	6	0.0469	128	1.0000

This table shows the number of times each value of support occurred, as well as percentages and cumulative statistics. The values are skewed toward the upper end, with 76.56% of the values in the 30-40 range, indicating very high support. The 25-30 range included 18.75% of the values and 4.67% of the values were below 20.

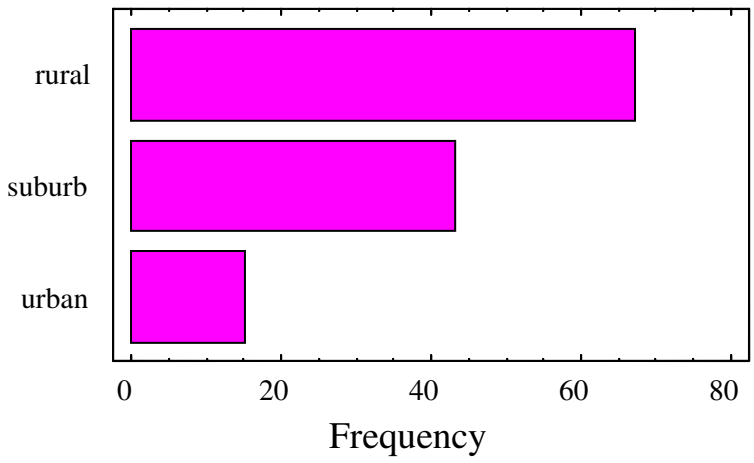

Figure 10. Demographics of Respondents

Table 12: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Demographics of Respondents

Demographics	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
rural	67	32.7761	29.6309	5.44343	-6.06385	8.95384
suburb	43	31.8372	26.091	5.10802	-3.64425	4.37773
urban	14	33.5714	62.1099	7.88098	-3.57714	4.74623
Total	124	32.5403	31.6975	5.63006	-7.83239	10.1398

Table 13: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Demographics of Respondents

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	39.8676	2	19.9338	0.63	0.5370
Within groups	3858.93	121	31.892		
Total (Corr.)	3898.8	123			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than .05, there is not a statistically significant difference between the mean support from one level of demographics to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 14: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Demographics of Respondents

Demographics	Sample Size	Average Rank
rural	67	63.9925
suburb	43	55.0698
urban	14	78.1786

Test statistic = 4.64386 p-Value = 0.0980841

Since the p-value was greater than, or equal to, 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

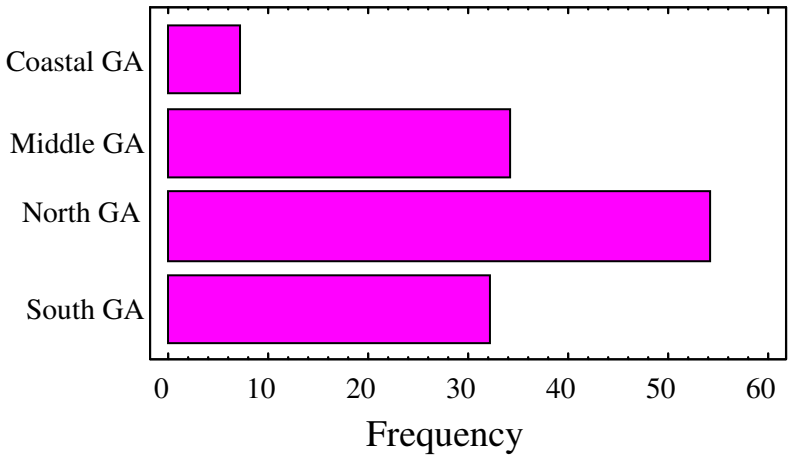

Figure 11. Location of Respondents

Table 15: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Location of Respondents

Location	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
coastal	7	30.5714	101.286	10.0641	-1.80269	1.75702
middle	34	32.1471	40.7353	6.38242	-4.59357	5.82559
north	54	32.5185	19.2732	4.39013	-3.4739	5.21177
south	31	33.2903	29.8796	5.46622	-3.05493	2.64902
Total	126	32.5	31.356	5.59964	-7.8135	10.1977

Table 16: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Location of Respondents

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between group	49.6524	3	16.5508	0.52	0.6681
Within group	3869.85	122	31.7201		
Total (Corr.)	3919.5	125			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean acceptance, from one level of location to another, at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 17: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Location of Respondents

location	Sample Size	Average Rank
coastal	7	62.0714
middle	34	63.2794
north	54	60.25
south	31	69.7258

Test statistic = 1.34837 p-Value = 0.717679

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

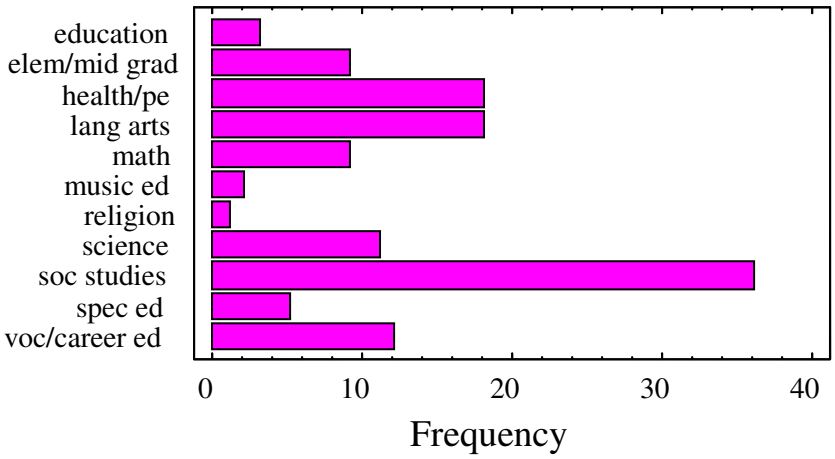

Figure 12. Undergraduate Major of Respondents

Table 18: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Undergraduate Major of Respondents

Major	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
education	3	32.6667	12.3333	3.51188	-0.299299	
ele/mid grade	9	33.6667	12.25	3.5	0.658026	-0.927358
health/pe	18	31.0556	42.4085	6.51218	-2.72394	1.96434
lang arts	18	33.6667	12.4706	3.53137	-1.55471	0.0736711
math	9	31.8889	51.3611	7.16667	-1.31335	0.754351
music ed	2	30.0	2.0	1.41421		
religion	1	37.0	0.0	0.0		
science	11	28.5455	70.2727	8.38288	-1.7866	1.56014
soc studies	35	33.0571	18.4672	4.29735	-0.430672	-1.06711
spec ed	5	29.6	134.8	11.6103	-1.48946	1.40332
voc/career ed	12	35.0833	9.53788	3.08835	-0.603552	0.213766
Total	123	32.439	31.6253	5.62364	-7.70849	10.0115

Table 19: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Undergraduate Major of Respondents

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	415.063	10	41.5063	1.35	0.2130
Within group	3443.23	112	30.7431		
Total (Corr.)	3858.29	122			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean support from one level of major to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 20: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Undergraduate Major of Respondents

Major	Sample Size	Average Rank
education	3	58.5
ele/mid grade	9	65.8333
health/pe	18	54.6667
lang arts	18	69.0278
math	9	61.0556
music ed	2	32.25
religion	1	101.0
science	11	41.7273
soc studies	35	62.6714
special ed	5	59.1
voc/career ed	12	80.7083

Test statistic = 11.1586 p-Value = 0.345296

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

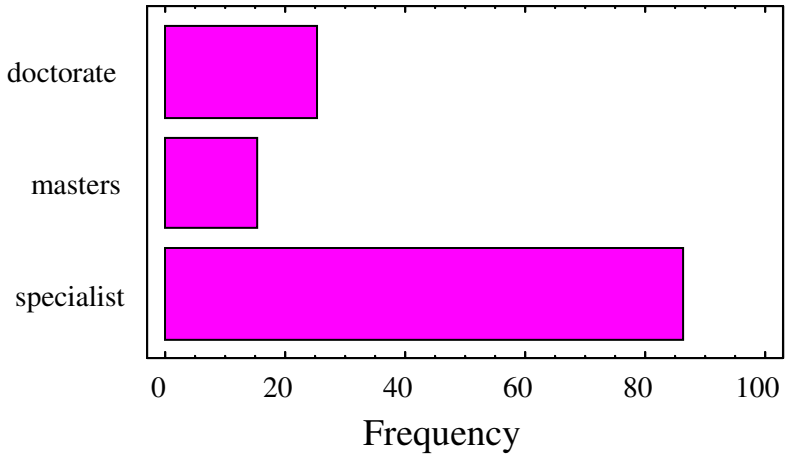

Figure 13. Highest Degree of Respondents

Table 21: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Highest Degree of Respondents

Degree	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
doctorate	25	31.96	38.8733	6.23485	-4.21904	7.04365
master	15	31.2	58.6	7.65506	-1.00842	-0.0427973
specialist	85	32.9059	25.1101	5.011	-7.32383	11.4138
Total	125	32.512	31.5261	5.61481	-7.80422	10.1462

Table 22: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Highest Degree of Respondents

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	46.6249	2	23.3125	0.74	0.4810
Within groups	3862.61	122	31.6607		
Total (Corr.)	3909.23	124			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean acceptance from one level of degree to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 23: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Highest Degree of Respondents

Degree	Sample Size	Average Rank
doctorate	25	59.7
masters	15	57.2
specialist	85	64.9941

Test statistic = 0.854209 p-Value = 0.652395

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

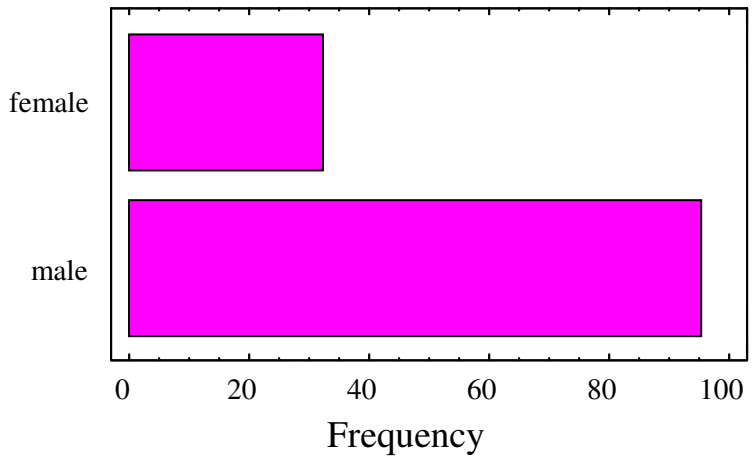

Figure 14. Gender of Respondents

Table 24: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Gender of Respondents

Gender	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
female	32	33.0313	29.6442	5.44464	-5.52158	11.1871
male	94	32.3404	32.0334	5.65981	-6.14406	7.02504
Total	126	32.5159	31.2757	5.59247	-7.87483	10.3295

Table 25: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Gender of Respondents

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	11.3931	1	11.3931	0.36	0.5483
Within groups	3898.08	124	31.4361		
Total (Corr.)	3909.47	125			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there is not a statistically significant difference between the mean acceptance from one level of gender to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 26: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Gender of Respondents

Gender	Sample Size	Average Rank
female	32	66.8125
male	94	62.3723

Test statistic = 0.354925 p-Value = 0.551338

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

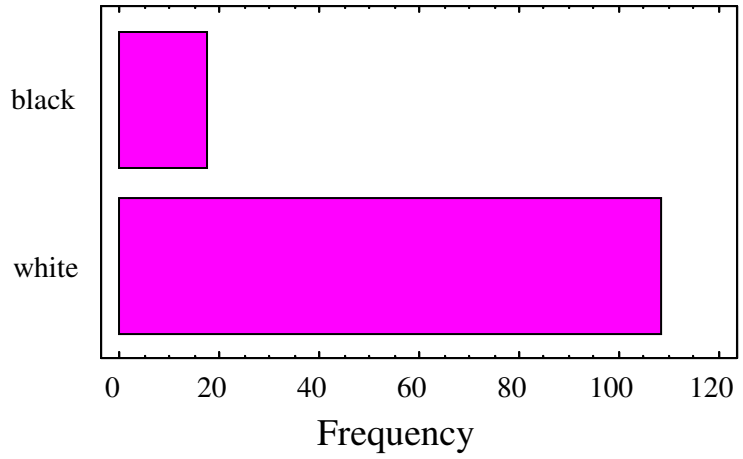

Figure 15. Ethnicity of Respondents

Table 27: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnic	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
black	17	33.1765	32.5294	5.70346	-1.81781	0.650751
white	107	32.6542	26.9831	5.19452	-7.21551	10.6938
Total	124	32.7258	27.5177	5.24573	-7.19544	9.6346

Table 28: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Ethnicity of Respondents

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	4.00122	1	4.00122	0.14	0.7046
Within groups	3380.68	122	27.7105		
Total (Corr.)	3384.68	123			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean support from one level of ethnic to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 29: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnic	Sample Size	Average Rank
black	17	68.4706
white	107	61.5514

Test statistic = 0.54686 p-Value = 0.459603

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

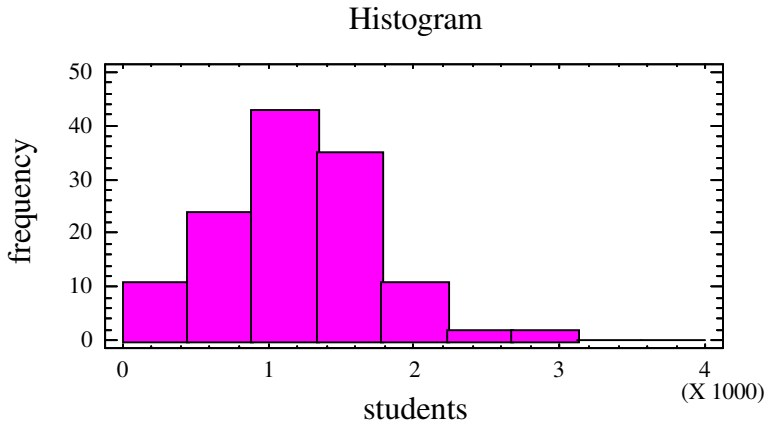

Figure 16. Number of Students in the Respondents Schools (rounded to the nearest 100)

Table 30: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Number of Students

Students	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
200	1	35.0	0.0	0.0		
300	2	35.5	0.5	0.707107		
400	8	33.125	49.5536	7.03943	-2.30586	2.89827
500	5	35.8	21.2	4.60435	-0.389979	-1.15754
600	6	33.6667	3.46667	1.8619	1.28074	0.926405
700	5	34.2	8.2	2.86356	-0.303238	0.761631
800	8	33.75	15.3571	3.91882	-0.282321	-0.560811
900	10	31.5	7.61111	2.75882	-0.0256178	-0.413702
1000	8	30.125	92.9821	9.64272	-1.93771	2.03301
1100	10	33.4	16.4889	4.06065	-0.982063	-0.354173
1200	8	29.5	24.5714	4.95696	-1.73896	1.46516
1300	7	33.8571	13.4762	3.67099	-0.0424193	-0.709318
1400	7	36.8571	14.1429	3.7607	-1.14015	-0.45538
1500	11	30.0	63.4	7.96241	-2.20886	2.49189
1600	7	28.8571	48.1429	6.93851	-1.08886	0.647809

(Continued)

Table 30: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Number of Students (continued)

Students	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
1700	10	31.6	54.2667	7.36659	-1.67359	1.21138
1800	4	33.75	12.9167	3.59398	-0.725525	-0.237557
1900	2	33.0	0.0	0.0		
2000	1	30.0	0.0	0.0		
2100	1	36.0	0.0	0.0		
2200	2	33.5	12.5	3.53553		
2300	1	26.0	0.0	0.0		
2500	1	32.0	0.0	0.0		
2900	1	37.0	0.0	0.0		
3000	1	35.0	0.0	0.0		
Total	127	32.4882	31.1249	5.57897	-7.83709	10.3172

Table 31: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Number of Students

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	663.928	24	27.6636	0.87	0.6453
Within groups	3257.8	102	31.9393		
Total (Corr.)	3921.73	126			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean acceptance from one level of students to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 32: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Number of Students

Students	Sample Size	Average Rank
200	1	84.0
300	2	89.25
400	8	74.125
500	5	87.1
600	6	67.1667
700	5	74.3
800	8	70.25
900	10	48.25
1000	8	57.0625
1100	10	68.5
1200	8	38.875
1300	7	71.2857
1400	7	97.0714
1500	11	50.6818
1600	7	41.7857
1700	10	62.5
1800	4	70.875
1900	2	59.5
2000	1	34.0
2100	1	94.5
2200	2	67.25
2300	1	10.0
2500	1	49.0
2900	1	103.5
3000	1	84.0

Test statistic = 25.8488 p-Value = 0.360882

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there is not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

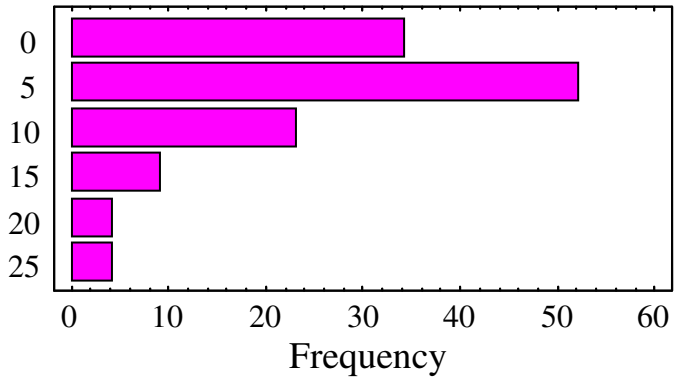

Figure 17. Principal experience (the variable principal experience was rounded to the nearest five years (i.e. the range 13 to 17 was represented by 15 and less than three years experience was represented by 0))

Table 33: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Principal Experience

Principal experience	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
0	34	31.8235	37.8467	6.15197	-2.99576	1.84837
5	51	33.098	17.0902	4.13403	-2.86079	4.54929
10	23	33.0435	17.5889	4.19392	-1.01674	-0.569135
15	9	34.5556	20.7778	4.55826	-0.443877	-0.656928
20	4	32.5	21.6667	4.65475	0.0	-0.176827
25	4	27.0	158.0	12.5698	-1.19718	1.0441
Total	125	32.632	27.3635	5.23101	-7.02372	9.45727

Table 34: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Principal Experience

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	197.442	5	39.4885	1.47	0.2046
Within groups	3195.63	11	26.854		
Total (Corr.)	3393.07	124			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there is not a statistically significant difference between the mean acceptance from one level of principal experience to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 35: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Principal Experience

Principal Experience	Sample Size	Average Rank
0	34	59.8676
5	51	64.1176
10	23	64.0217
15	9	75.8889
20	4	57.625
25	4	45.875

Test statistic = 2.45601 p-Value = 0.783106

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

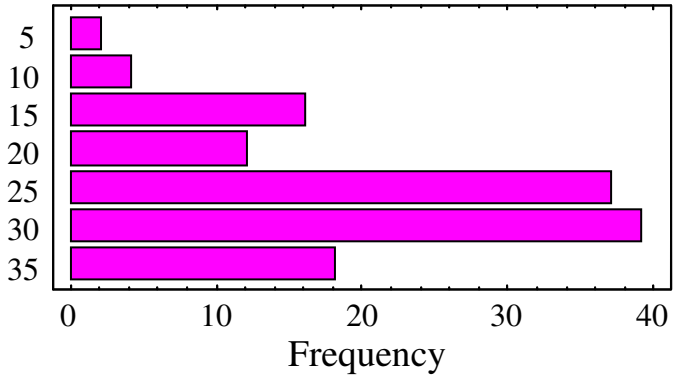

Figure 18. Years in Education (rounded to the nearest 5 years)

Table 36: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Years in Education

Years in ed	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
5	2	27.0	8.0	2.82843		
10	4	32.5	9.66667	3.10913	-1.30401	1.10387
15	16	26.875	58.1167	7.62343	-1.80937	0.164217
20	12	35.1667	11.6061	3.40677	-0.241484	-0.72449
25	37	32.7297	21.0916	4.59256	-2.59244	3.1263
30	38	33.9211	12.399	3.52122	-1.02008	-0.343845
35	18	32.7778	55.0065	7.41664	-3.59189	4.84297
Total	127	32.4882	31.1249	5.57897	-7.83907	10.3172

Table 37: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Years in Education

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	732.144	6	122.024	4.59	0.0003
Within groups	3189.59	120	26.5799		
Total (Corr.)	3921.73	126			

Since the p-value of the F-test was less than 0.05, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean support from one level of years in education to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 38: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Years in Education

Years in ed	Sample Size	Average Rank
5	2	16.75
10	4	58.125
15	16	32.5313
20	12	82.875
25	37	63.1216
30	38	71.8553
35	18	71.1667

Test statistic = 20.7999 p-Value = 0.00199282

Since the p-value was less than 0.05, there was a statistically significant difference among the medians at the 95.0% confidence level. A Multiple Range Test was implemented to identify where the significant difference existed.

Table 39: Multiple Range Test for Support of Character Education by Years in Education

Method: 95.0 percent LSD

Yrs. in ed.	Count	Mean	Homogeneous Groups
15	16	26.875	X
5	2	27.0	XX
10	4	32.5	XXX
25	37	32.7297	XX
35	18	32.7778	XX
30	38	33.9211	XX
20	12	35.1667	X

Contrast	Difference	+/- Limits
5 - 10	-5.5	8.84012
5 - 15	0.125	7.65577
5 - 20	*-8.16667	7.79625
5 - 25	-5.72973	7.41044
5 - 30	-6.92105	7.40544
5 - 35	-5.77778	7.60836
10 - 15	5.625	5.70627
10 - 20	-2.66667	5.89341
10 - 25	-0.22973	5.37265
10 - 30	-1.42105	5.36575
10 - 35	-0.277778	5.64251
15 - 20	*-8.29167	3.89813
15 - 25	*-5.85473	3.05425
15 - 30	*-7.04605	3.04209
15 - 35	*-5.90278	3.50728
20 - 25	2.43694	3.39105
20 - 30	1.24561	3.3801
20 - 35	2.38889	3.80418
25 - 30	-1.19132	2.35757
25 - 35	-0.048048	2.9334
30 - 35	1.14327	2.92074

* denotes a statistically significant difference.

Table 39 applied a multiple comparison procedure to determine which means were significantly different from which others. The bottom half of the output shows the estimated difference between each pair of means. An asterisk has been placed next to five pairs, indicating that these pairs show statistically significant differences at the 95.0% confidence level. At the top of the chart, three homogenous groups are identified using columns of X' s. Within each column, the levels containing X' s form a group of means within which there are no statistically significant differences. The method used to discriminate among the means is Fisher' s least significant difference (LSD) procedure. With this method, there is a 5.0% risk of calling each pair of means significantly different when the actual difference equals 0.

Table 40: Summary Statistics for Support of Character Education by Year Character Education was Implemented

Started char. ed	Count	Average	Variance	Standard deviation	Standard skewness	Standard kurtosis
Prior to 1996	1	29.0	0.0	0.0		
1996	14	33.3571	54.0934	7.35482	-4.27922	6.66895
1997	6	36.1667	12.1667	3.48807	-0.420218	-1.01006
1998	11	31.5455	21.2727	4.61224	-0.235942	-1.04451
1999	19	31.0	42.8889	6.54896	-3.74816	6.04974
2000	36	32.3611	22.0087	4.69135	-3.19172	5.14343
2001	25	34.04	23.2067	4.81733	-3.55738	5.66242
Total	112	32.7232	29.6074	5.44127	-7.91425	12.0368

Table 41: ANOVA Table for Support of Character Education by Year Character Education was Implemented

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Between groups	210.379	6	35.0632	1.20	0.3138
Within groups	3076.04	105	29.2956		
Total (Corr.)	3286.42	111			

Since the p-value of the F-test was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean support from one level of started character education to another at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 42: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Support of Character Education by Year Character Education was Implemented

Started char. ed	Sample Size	Average Rank
Prior to 1996	1	20.0
1996	14	68.1071
1997	6	79.6667
1998	11	46.1364
1999	19	46.0263
2000	36	51.6944
2001	25	65.34

Test statistic = 11.9084 p-Value = 0.0640435

Since the p-value was greater than 0.05, there was not a statistically significant difference between the medians at the 95.0% confidence level.

Table 43: Analysis of Variance for Support of Character Education - Type III Sums of Squares

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F- Ratio	p-Value
MAIN EFFECTS					
A: age	223.296	8	27.9119	1.20	0.3311
B: degree	56.568	2	28.2844	1.21	0.3104
C: demographics	117.185	2	58.5925	2.51	0.0965
D: ethnic	53.1264	1	53.1264	2.28	0.1408
E: gender	10.2865	1	10.2865	0.44	0.5113
F: location	205.795	3	68.5984	2.94	0.0474
G: major	187.577	10	18.7577	0.80	0.6260
H: principal experience	143.12	5	28.6241	1.23	0.3186
I: started character ed	146.469	5	29.2938	1.26	0.3061
J: students	560.185	21	26.6755	1.14	0.3567
K: years in ed	207.008	6	34.5013	1.48	0.2158
RESIDUAL	769.833	33	23.3283		
TOTAL (CORRECTED)	2631.63	97			

All F-ratios are based on the residual mean square error. The ANOVA table decomposed the variability of support into contributions due to various factors. Since Type III sums of squares (the default) have been chosen, the contribution of each factor was measured having removed the effects of all other factors. The p-values test the statistical significance of each of the factors. Since one p-value (location) was less than 0.05, this factor had a statistically significant effect on support at the 95.0% confidence level.

Acceptance for the Principles of the

Mandated Character Education Program

Georgia public high school principals' responses to surve y items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Section 2 are presented. Data are presented in tables 20 through 24 and is followed by illustrative comments on each of the five survey items.

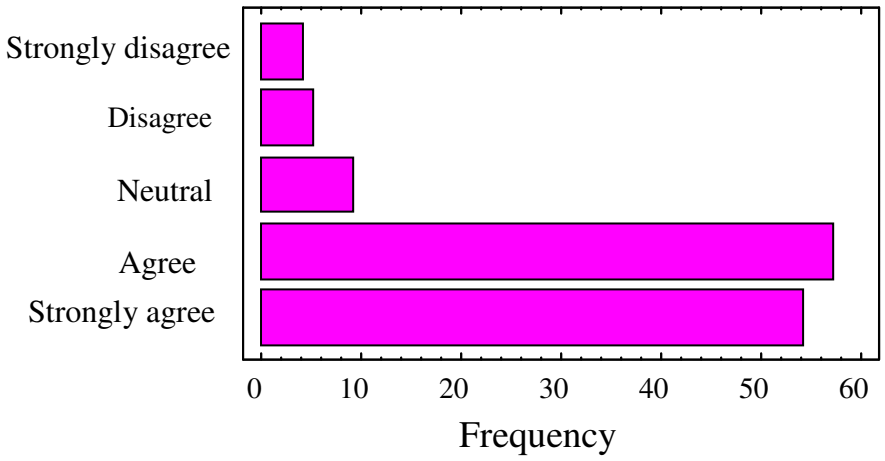

Figure 19. Question 1: It is possible for public high schools to teach positive character traits, such as honesty, empathy, respect, and compassion without involving religious doctrine.

Table 44: Frequencies for Question 1

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	4	0.0310	4	0.0310
Disagree	5	0.0388	9	0.0698
Neutral	9	0.0698	18	0.1395
Agree	57	0.4419	75	0.5814
Strongly agree	54	0.4186	129	1.0000

Of the 129 respondents, 111 (86.05%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible to teach positive character traits without involving religious doctrine. Nine (6.98%) were neutral on the issue, and 9 (6.98%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the comment section, only five principals responded. Their general consensus was that it can be done, but trying to avoid religious doctrine makes it more difficult.

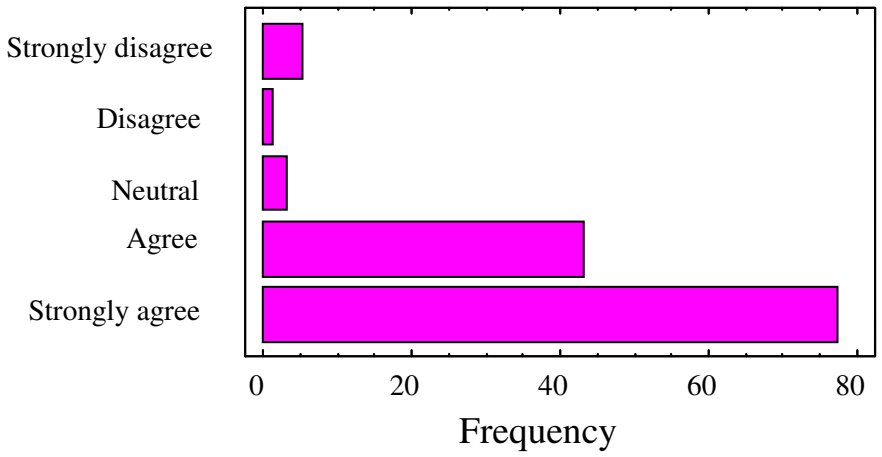

Figure 20. Question 2: In spite of the cultural pluralism that exists in our state's pubic high schools, it is possible and desirable to foster a relatively common set of traditional values, such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and fairness.

Table 45: Frequencies for Question 2

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	5	0.0388	5	0.0388
Disagree	1	0.0078	6	0.0465
Neutral	3	0.0233	9	0.0698
Agree	43	0.3333	52	0.4031
Strongly agree	77	0.5969	129	1.0000

Of the 129 responding principals, 120 (93.02%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is possible and desirable to foster a common set of traditional values in spite of the cultural pluralism that exists. Only three (2.33%) were neutral and six (4.66%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Even though this was the most overwhelming one-sided positive response, only one principal elected to comment on the issue. His comment consisted of one word, "essential".

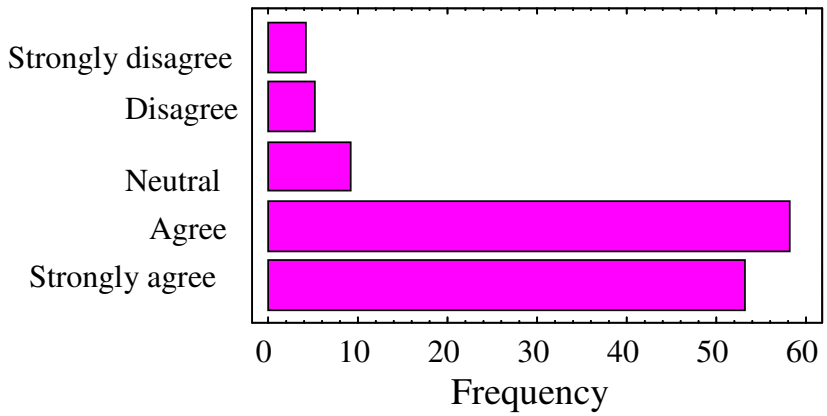

Figure 21. Question 3: Public schools have always been value-laden, whether overt or covert in nature.

Table 46: Frequencies for Question 3

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	4	0.0310	4	0.0310
Disagree	5	0.0388	9	0.0698
Neutral	9	0.0698	18	0.1395
Agree	58	0.4496	76	0.5891
Strongly agree	53	0.4109	129	1.0000

Of the 129 responding principals, 111 (86.05%) agreed or strongly agreed that schools have always been value-laden, whether overt or covert in nature. On this item, nine (6.98) principals responded with a neutral response and nine (6.98%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the comment section of this item, only two principals responded. One indicated that schools are value-laden, but not as much as they were in the past. The other comment was: "Public schools build culture; without culture we lose our identity".

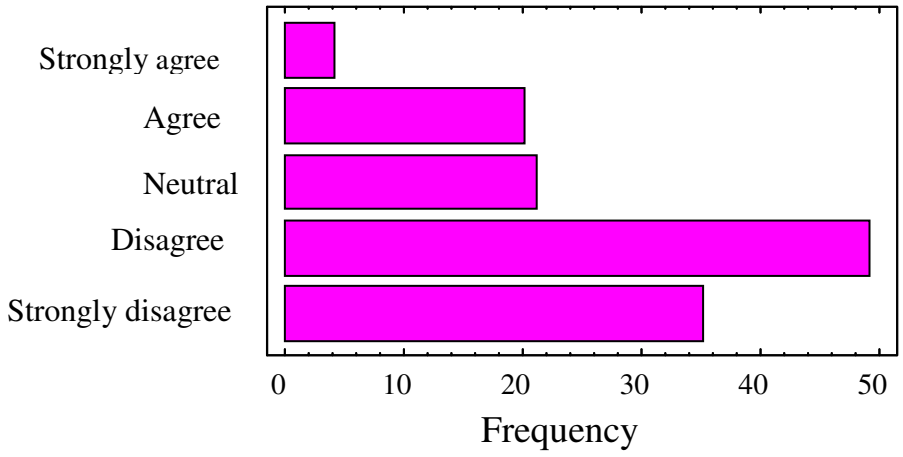

Figure 22. Question 4: Even though a program of character education is mandated by the Georgia Department of Education, it is a low priority in my high school.

Table 47: Frequencies for Question 4

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly agree	4	0.0310	4	0.0310
Agree	20	0.1550	24	0.1860
Neutral	21	0.1628	45	0.3488
Disagree	49	0.3798	94	0.7287
Strongly disagree	35	0.2713	129	1.0000

Out of 129 respondents, 84 (65.11%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that character education was a low priority at their school even though it is a mandated program. There were 21 (16.28%) neutral responses and 24 (18.60%) principals agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

This question gathered the greatest number of responses in the comment section. The comments were divided equally between the principals who agreed and the ones that did not. A common response stated that, "the school focused on academics and test scores". Another respondent cited "funding problems" for a character education program. Conversely, a principal stated that "character is the backbone of education", and another respondent wrote: "It's a high priority with this administrator".

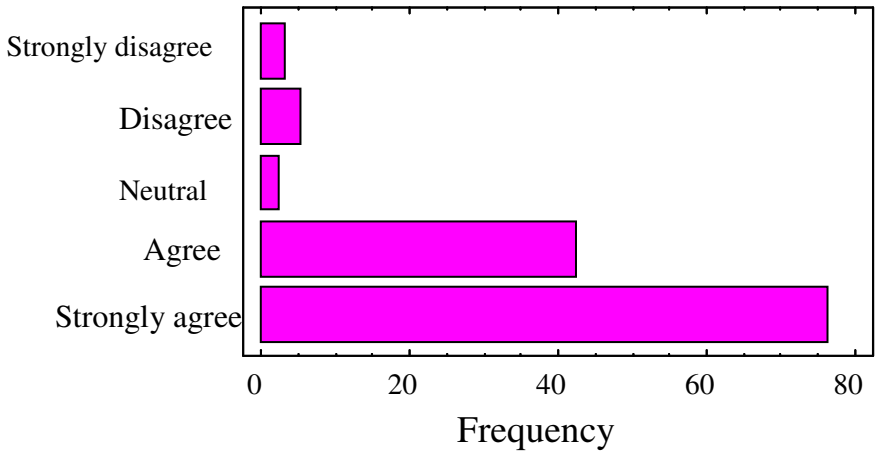

Figure 23. Question 5: Effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society, in particular: respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, and virtue and citizenship.

Table 48: Frequencies for Question 5

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Strongly disagree	3	0.0234	3	0.0234
Disagree	5	0.0391	8	0.0625
Neutral	2	0.0156	10	0.0781
Agree	42	0.3281	52	0.4063
Strongly agree	76	0.5938	128	1.0000

The response to this item was greatly skewed to the agree/strongly agree pole, with 76 (92.19%) principals indicating they are in concurrence with the statement that effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society. There were two (1.56%) neutral responses and eight (6.25%) responses indicating disagree or strongly disagree. One principal left this item blank.

The comment section generated only two replies: "I believe this is a fundamental truth", and, "We have negative support for teaching family values".

Level of Training in the Principles of Character Education

In this section, the Georgia public high school principals' responses to survey items 13 and 17 are presented. Graphic representations of the data are presented in tables 25 and 26, and each is followed with illustrative comments.

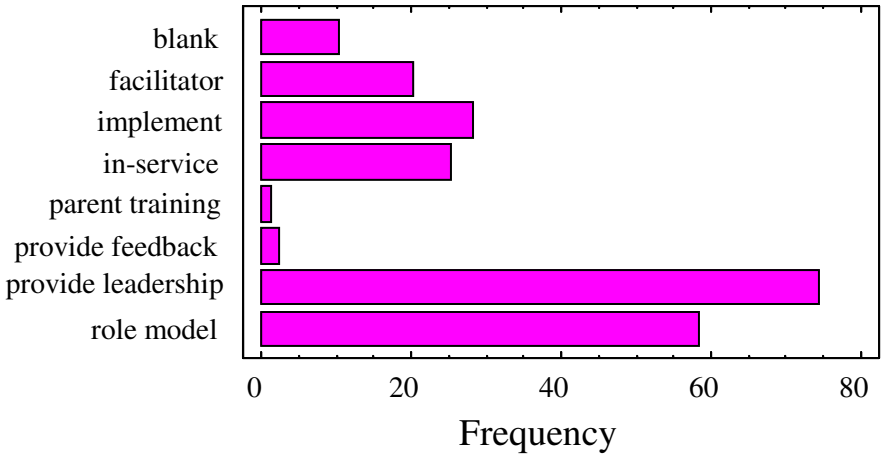

Figure 24. Question 13: What do you believe is the role of the principal in a high school character education program? (i.e. provide leadership and support, conduct in-service training for teachers, facilitate state and district initiatives).

Table 49: Frequencies for Role of Principal

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
blank	10	0.0459	10	0.0459
facilitator	20	0.0917	30	0.1376
implement	28	0.1284	58	0.2661
in-service	25	0.1147	83	0.3807
parent training	1	0.0046	84	0.3853
provide feedback	2	0.0092	86	0.3945
provide leadership	74	0.3394	160	0.7339
role model	58	0.2661	218	1.0000

The most mentioned role of the principal in a high school character education program was "providing leadership and support" with 74 of the 129 respondents listing it. "Be a role model" was the second most common role listed by the principals. "Implementation of the program" and "conduct in -service training for teachers" were the next two most popular responses with 28 and 25 respectively. "Be the facilitator" for the character education program was also an important listed role, with 20 responses. Ten principals left this item blank, and one principal wanted to "provide parent training".

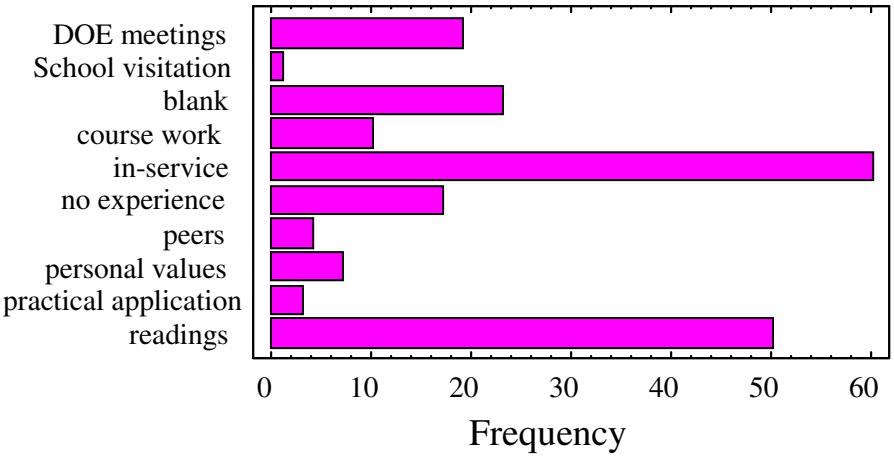

Figure 25. Question 17: List your experiences in the area of character education (i.e. course work, in-service, readings, attended Ga. Dept. of Ed. Character Education meetings).

Table 50: Frequencies for Experience in Character Education

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
DOE meetings	19	0.0979	19	0.0979
School visitation	1	0.0052	20	0.1031
blank	23	0.1186	43	0.2216
course work	10	0.0515	53	0.2732
in-service	60	0.3093	113	0.5825
no experience	17	0.0876	130	0.6701
peers	4	0.0206	134	0.6907
personal values	7	0.0361	141	0.7268
practical application	3	0.0155	144	0.7423
readings	50	0.2577	194	1.0000

Of the 129 responding principals, the most mentioned method of training in character education was "in-service" training with 60 responses. "Readings" in character education was a close second with 50 responses. "DOE meetings" was also a popular training method, with 19 responses. Twenty-three principals left this item blank, and 17 indicated that they had "no experience" in character education. Other responses included: "course work" (10), "personal values" (7), "peers" (4), "practical application" (3), and "school visitation" (1).

Year of Implementation of Character

Education and Additional Comments

The final two questions on the survey instrument asked for the principals to indicate the year that character education was implemented in their high school and to provide the respondents a space to write any additional comments they wished to express. Table 51 provides the responses to the year of implementation of character education, followed by illustrative comment. This is followed by a report of any addition comments from the responding principals.

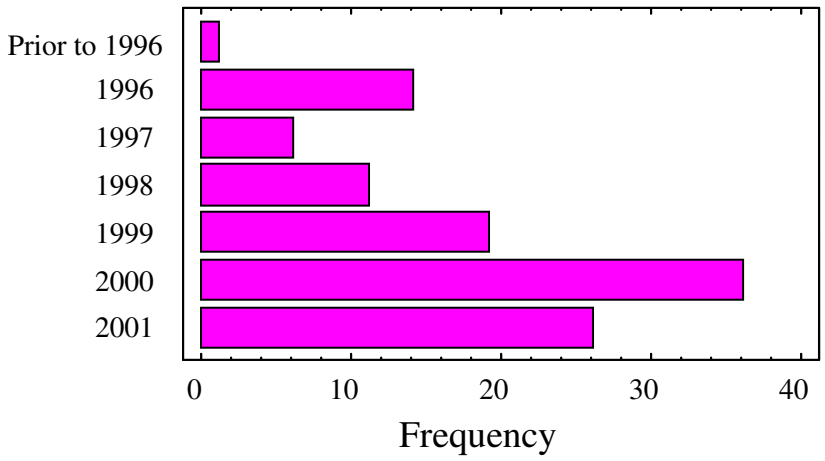

Figure 26. Question 18: When was Character Education Implemented in Your School?

Table 51: Frequencies for Year Character Education was Implemented

Class	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
Prior to 1996	1	0.0088	1	0.0088
1996	14	0.1239	15	0.1327
1997	6	0.0531	21	0.1858
1998	11	0.0973	32	0.2832
1999	19	0.1681	51	0.4513
2000	36	0.3186	87	0.7699
2001	26	0.2301	113	1.0000

The "1999-2000 school year" was the most common response to the question of when character education was implemented in their school, with 36 of the 129 respondents indicating this response. Twenty-six reported starting a character education program in the 2000-2001 school year (the final year of compliance). The remaining choices in descending order, by number of responses, were: 1998-1999 (19), 1995-1996 (14), 1997-1998 (11), 1996-1997 (6), and Prior to 1996 (1). Sixteen principals left the item blank, or wrote in that they were not sure when it was implemented in their school. One principal commented: "I'm not sure when character education was in place in my school. It was already here when I arrived".

Question 19 provided space for the principals to write additional comments. Of the 129 respondents, 27 chose to respond to question 19: Additional comments. These comments were divided into four distinct categories. One of these categories consisted of words of encouragement from the principal to the researcher, along with contact information for further communication. This group consisted of eight respondents.

There were two groups consisting of seven respondents each. One group enthusiastically endorsed character education, and this group can be summed up with one principal's reply: "We have always taught character education. That's what schools do". The other group, consisting of seven respondents, was divided out based on the comments stating that character education must come from the home. Some typical comments from this group included: "Schools should teach character education to reinforce what comes from the home", "Even though educators are involved in this program, we can never take the place of the parents/guardians", "We cannot do both -raise children and teach children the academics".

The final group contained five respondents' comments and consisted of those principals that believed character education should be approached from a curricular perspective. "Character ed. cannot be taught in one or two lesso ns. It should be modeled by adults in the school and woven throughout the curriculum" was one principal's response. Another principal stated that she would like to see character education "become a required course including the basic character traits and such things as table manners, how to carry on conversations, loudness, and other skills which would assist a student to be a more refined individual".

Summary

Of the responding principals, the most common characteristics are a white male with a specialist degree and an undergraduate major in social studies, working in a rural school in North Georgia. The most common school size was a thousand students and the most common years experience was 30 with five as principal. The majority of the respondents were supportive of the concepts of character education.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

The data obtained from the survey of Georgia's public high school principals were tabulated and analyzed in relation to the five research questions.

1. Do Georgia public high school principals view character education as a legitimate function of the school? Yes they do. The data indicated a very positive response to survey items 6, 7 and 8 in section 2 and items 14, 15 and 16 in section 3. This information was reported in tables 1 through 6. As reported in table 2, of the 129 responding principals, 90 (71%), indicated that they considered character education a legitimate function of the school. Table 3 reports that 76% of the responding principals indicated that the faculty and parents of the students support the direct teaching of positive character traits, and 73% agreed that there are identifiable character traits which families want the schools to teach (table 1). As reported in table 4, honesty, respect and responsibility were the character traits most mentioned, by the responding principals. The school's guidance department was the entity most likely to assist with implementation of character education (table 5), and "none" or "blank" were most mentioned hindrances of a character education program (table 6).

2. Do Georgia public high school principals view character education as an effective deterrent to high school discipline problems and school violence? They asserted that it can be, but it currently is not. This conclusion emerged from the analysis of the responses to survey items 9 through 12 in section 2, represented on tables 7, 8, 9 and 10. As reported in table 10, 84% of the responding principals believed that a character education program was needed in the schools and 61% agreed that the direct teaching of positive character traits is an effective means of addressing violence, vandalism, and other discipline matters (table 9). Table 8 reports that 60% of the principals agreed schools can make an important contribution to the development of positive character traits, while only 30% believed that character education has been effective in addressing students' lack of discipline, civility, and respect (table 7).

3. Does a relationship exist between certain personal and professional characteristics of Georgia public high school principals and the amount of effort and support they are willing to give the character education program? In regard to personal and professional characteristics gathered from section 1 of the survey, character education enjoyed a full, across the board, base of support, with the exception of years in education (tables 36, 37, 38). In this category, responding principals with 18 to 22 years of experience in education rated significantly higher on the support score when compared to the respondents with three to seven years experience, and those with 13 to 17 years experience scored significantly lower than those with 18 to 22, 23 to 27, 28 to 32 and 33 to 37 years experience (table 39). At all other levels, there were no significant differences in the means or medians of the support scores (table 39). When the contribution of each factor

was measured after the effects of all other factors was removed, only "location" had a statistically significant effect on support (table 43).

4. What is the level of acceptance that Georgia public high school principals have for the principles of the mandated character education program? They accept and support character education. This conclusion resulted from an analysis of the responses to survey items 1 through 5 in section 2, and reported in tables 44 to 48. From table 46, 111 out of 129 responding principals (86%) reported that schools have always been value laden, and 86% believed that it is possible to teach positive character traits without involving religious doctrine (table 44). In table 48, 92% of the respondents concurred with the statement, "that effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society". The highest percentage of agreement was displayed in table 45, where 93% of the principals indicated they believed it to be possible and desirable to foster a common set of traditional values. In response to question 4 (table 47), 65% of the responding principals indicated they disagreed that character education was a low priority of their school.

5. What level of training do Georgia public high school principals have in character education? The analysis of the data indicated that this is an area which could use some improvement. Of the responding principals, 23 left question 17 (List your experiences in character education) blank and 17 indicated that they had no experience. The top 2 choices were "in-service" and "readings in character education" (table 50). The principals, however, felt that they played a valuable role in the character education program. Table 49 indicated that most of the respondents thought the principal had to provide leadership and be a role model for the program.

In reference to the year that character education was implemented in their school, the majority of the principals (104) indicated that the program was implemented before it was mandated, with only 25 principals responding indicated that it started in 2000 – 2001, the final year of compliance (Table 51).

The survey responses were mostly supportive of character education. The principals appeared to be ready and willing to embrace character education, but they seemed to lack direction as well as specific strategies. These shortcomings must be addressed if character education is to be successful. The largest deficit was in the area of training.

Recommendations

The lack of training can be remedied. Principals must take advantage of what is already available. Each RESA offers a course in character education, and there are numerous readings available. Principals should visit schools which have a strong program in place, and local boards of education need to sponsor character education workshops. School districts must provide in-service training in character education.

In addition to the programs already extant, more options need to be fostered. Georgia's colleges and universities could develop undergraduate and graduate courses in character education, and a course in character education could be added to the requirements for teacher certification in Georgia. Also, professional organizations could provide support and opportunities for their members in the area of character education.

Implications for further research

Teachers should be surveyed to ascertain their position on this issue, since they are the ones delivering character education to the students. Their input would be valuable in

ascertaining what is currently in place, what needs to be in place and how best to implement.

It might be beneficial to survey private high school principals in order to determine what pitfalls and triumphs they have encountered regarding character education. It would be interesting to see if there is a difference between private and public schools with regard to this issue.

Information gathered from middle school and elementary school principals would be helpful in evaluating a comprehensive character education curriculum from kindergarten through high school. To truly make a difference, character education needs to be instilled at all ages.

A Final Word

More than 2000 years ago Plato warned that if man's education is inadequate or bad, he becomes the most savage of all the products of earth. It is obvious that our society is failing in the area of character education with the widespread incidence of crime, violence, vandalism, drug abuse, and suicide.

Until about 1910, our schools gave ethical instruction a high priority. That emphasis has been greatly reduced. It has been the purpose of this study to show that ethical instruction in our schools is traditional, legal, feasible, and highly beneficial to everyone. All successful societies have recognized the importance of teaching responsibility. Ethical instruction cannot be left to the schools alone. Parents, churches, the media, and other key institutions must do their part. Together, we must take the opportunity and assume the responsibility for moral education.

Fortunately, awareness of, and interest in, ethical instruction are growing. There is considerable evidence indicating that the educational pendulum is swinging in the right direction. The future health of our society depends upon a concerted effort to assist parents, schools, churches, and other institutions in helping young people develop sound character. The need is urgent. The time is now. As Edmund Burke warned two centuries ago, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

This study delineated and examined issues concerning the decline of values in our youth and the increase in student discipline referrals. It considered the perception that we could improve discipline in schools by teaching virtues. The legislature in Georgia has indicated which virtues are needed by the students (see appendix A). The role of schools in building character is a major one, but it is not the only one. Parents, families, and peers all have a major influence on a child's character. It is hoped that a properly implemented character education program will ultimately increase moral awareness, positively changing public education and subsequently society, in the state of Georgia.

This study examined the impact of a mandated character education program. Specifically, it looked at the principals' perspective of character education in Georgia's public high schools.

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APPENDIX A

27 CHARACTER TRAITS MANDATED BY THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Perseverance

Cheerfulness

Compassion

Self-Respect

Respect for Others

Creativity

Courage

Cooperation

Fairness

Tolerance

Patriotism

Sportsmanship

Respect for the Environment

Respect for the Creator

Citizenship

Kindness

Diligence

Generosity

Self-Control

Courtesy

Honesty

Punctuality

Cleanliness

School Pride

Patience

Virtue

Loyalty

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

The University of Georgia

College of Education
School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning
Department of Educational Leadership

November 15, 2001

Dear Public High School Principal,

Given the rising tide of student incivility, violence, and general lack of discipline, I believe that urgent attention is needed. Therefore, I am asking your help in confirming the role that Character Education may play in addressing this problem. You can be of assistance in helping to solve this problem by responding to the brief questionnaire enclosed. This survey should take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete.

All of your responses will be anonymous and will be treated with strict confidentiality. The numbering on the outside of the return envelope is only for accounting purposes. The envelope and questionnaire will be separated upon receipt, further guaranteeing your anonymity. I will be glad to send a copy of the study's findings to every high school principal who prints their e-mail address on the front page of the survey.

I am aware of the demands of your time, so it is with special appreciation that I thank you in anticipation of your helpfulness.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address *IRB@uga.edu*.

Sincerely,

Wayne Broadhead

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APPENDIX C

SURVEY OF GEORGIA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This study investigates Georgia public high school principals' perception of character education programs for the preparation of a descriptive analysis.

DIRECTIONS

Your name is not requested on the questionnaire since results will be processed in a strictly confidential manner. In reporting results, only statistical summaries and illustrative comments of the responses of groups of principals will be cited so you are encouraged to be very frank in your responses.

You may use pen or pencil to circle or fill in the appropriate response. In Section 2, circling 1 means you strongly disagree, 2 means you disagree, 3 means you are neutral (i.e. have no knowledge or hold no opinion or both), 4 means you agree, and 5 means you strongly agree. If you change a response, please make the change distinctly so your choice is clear.

Please attempt to answer every item. For some items none of the alternatives may correspond exactly to your situation or to the opinion you hold. In such cases mark the alternative which comes closest to the answer you would like to give. For each item a section is provided for you to make any comments you deem necessary (i.e. clarifying your response, you're interpreting an item, or expressing a concern). You may use the back of the page to make further comments.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in this study and for returning your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided. Please check the box on the envelope if you desire a copy of the survey results.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me at 770-554-2668.

SECTION 1: PROFILE OF PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SCHOOLS

Directions: Fill in or circle as is appropriate. Please complete every item in this section. The demographic date collected here will be paired with data collected in the following 2 sections.

Sex: (01) Male (02) Female

Age: _____

Ethnic group: (01) White (03) Hispanic (05) Asian
(02) Black (04) American Indian (06) Other

Your undergraduate major: _____

Highest degree you have completed:
(01) Doctoral degree
(02) Educational Specialist, six-year program or equivalent
(03) Master's degree

Years of experience as a professional educator: _____

Years of experience as a public high school principal: _____

Number of students enrolled in your school: (Approximate to the nearest hundred) _____

Geographic location of you school: (01) South Georgia
(02) Middle Georgia (03) North Georgia (04) Coastal Georgia

Population category of your school: (01) Urban (02) Suburban (03) Rural

Section 2: THE CHARACTER EDUCATION ISSUE (Character Education is defined as instruction in predetermined, pro-social character traits such as respect, honesty, compassion, fairness, responsibility, caring, justice and civic virtues.)

Directions: Circle the number to the left of the survey item that corresponds to the position that you hold. Circling 1 means you strongly disagree, 2 means you disagree, 3 means you are neutral (i.e. have no knowledge or opinion or both) 4 means you agree, and 5 means you strongly agree.

1 2 3 4 5 1. It is possible for public high schools to teach positive character traits, such as honesty, empathy, respect, and compassion without involving religious doctrine.
Comments_____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 2. In spite of the cultural pluralism that exists in our state's public high schools, it is possible and desirable to foster a relatively common set of traditional values, such as respect, responsibility, honesty, and fairness.
Comments_____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 3. Public schools have always been value-laden, whether overt or covert in nature.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 4. Even though a program of character education is mandated by the Georgia Department of Education, it is a low priority item in my high school.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 5. Effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society, in particular, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, and civic virtue and citizenship.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 6. There are identifiable character traits that families and communities want public high schools to teach directly to students.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 7. I believe that the direct teaching of positive character traits is a legitimate function of the public high school.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 8. The faculty and parents of the students at my public high school support the direct teaching of positive character traits.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 9. Imposing a character education program in Georgia public high schools has been effective in addressing high school students' lack of discipline, civility, and respect.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 10. Schools can make an important contribution to the development of positive character traits regardless of whether those traits are being reinforced at home.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 11. I believe that the direct teaching of positive character traits is an effective means of addressing the problems public high schools are experiencing with violence, vandalism, and other discipline matters.
Comments _____
_____

1 2 3 4 5 12. A character education program is not needed in the public high school because the students are relatively respectful and disciplined.
Comments _____
_____

SECTION 3: RESPONSE TO THE CHARACTER EDUCATION ISSUE

Directions: Please write in your responses to the following questions. Feel free to use the back of the page to make more in depth comments. You may attach additional pages if you wish.

13. What do you believe is the role of the principal in a high school character education program? (i.e. provide leadership and support, conduct in-service training for teachers, facilitate state and district initiatives)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. List those "character traits" which you feel public high schools should actively teach to students.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

15. List one or two of the entities (i.e. PTSA, guidance dept., student organizations) within your school community that are most likely to assist in the effective implementation of a program of character education.

_____
_____
_____

16. List one or two of the entities within your school community that are most likely to hinder the effective implementation of a program of character education.

_____
_____
_____

17. List your experiences in the area of character education (i.e. course work, in-service, readings, attended Ga. Dept. of Ed. Character Education meetings)

_____
_____
_____
_____

18. When was character education implemented in your school?
2000-2001 1999-2000 1998-1999 1997-1998 1996-1997
Prior to 1996

19. Additional comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____